

Death is No More Fearful:

**A Study of the Image of Death in John Donne's
"Death Be Not Proud" and Sylvia Plath's "Tulips"**

الموت لم يعد مخيفاً: دراسة لصورة الموت في قصيدتي جون دون
"لاتفخر ايها الموت" وسيلفيا بلاث "الخرامى"

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Abstract

Humans are mortal beings, and as such, everyone who experiences life will eventually face death; this is an inevitable law that imparts significance to our existence. Devoid of death, time would lose its value, rendering life purposeless. It's a topic that evokes profound and diverse emotions universally. Therefore, it's not surprising that poets throughout history, regardless of the era or location, have endeavored to explore death through their verses.

Fearing from death appears to stem from two main factors: the absolute finality of death and the uncertainty surrounding what comes afterward. Numerous literary works tackle this subject, aiming to provide solace, instill hope, or encourage individuals to amend their conduct while still alive. The conflicting perspectives presented by various societies may remain irreconcilable, given the absence of firsthand accounts from those who might shed light on an afterlife. Nevertheless, not one poet along the course of English poetry in its various epochs challenged death and the fear it provokes. They welcome death as either a challenge, a means of reunion with loved ones or a way of escaping life's devastating events.

Therefore, the present paper aims at formulating an in-depth thematic analysis of the image of death in two poems composed by two poets who are selected from two different eras of English poetry, namely the metaphysical British John Donne and the modern American Sylvia Plath, to shed light on their notions of death and how it is presented by them as not that fearful experience as is seen by various other poets.

Keywords: death, poetry, Donne, Plath

The exploration of the death-theme is frequently regarded as one of the enduring concepts traced throughout the history of literature. By delving into the conventional associations linked with death, it is commonly asserted that a genuine appreciation for life necessitates a fundamental comprehension of death. Two of the poets who dug deep in life to form an understanding of death so as not to fear it are; John Donne and Sylvia Plath.

John Donne (1572-1631), the famous metaphysical poet is known for his preoccupation with death. He was fascinated by its mystery and, as a devout Christian, he believed in life after death. His poetry often deals with death either directly or indirectly though at times, he was unable to deal with this theme consistently. Some of his poems mocked death's significance while others showed his human fears of death. However, his sonnet, "Death Be Not Proud" dismisses his human fears of death and rather welcomes it "as a necessary stage before reaching the glory of heaven, the promised life with God" (Oliver,1999:1).

In fact, Donne's experiences of so many misfortunes in life made him a death poet. At the age of four, Donne's father died. A year after, his sister, Elizabeth died too. That was not all, shortly after, Donne's two sisters, Mary and Katherine, died. At an early age, then, the poet experienced the successive deaths of four of his family members. Besides, being born a Roman Catholic was another misfortune since Catholics were persecuted at the times as a minority and were subject to financial penalties. Donne's own brother was imprisoned for sheltering a Roman Catholic priest and out of fever he died in prison later. Donne's uncle, Jesuit, was also hanged. After which, however, the poet converted to the Church of England (Harger,2010:1).

Donne's years of marriage were not restful and were often spent in deprivation. Donne eloped with his employer's niece, Anne More which

caused his employer to cast him out of his job as a secretary. He married her then and the two struggled much against financial difficulties till Donne joined the Anglican Ministry after being pressured by king James I. Five of his twelve children died either by birth or during infancy. To top everything off, his 33 years old wife died, after giving birth to their twelfth child and that was only a year after Donne's taking his Parish job (Greenblat,2006:1261). In addition, Donne witnessed most of the religious conflicts within the Church of England at the time which had their influence on him as a poet. Also, the spread of plague throughout London and the British countryside was another calamity for Donne who himself was taken ill.

However, the poet's own experiences of death, poverty, disease, persecution as a Catholic were not the only reasons responsible for his preoccupation with the idea as it resulted from his obsession scientifically with the process of death itself as that of regeneration of human body and liberation of the human soul, finally taking it to "the eternal, crystalline purity, a bliss of heaven which for many Christians, was the real world and the real life" (Sugg,2007:192).

