

CHAPTER III
EMILY DICKINSON'S IDEAS ABOUT DEATH AS SEEN IN HER EIGHT
POEMS ABOUT DEATH

In analyzing Emily Dickinson's ideas about death, her eight poems about death will be discussed in this chapter. They are "Dying! Dying in the night!" (158), "Tie the Strings to my Life, My Lord" (279), "I heard a fly buzz when I died" (465), "Because I could not stop for Death" (712), "This quiet Dust was Gentlemen and Ladies" (813), "Death is the supple suitor" (1445), "As from the earth the light balloon" (1630), and "Death is like the Insect" (1716)

3.1. "Dying! Dying in the night!" (158)

In this poem, the speaker describes the situation of her dying moment, and also her feeling at that time. In the first line she says "Dying! Dying in the night!" The speaker

uses the word “night” as the setting of time since night can be the symbol of death. Night is the time after the sun sets. It is the end of a day. The night is so dark that the speaker **asks** “somebody” to “bring the light” (line 2) for her. She is wondering whether somebody would do that request. “Somebody” here means one of the people near the speaker’s dying bed. The speaker needs the light bearer so that by the light he/she brings she could see the way to go. In this case, the “light” that she asks can be a symbol of something that may enlighten the speaker or convince her of Jesus, which is an allusion to John 8: 12, “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”, so that she would feel secure and certain. In other words, she says that she needs the “light” so that the path is not dark anymore and she “can see which way to go/ Into the everlasting snow” (lines 3-4).

The speaker shows the tone by the word everlasting in “everlasting snow” (line 4). The snow here is actually an allusion to Emily Dickinson’s letter to Jane Humphrey after the death of their schoolmate, Abby Haskell: “The snows have covered Abby in her sweet churchyard rest” (Johnson 82). That somehow affects Emily so that she describes death in this poem as an “everlasting snow”, snow that never melts, winter that would never change into spring and summer. **So**, the tone is horrifying because death is described as never ending coldness.

Then the speaker remembers “Jesus” (line 5). She questions, “where is Jesus gone?” (line 5). This is also an allusion to the Bible:

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if you go and prepare a place for you, I

will come again, and receive you unto myself that where I am, there ye may be also” (**John14:1-3**).

The speaker believes that Jesus will come after preparing a place for her in His Father’s mansion. It means when Jesus comes, the mansion is ready and she will go (die) with Jesus. The speaker is dying and she is waiting for Jesus, but He does not come. She becomes panic. Her question “Where is Jesus gone?” actually pictures the speaker’s fear that Jesus forgets and abandons her. The people around her reply, “Jesus – always came“ (line 6). But since He does not appear, it means, “Perhaps he doesn’t know the House” (line 7). The speaker gets more panic. But then, she thinks somebody is coming. Although she still feels unsure, she hopes that it is Jesus who comes. She says, “This way, Jesus, Let him pass!” (line 8)

She again asks “somebody” to “run to the great gate” (line 9), her house gate, but this time it is to “see if Dollie’s coming” (line 10). After expecting Jesus, the speaker expects “Dollie”. Actually “Dollie” is her sister-in-law and lifelong friend, Susan Gilbert Dickinson. “‘Sue’ was Dickinson’s “Lily” and “Rose“ and “Dollie“; they met in a back passage of Emily’s house to exchange gifts, writings, and books” (http://www.weeklywire.com/ww/11-09-98/boston_books_1.html).

In a letter addressed to Susan Gilbert Dickinson, **Emily** writes: “...if this life holds not another meeting for us, remember also, Susie, that it had no parting more, wherever that hour finds us, for which we **have** hoped so long, we shall not be separated, neither death, nor the grave can part us.. - (Johnson 89). Since the love for “Dollie” is so big the speaker expects her to come to accompany her during her dying moment and to comfort her.

Moreover, the speaker expects Dollie's coming because she needs the light and Dollie is the light bearer. It is because Dollie loves Jesus Christ very much so that the speaker is sure that Dollie can convince her about the love of Jesus for her. In her letter to Susan Gilbert (Dickinson), her Dollie, she mentioned "the Jesus Christ you love" (Johnson 122), which means that Sue loves Jesus very much.