"Death Be Not Proud" is one of Donne's "Holy sonnets" in which the poet shows contempt for death's pride through his frequent emphasis on the powerlessness of death. In essence , this sonnet is Donne's strong challenge to death which immediately begins with the poet's calling death to "be not proud" and that while some people think him "mighty and dreadful" it is not in fact so . The idea that death does not have much power as some people believe is an argument the poet began building right from the opening line of the sonnet. The way the poet addresses death (apostrophe) is meant to remind the reader that death is not in such a superior position as not to be addressed by a man.

The poet rather places death on the same level as he, as a human being, by means of personification. Through the poet's use of this device, a hint is given at the final conviction, the poet highlights that death, like other mortals, will also die at the end. Since death has no voice to answer the poet, it is powerless, and the poet's lack of fear for death is understandable.

The poet proceeds to deny the power of death and thus gives lists of reasons. People whom death believes it kills, do not really die, while death thinks that he is "over throwing" man, causing him to fall, he is indeed enabling him to rise. Hence appears apparently the major contrast of the poem. Here is the Christian concept of death as the means by which man finds Resurrection, eternal life and immortality through uniting with Christ in Heaven (Jokinen,2002:1).

Donne then is sneering at death as a "poor", while the latter is deluded to think of himself as "mighty and dreadful". Again, the poet mocks death for not having the power to kill him and this reinforces the same idea mentioned above of death as "the enabler of new, immortal life" (ibid). Death cannot kill; thus, he has no power over man. Death is only a stage of transition between this life and the after:

Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadfull, for, thou art not soe,
For those, whom thou think's thou dost overthrow
Die not, poore death, nor yet canst thou kill me (1-4).

The weakness of death to overthrow man is further implied through the poet's description of death as "rest and sleep". Sleep and rest give us pleasure and thus this comparison through illustration is meant to help us imagine what death must be like. Besides, it is implied that death, as a

pleasant experience, is not to be afraid of. Sleep is such a pleasant experience and since the poet believes death to be a longer form of sleep, it must be then more pleasurable. The frequent use of metaphor to compare death to sleep, is to lessen the fear of death. Through the poet's comparing the unfamiliar or unusual phenomena (death) to the familiar or usual one (sleep), he intends to create a sense of familiarity with death to remove its mystery as the unknown (Fomeshi,2013:78).

Since the poem shows much of the poet's beliefs as a devout Christian, of death and the afterlife, death is seen not as an end to man's life, but a kind of sleep, a transition period as it was before man's final reuniting with the creator. The idea of a sleep as a form of death brings to mind the Renaissance image of how the sleeping man looks much like the dead man. Throughout the sonnet, then, the poet frequently parallels the different images of sleeping, dying and walking afterwards.

Those whom death takes do not really die, they sleep for a short while to be resurrected and live eternally. Thus, if man gets pleasure out of rest and sleep which are in the sonnet but two forms or copies of death, then much pleasure must be resulting from death. It is the best men who so soon go to death, their bones get to their rest in the grave while their souls got delivered. This implies that those men enjoy the feeling of being set free from the human body through death. The idea recurs Shakespeare's Hamlet's "Shuffle off this mortal coil", that is freed from the fear of death, being delivered both in the sense of being born and reborn in heaven (Jokinen,2002:1).

The fact that even best men embark on death again reinforces death as pleasant, not a punishment, a common experience all must come across. Besides, it is meant to dismiss human fears against those who are scared of death as the final Stage of their material existence. Further, the poet shows

both the physical and spiritual needs for this experience since it does not only "rejuvenate the body, but also the spirit readying it for the glorious return to Christ in the afterlife" (Oliver,1999:1).

From rest and sleepe, which but thy pictures bee,
Much pleasure, than from thee, much more must flow
And sonnest our best men with thee doe goe,
Rest of their bones, and soulesdeliverie (5-8).

The poet undermines death's pride calling him a "slave". The poet argues that death is not free to choose who is to die. He cannot carry out his deed unless a command is given by: fate, chance, kings and desperate men. At times, death must submit to a mere chance or human, be they kings or desperate men alike to act. By placing death in such position, death is denied power and pride.