The speaker hears Dollie's steps upon the stairs, This seems as an irony of situation, that when the speaker expects Jesus, it is Dollie who comes to her house at last. But, actually this is not an irony since Dollie is the light bearer who strengthens the speaker's belief about Jesus. So when Dollie comes, the tone suddenly shifts to calm and peaceful: "Death won't hurt – now Dollie's here".

In this poem, Emily as a Christian believes that death is the time when Jesus comes to pick a dying person up after preparing the place for him/her in His Father's mansion. Besides, there are some new insights about death here. First, death is described as everlasting coldness. Also, death in this poem is not frightening, but the speaker in her dying moment is panic so that she needs conviction about Jesus. After getting enlightened, the speaker is sure that "death won't hurt". Emily in this poem wants to say that a person should not be frightened or panic before his/her death because death will not hurt. Death is a special moment when he/she will be picked up personally by God to live in His Father's mansion.

3.2. "Tie the Strings to my Life, MY Lord" (279)

Since Emily Dickinson was a Christian, this poem is analyzed by using Christian point of view. In the first line of this poem, the speaker asks the Lord to tie the strings to her life. It means she is willing to follow God and implicitly it means that she is willing to give up all her life. Then, she says she is "ready to go" (line 2) with God to the

“Judgement” (line 7). In this poem the journey to the Judgement is “rapid” (line 4) and pulled by “horses” (line 3). Although in this poem Emily does not mention the exact word “chariot”, this poem can be an allusion to a story in the Bible about Elijah who journeyed to heaven on a chariot: “And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven” (II Kings 2: 11).

While Elijah went up to heaven, the speaker goes down since the destination is “partly, down hill” (line 8). Because it is declining, the speaker’s journey seems quite fast. Afraid to fall down, the speaker says to God, “Put me in on the firmest side/So I shall never fall (lines 5-6)”. She believes that she will be safe during the journey because she is on the safe side.

However, the speaker says in lines 9-10 that she does not care about the “steeper” and the “sea”. They are what the speaker finds along her way to the Judgement, which is down hill. “Steeper” and “sea” here are the symbols of dangers found in life. She never minds about them for she believes that she will be safe because she is holding her Lord fast (line 11) in the journey on earth, which is an “Everlasting race” (line 11). It is called an “Everlasting race” because the speaker decides to go forever with Jesus in the rapid chariot until her death comes. The speaker decides to trust her Lord “by my own Choice - and Thee” (line 12). She chooses the Lord, and since the Lord chooses her too, she feels more convinced.

The last stanza of this poem is her farewell to her former (old) life in the world. She says, “Goodbye to the Life I used to live --/ And the World I **used** to know” (lines 13-14). **As** she has given her life to Christ, she becomes a new person. She is not the same person as the one she used to be. However, it seems that she is not afraid. On the other hand, she is very happy so she says, “and kiss the Hills, for me, just once” (line 15). “Hills” is a

synecdoche for the world. The tone of the speaker is full of enthusiasm for she is **going** to leave the world behind. But she still wants to say goodbye to the world for the last time before she is “ready to go” (line 16).

Emily Dickinson brings Christian beliefs in this poem, that death is the Judgement. Before death takes place, one should give up his/her life to the Lord. After that, and with a strong faith in God, death can be seen as journey on a chariot from the life on earth into the Judgement. The speaker believes that God will take care of her by putting her on the safest side and keeping her from danger. That is why, death is not something that should be afraid **of**, but it is something that should be expected excitedly. Emily Dickinson in this poem tries to suggest the readers to spiritually prepare themselves before they die so that they do not fear death.

3.3. “I heard a fly buzz when I died” (465)

This poem is quite unique because the speaker has already died, and she **is** telling the readers her memory of the moment just before she died

(<http://www.tsum.edu/~1worthington/eng206ia/empoe.htm>). It is a kind of flashback with an irony of situation put in the very first line. The dying moment is usually wished to be peaceful and quiet, but while the speaker of this poem is dying, she “heard a fly buzz” (line 1).