A slave is at command so death is once again denied dominance and freedom to carry out its deed. He does as others wish be they mere chance or people of different social ranks. Chance or fate may suddenly take one's life, kings likewise may sentence someone to death and desperate men may cheat death of its own authority by taking their own lives. Thus, by making death depend on man's choice, the poet shows us that it is man who is in control of death than death is really overthrowing man. Death dwells altogether with poison, war or sickness since they all may result in death. The poet lessens the power of death as when he compares its effect to be as insignificant as the ones resulting from them.

Donne furthers then the importance of death comparing its method to that of poppy and charms. They have the power of producing sleep, of making us sleep even better than its stroke does, whatever interpretations death's stroke may have, be sickle or sword, the placing pictures of "poppy" and

"weapons" is meant again to show us how little power death has. Since this is the case of death causing us to sleep for a short while, before resurrection, death then has no right to feel proud. The poet then questions the inappropriateness of death being so "swelling" with pride:

Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men
And dost with poyson, warre and sickness dwell
And poppie or charmes can make us sleepe as well
And better than thy stroake; why swell'st thou then? (9-12).

After we are dead for a short while, we will wake up resurrected to an eternal life, and will no more have the experience of death or sleep. Once again, the Christian conviction of death as a transitional period, or a break between this life and the after is emphasized. Once we wake to live eternally, death itself will be no more. It will cease to be.

Throughout the poem, then, death has been challenged not as "mighty a dreadful" but a mere mortal. The personified death will die as all mortals but with the exception that he will die an eternal death. Whereas we, mortals, experience death once and make soon after to live forever. Donne then takes the stance to remind the reader of "the ultimate defeat of death through eternal life" (Targoff,2008:106).

One short sleepe past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more, Death thou shall die (13-14).

Another perspective on death, not imbued with the same fear as Donne's depiction but rooted in different motivations, is evident in Sylvia Plath's "Tulips." Plath's life, fraught with tales of tragedy, pain, and adversity, served as a wellspring of inspiration for her writing. Her autobiographical

poems provide a window into her emotions, offering the world a glimpse of how she grappled with personal challenges. A trailblazer in the realm of 'confessional poetry,' Plath's work reflects her deep-seated fixation on death and pain, permeating many of her creations characterized by profound and dark themes. Despite the tumultuous impact of her seemingly ceaseless depression, which wreaked havoc on her marriage, family, mental well-being, and overall life, Plath's afflictions paradoxically played a pivotal role in crafting remarkably distinctive poems. Her struggles with melancholic and manic illnesses, coupled with persistent physical health issues such as recurring strep throat, high fevers, and exhaustion, were integral components of her tumultuous journey.

Sylvia Plath entered the world in October 1932, hailing from Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts (Wagner and Stevenson, 2008:1). Born to Otto Plath who was a German immigrant, and Aurelia Plath, whose roots traced back to Austrian immigrants, she had a younger brother named Warren (Axelrod, 2008:3). Plath's personal journey was marked by persistent suffering, and ironically, her life commenced during the challenging era of the Great Depression, laying the groundwork for her lifelong struggle with clinical depression. Unfortunately, she was never fully able to overcome the pain associated with her father's death, and so it haunted her for the remainder of her life.

Upon returning from Smith College and during her junior year, Sylvia Plath faced a critical juncture, being hospitalized following a suicide attempt (Wagner and Stevenson, 2008:2). Her trajectory took a significant turn when she studied in England and encountered Ted Hughes, a fellow poet. Their brief courtship culminated in marriage in June 1956 in London (Ibid). However, Plath's suffering intensified as she was institutionalized by her husband, a move compounded by other medical issues. This period

prompted Plath to delve into her emotions, finding expression in her work "Tulips". The distress in Plath's life escalated when she discovered her husband's infidelity with another poet, Assia Wevill. The pain inflicted by Hughes lingered, and Plath struggled to fully recover. Following the birth of her two children, she separated from her husband, departing the countryside of Devon to return to London. Interestingly, she rented a house once occupied by William Butler Yeats, a detail that brought her a sense of joy and connection (Ames, 2005:12).