The fly in this poem “could symbolize her doubt in predestination”

(<http://www.tsum.edu/~worthington/eng206ia/empoe.htm>). In Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, predestination is “doctrine or belief that God has decreed in advance that certain souls will be saved and others will not” (975). The speaker is afraid that her soul is not one of the chosen by God to go to heaven.

Her doubt of predestination here is alluded in Emily Dickinson's letter to her friend Abiah Root, which says: "I have perfect confidence in God & his promises & yet I know why, I feel that the world holds a predominant place in my affections. I do not feel that I could give up all for Christ, were I called to die. Pray for me dear A. that I may yet enter into the kingdom, that there may be room left for me in the shining courts above" (Johnson 9).

The speaker uses a fly because a "fly's wisdom includes survival and adaptation to the harshest environments" (<http://www.geocities.com/~animalspirits/index42.html>). It means that she wishes that in case she is taken to the harshest place after she dies, she would be able to survive.

The speaker describes the situation of her dying moment before the fly comes by using a simile. She said, "The Stillness in the Room/ Was like the Stillness in the Air/ Between the Heaves of Storm (line 2-4)". The stillness round the speaker's body is compared to the stillness between the storms. The speaker means something by using this simile. Reading these lines, the thesis writer imagines a very calm condition since in Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary "the eye of the storm" means "a relatively calm spot in the centre as a storm, especially a hurricane" (428).

The speaker is using a synecdoche "eyes" to represent the people beside her, showing the readers that the people are watching her. "The eyes beside had wrung them dry (line 5)". The word "wrung" is exaggerating. It is a hyperbole, showing that the people "had cried all their tears; they couldn't cry anymore" (<http://www.tsum.edu/~worthington/eng206ia/empoe.htm>).

"Breaths" in "And breaths were gathering sure" (line 6) is also a synecdoche, representing people who are expecting "the last onset, when the king/ Be witnessed in his power" (line 7-8). It is said in <http://www.tsum.edu/~worthington/eng206ia/empoe.htm>,

“In the 19th century, there was a myth or old wives’ tale, that said that if you saw the face of a dying person the minute that they died, you could see them see God’ . While the speaker of this poem is dying, people around her are waiting for the chance to see her sees God.

The speaker is ready to die. She says, “I willed my Keepsakes -- Signed away/ What portion of me be/ Assignable” (line9-11). In Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary “keepsakes” is a gift that is kept in memory of the giver or previous owner (**684**). “Keepsakes” in this poem means her possessions that are able to remind the receivers of her. She finishes her testament and gives away **all** her things that she “could make assignable”.

But suddenly “there interposed a Fly” (line 12). The fly interrupts the moment “with Blue -- uncertain stumbling Buzz” (line 13). In Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary blue is a color that symbolizes sadness and depression (**119**) and stumbling means causing difficulty or hesitation (**1278**). Lines 12-15 contain an irony of situation since at the time the speaker is ready to leave the world; the depression, uncertainty and hesitation suddenly come between her and “the light” (line 14). Light here is a light that comes to a dying person just before he/she dies, but it can also be a symbol of her Christian beliefs. In this case it is about the speaker’s beliefs in predestination, God and salvation. The speaker’s hesitation about them, which is represented by the fly, comes out of the blue and blocks the light.

“And then the windows failed -- and then/I could not see to see” (line **15-16**). “The windows” are the symbol of the speaker’s eyes. They shut and the speaker cannot see anything anymore The situation is ironic since she cannot see God she has been waiting for the moment she is dying because of her sudden hesitation.

The tone of this poem is depressed and doubtful, especially to the afterlife. It is seen, especially by the words “fly” (line 1, 12), “blue, uncertain and stumbling” (line 13). But yet, the word “fly” can also show the speaker’s confident of survival.

In this poem, when life ends, death is generally believed as the time when a dying person can meet God face to face. It is seen as the time when God “be witnessed in his power” (line 8). Another idea is that life after death is mysterious. But in this poem, there is an idea which is not generally known by people. It is said that the dying time is the time when one doubts his/her religious beliefs. In this case, since Emily is a Christian, the dying moment is when the speaker doubts in predestination, and in God and salvation.