Sylvia Plath penned "Tulips," exactly the same year she separated from Ted Hughes, infusing the poem with the profound pain that became a harbinger of her suicide just four months later. It is crucial to recognize that her tumultuous life, fraught with suffering, did not unfold in vain; rather, it served as a catalyst and muse for much of her literary output. As the intensity of her pain heightened, Plath channeled those emotions into her writings. Over time, her depression reached such a pinnacle that her poems transformed into confessions laden with dark themes encompassing pain, suffering, and death. With an unmistakable autobiographical thread, Plath made numerous unsuccessful suicidal attempts before finally taking her own life during a particularly harsh winter in 1963 (Ibid:15).

Sylvia Plath's poem "Tulips" has earned widespread acclaim, with Plath using a personal experience as a backdrop to articulate the intricate emotions tied to the concept of childlessness. According to Ted Hughes, Plath penned "Tulips" following a hospitalization for an appendectomy in March of 1961. The proximity of this medical event to a recent miscarriage likely triggered associations with death, adding depth to Plath's emotional turmoil. The poem vividly reflects the impact of Plath's depression stemming from this distressing experience. It delves into another significant aspect of her identity—postpartum depression, which she

grappled with immediately after the birth of her daughter, Frieda. Plath, evidently, was not emotionally ready for the arrival of a new baby or any child, and this emotional unpreparedness becomes a poignant undercurrent in the themes explored within "Tulips."

The joyous events typically associated with the arrival of a child became distressingly unsettling for Sylvia Plath after the birth of her baby, with even the presence of flowers causing discomfort. Diana Curtis highlights this aspect, noting that the flowers and the entire context of childbirth served as a harsh reminder of the unpleasant realities of the outside world (Curtis, 2009:184). Plath's feelings of angst are palpable in the speaker of the poem, who describes hearing the baby breathe "lightly, through their swaddlings, like an awful baby" (37-38). There's a wild and dangerous quality attributed to them, leading the speaker to reject them, claiming they "eat my oxygen" (49). This rejection extends to the tulips, symbolizing a rejection of the trappings of her life and family:

Now I have lost myself, I am sick of baggage
My husband and child smiling out of the family photo;
Their smiles catch onto my skin, little smiling hooks (18, 20-21).

In this context, the tulips are personified as the speaker feels intimidated by their presence. Despite the baby being a beautiful miracle, it is demonized, and the tulips, though gorgeous, are portrayed as adversaries. The amalgamation of these elements in "Tulips" underscores the profound impact of Plath's deep-seated depression, steering the poem towards a darker and more horrific theme.

In "Tulips," Sylvia Plath expresses a desire for death rather than flowers, recognizing the ironic symbolism that death, despite being a gift

symbolizing the end of life, is, in itself, a profound symbol of life. The rejection of flowers represents a yearning for freedom and a kind of perfection:

I didn't want any flowers. I only wanted
To lie with my hands turned up and be utterly empty.
How free it is, you have no idea how free--
it is what the dead close on, finally (29-31, 34)

This newfound freedom is described as both wonderful and terrible due to the high price it demands. The woman must relinquish her connections to family, possessions, and ultimately face death as both a price and a reward (Dobbs, 1977:22). The speaker envisions death as a cathartic release, anticipating a sense of peacefulness as she lies in an environment "snowed-in" with death. This portrayal reflects the complex emotions and the paradoxical nature of seeking freedom through the acceptance of mortality.

In "Tulips," the flowers serve as a catalyst for a profound psychological journey into and out of anesthesia, symbolized by the "numbness" induced by the nurse's "bright needles" (17). The poem meticulously traces the stages of the hospital patient's reluctant descent into an anesthetized state of "peacefulness" and the equally hesitant return to consciousness (Dickie, 1979:132). The speaker transcends normal activity, embracing the opportunity to shed all responsibility and become a body devoid of personal identity: "I have given my name and my day-clothes up to the nurses / And my history to the anesthetist and my body to surgeons" (6-7).

This individuality-renunciation extends to the depersonalization of others, reducing them to a level where no claims are made on her, and she

acknowledges making none on them. The nurses, in their hurried movements around the ward, are likened to a flock of gulls flying inland. The speaker perceives herself as an inanimate object, a pebble, prompting the poet to cease consciousness altogether. The poem reflects a haunting contemplation of the failed myth of human or artistic perfectibility, leading the speaker to embrace a courtship with nihilism (Molesworth, 1979:63). In crafting "Tulips," Sylvia Plath employs various elements such as setting, style, diction, and color imagery to convey a vivid perspective of emotional emptiness and strife, ultimately leading to an inevitable longing for death. This poetic symphony creates a clear understanding of Plath's perception of death as a non-panicked experience.

The speaker strategically utilizes the setting to establish a calm and peaceful atmosphere, predominantly within the hospital. This choice is reinforced by metaphorical imagery describing the ward as 'winter,' characterized by 'everything white' and surroundings 'snowed-in.' The absence of a rhyme scheme accentuates the speaker's exploration of feelings in an unstructured manner. While the verse is nominally free, a subtle iambic base underlies the seven lines in each stanza, contributing to a quiet and melodious movement. The presence of a hidden melody, evident in phrases like 'learning'/'lying,' 'lying by myself quietly,' 'light lies,' and 'white walls,' transforms seemingly casual remarks into memorable speech. This melodic quality aids in turning the speaker's experience into a mysterious initiation, a symbolic departure from this world. In the poem "Tulips," the speaker undergoes a profound transformation where everything that defines her identity, constraining her in existence, is willingly relinquished. This surrender leads her into a state of complete emptiness, marked by a sense of openness that, at times, is

associated with immersion in water. This imagery evokes a return to the fetal state, symbolizing a retreat to the primal matrix of being.

Throughout this journey, the speaker encounters an initial resistance, embodied by a photograph of her husband and children placed by her bedside. This visual reminder serves as a connection to the burdens of interpersonal relationships and the challenges posed by the existence of others. The image of "little smiling hooks" (21) conjures the idea that these familial ties act as subtle entanglements, attempting to pull her back from the metaphorical sea of death. This resistance becomes a poignant element in the speaker's quest for liberation and ultimate surrender to the allure of death.

The speaker in "Tulips" deliberately selects words such as "white walls" and "light" to amplify the feeling of tranquility enveloping her hospital bed. Her choice of descriptive adjectives like "excitable," "red," and "vivid" injects a sense of vibrancy into these elements. However, these ostensibly lively aspects carry an undercurrent of danger and allure, likened to an "African cat" (35). The use of these adjectives becomes a poignant reminder of the speaker's wound, subtly implying that they serve as triggers, evoking memories of her past. Pamela Annas points out that in the initial four stanzas, the speaker portrays the hospital world with a yearning tone, as someone who has already turned her back on it and senses its gradual slip away (Annas, 1988:98). In the fifth stanza, there is a shift to the past tense, indicating that the speaker is gradually coming to terms with her decision to embrace death, a nuanced transformation reflected in the evolving verb tenses and tone throughout the poem.

In stanza two, however, a poetic metaphor draws a parallel between the tranquility experienced by the narrator and the attentive care provided by the nurses. Plath employs repetition, notably repeating the verb "pass" four

times within two lines, to skillfully convey the repetitive and rhythmic nature of the nurses' actions. The speaker, in a state of resignation, likens the nurses' movements to "the way gulls pass inland in their white caps" (12), creating a vivid image of serene and rhythmic motions. The use of the repeated phrase "pass and pass" (12) not only captures the steady and monotonous pattern of the nurses' activities but also emphasizes the relentless passage of time. This repetition serves to convey a sense that the speaker has been lying there, motionless, for an extended duration, contributing to the contemplative atmosphere woven throughout the poem.

The intentional absence of punctuation in the poem mirrors the speaker's state of bewilderment and anesthesia, suggesting that her thoughts are formulated in an almost unconscious manner. The speaker employs a metaphor, comparing the nurses to "gulls" (12) passing inland in their white caps. This calming description signifies the speaker's contentment in her passive and numbed state. The metaphorical separation is accentuated by her expressed weariness of "baggage" (18), symbolizing the responsibilities associated with relationships and the emotional toll of family life. The metaphorical portrayal intensifies as the "smiles" of her "husband and child catch on (her) skin like hooks" (20-21), creating vivid negative imagery and emphasizing the painful nature of these relationships. The imagery of the speaker as a "thirty-year old cargo boat" (22) conveys a sense of burden, aging, and fatigue, portraying her family as a weight she carries. This emotional burden becomes palpable in the speaker's psychological state, as evidenced by her dramatic depiction of the tulips as threatening entities that "talk to (her) wounds" (39).

Plath utilizes assonance as a literary device to underscore her perspectives on death and to emphasize her heightened embrace of death while rejecting a return to a catastrophic and meaningless life. In the hospital setting, she

describes the experience “They have propped my head between the pillow and the sheet-cuff / Like an eye between two white lids that will not shut./ Stupid pupil, it has to take everything in.”(10-8)

The assonance, particularly in the repeated vowel sounds like "propped" and "between," contributes to the musicality of the lines. Plath presents the image of her head being positioned like an "eye" between closed eyelids, metaphorically suggesting a forced and painful vigilance. The term "stupid pupil" implies a reluctant and burdensome awareness, indicating that this conscious seeing through her eyes is a difficult experience. Despite the discomfort of this forced perception, Plath seems to express a preference for it over the alternative—anesthetized drift. The threat of succumbing to numbness and anesthesia looms, but she appears to consciously desire either the drift or the intense fixation, as long as it offers an extreme experiential focus. This choice underscores the complexity of her emotional state and the conflicting desires she grapples with in the face of her suffering.

Plath skillfully employs color imagery and symbolism in "Tulips" to convey her perspective on death without fear and her acceptance of it. The poem vividly illustrates the prominent scenery through the use of colors, and Plath employs these colors not only for descriptive purposes but also to enhance the depth of her portrayal of intense and contrasting emotional states. Additionally, she carefully dissects her subject matter into its raw elements. In "Tulips," colors carry connotations of life and death, with white representing peace and death, while red symbolizes life and excitement. This deliberate use of color serves to emphasize the dichotomy between life and death and underscores Plath's exploration of these contrasting states. By infusing the poem with such rich and symbolic color imagery, Plath adds layers of meaning to her expressions, providing

readers with a visual and emotional landscape that contributes to the overall depth and complexity of her work.

The color white in "Tulips" serves as a powerful symbol, representing winter, death, and the state of Sylvia Plath's mind. The imagery of "look how white everything is, how quiet, how snowed-in" (2) paints a picture of winter, where everything is still, calm, and covered in snow. This portrayal reflects the stagnant state of Plath's mind. Plath's aversion to the tulips is partly due to their being "too red" (36), symbolizing spring, movement toward the light, and an intrusion into the "winter" (1) of her mind. The tulips, with their vibrant red hue, contrast sharply with the whiteness that symbolizes nullity and death. They represent life, growth, and vitality, qualities that disturb the calmness of Plath's inner winter.

The tulips' striving to bloom is unsettling for Plath, as it stands in stark contrast to her own surrender to the welcoming embrace of death. The lines "And I am aware of my heart: it opens and closes / Its bowl of red blooms out of sheer love of me" (60-61) further emphasize this contrast, highlighting the tulips' vitality and the warmth of life. This contrast intensifies Plath's sense of unrest, as she has relinquished any efforts to strive and has wholeheartedly embraced the impending experience of death.

The wintry paleness of the white colors on the hospital walls exerts a profound influence on the speaker in "Tulips," both imparting a sense of tranquility and imposing it upon her. This pressure leads to the obliteration of the speaker's sense of self and the erasure of life's inherent volatility. According to Van Dyne, this annihilation is linked to the speaker's fears of the corporeal and contaminating aspects of flesh (Van Dyne, 1993:92). Additionally, Van Dyne suggests that the speaker takes pleasure in observing the body's descent into "anonymity and irresponsibility" (Ibid).

Hayman echoes this sentiment, contending that Plath revels in the relinquishment of responsibility within the poem (Hayman, 1991:155). Notably, the body undergoing this erasure in "Tulips" is a white body in a white world, a body grappling with either entrapment within or escape from its own potent symbols. These symbolic uses of colors delve into the speaker's ultimate desire for liberation from a life marked by the constraints of her loved ones and the profound responsibilities of being both a mother and wife.

The whiteness symbolizes the liberation the speaker seeks, while the redness of the tulips serves as a reminder of her burdens and responsibilities in the world outside the hospital room. The speaker perceives the tulips' redness as a threat because "it hurts [her]" (36) and jeopardizes her quest for liberation. It feels like "red lead sinkers round [her] neck" (42), awakening her from numbness and forcing her to confront the painful reality she is not ready to face. The redness speaks to her "wound" and disrupts her peace of mind with its vibrant color. The lively redness of the tulips undermines her tranquility. This redness starkly contrasts with the whiteness of the hospital room, symbolizing life and raw consciousness that oppose the speaker's fantasy of perpetual peace. Consequently, by rejecting the presence of the vibrant redness of the tulips, the speaker is essentially denying her current vitality and yearning for the eventual freedom, that is death.

Sylvia Plath, thus, is not fearing to confront the death experience. She wanted death by choosing to be nothing, to reject her personal identity, to be free of all ties and responsibilities, and finally to stop her "stupid pupil" from seeing, that is, to die.

Conclusion

Being the most recurrent theme dealt with in the long, varied history of English literature, death is selected by a tremendous number of poets to be the core notion running through the veins of their composed writings. Despite the fact that many of them have treated with death, the door they get through to deal with it is yet still varied and different. In addition, their inclinations and reasons to choose to shed light on the portrait of death are also different. Two of these poets who put a finger on what is death and how to view it are John Donne and Sylvia Plath. Those two both viewed death as not that experience to fear of. In contrary, it is welcomed by both either as a means of meeting up with God in Heaven or as apparatus of freedom from life and its aching responsibilities.

As for Donne in his "Death be not Proud, Donne shows his religious views as a believer in death as a transitory period between this life and the hereafter, and then man's immortality after Resurrection. Through his challenge of death's pride, the poet attempts to create a sense of familiarity with death, not as an abstract idea, but as a fellow human or a mortal who will also die at the end. He intentionally then provides different images of 'poor death ' as 'slave' and the one dwelt with unfavorable cases as war, poison, sickness to show how powerless and impotent death is. Beyond his mockery of death as a 'slave' at commands of 'fate, chance, kings and desperate men', lies a strong will to dismiss human fears of death.

Besides, the images of 'rest' and sleep ' as copies of death are meant to help us imagine death as a pleasurable experience, as restful as sleep might be. They also help us accept death as period of transition, not a punishment, which makes possible regeneration of human flesh and liberation of soul to meet the Glorious God in heaven. The poet assures people that after

sleeping for a short while then, they will wake to live forever and there will be no more fear of death. Death will cease to be forever.

Similar to Donne, Plath also mirrors her welcoming of death as a not terrifying experience, as not to be feared by human beings for it will only result in putting an end to their material existence. According to her, death is a restful experience that will lead to peacefulness and eternal, everlasting freedom. A dead person, to Plath, is one who is free of all burdens and responsibilities stemming from this burdensome, laborious life in a world that is pregnant with disasters of all types.

Yet still, unlike Donne, Plath is not fearing death due to religious orientations. She welcomes and even longs for death as it is the only solution that will enable her to live peacefully. Therefore, her not regarding death as fearful is because she, in her life, has encountered a heap of physical as well as mental problems. She felt unrest due to her failed relation with a once loved husband, Ted Hughes. She, then, rejects living and chooses death willingly as she does not accept tulips as gifts while she was lying in the hospital, the gift she is longing for is death not something embodying life.

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