3.4. “Because I could not stop for Death” (712)

Emily Dickinson’s poem “Because I could not stop for Death”, which is also called “The Chariot”, is one of her most discussed and famous poems, especially because of her “different view on the popular subject of death” (<http://college-term-papers.com>). In this poem “death seems to be passive and easy, contradicted to public imagination that death is brutal and cruel” (<http://college-term-papers.com>). Building her poem like a narrative, **Emily** Dickinson uses the metaphor of Death throughout the poem.

In this poem the speaker personifies death as a gentleman. It is proved when she says that death is “kind” (line 2) and “civil” (line 8). Because the speaker “could not stop for death, death stopped for” her (line 1). He picks her up for a drive in a Carriage. The “Carriage” in this poem is actually a metaphor. It is death himself and it is him who takes the speaker to “eternity” (line 24).

The speaker is in the Carriage, with Immortality as the third occupant. In http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a_f/dickinson/712.htm immortality is said not to be a person, but a desired condition. In Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, immortal

means “live forever” (621), and it matches to what Emily hopes will come with death in her Christian belief.

On the trip, death is really in charge. “He is in the driver’s seat and he drives as slowly as he likes” (Tate, stated in Sewall22). Thus the speaker, for death’s “civility” (**line8**), puts her labor and leisure. Life contains labor and leisure, so while the speaker says labor and leisure, she actually means life. She gives her life over to go with death.

As the driver, death takes full control of the trip and the destination. The Carriage passes the “School” (line 9), the “Fields of Gazing Grain” (**line11**), and the “Setting Sun” (line 12). Shaw, M.N. in <http://www.cswnet.com/~erin/ed14.htm> states that they symbolize the three stages in people’s life. The “School” symbolizes childhood since there are “children” and not adults who “strove at recess in the ring”(line9-10).

“Fields of gazing grain” symbolizes maturity. In http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a_f/dickinson/712.htm, there is an explanation about this. “The fields of gazing grain are what preoccupy people when they are adults: the labor that sustains them”. So, the “fields of gazing grain” are the places for adult people who use more time to work, and give more efforts to survive.

Then, the “setting sun” symbolizes the old age. The relationship between “setting sun” and old age is that sunset is the close of a day and old age is the last stage of life. Also it is mentioned in http://www.gale.com/freresrc/poets_cn/beckexp.htm, that the “setting sun is the universal clock, the thing by which human beings measure their lives on earth.”

In the third stanza, instead of “play” which *is* more understandable for children to do at school recess, in line 9 Emily uses the word “strove”, which in Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary means “struggle” (1275). The word “strove” is then strengthened even more with the phrase “in the ring” (line 10). “Rings have magical significance for human beings because they are a symbol of **eternity**”

(http://www.gale.com/freresrc/poets_cn/beciexp.htm). It is also mentioned in

http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a_f/dickinson/712.htm that in these two lines “Emily stresses that children are meant to start early labor for their own salvation”. Emily wants to remind that time presses, and death can come early, even upon children.

Death and the speaker pass the “setting sun” (line12), but then the speaker states, “or rather – he passed us” (line 13). Line12 and line13 are actually related to each other, but there is a kind of doubt about what the speaker thinks, about who passes whom. With these lines, Emily tells the reader that sometimes people think that they pass their time with all daily routines until they die. But they do not realize that actually they are too busy, and their life activities are just too much so that they forget about their getting old and time passes them. Thus, line 12 and line I3 confirm that people pass time, and vice versa.

Back to the trip, Emily describes that the carriage passes “the cold damp air after the sunset and then arrived at the tomb where one imagines a similar quality of air”

(http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a_f/dickinson/712.htm). In line14, “the dews drew quivering and chill”. The speaker feels cold for her gown is only “**Gossamer**”(line14), which in Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary means a “soft light delicate material” (539). And her “Tippet” or scarf is not made of fur and wool but of “Tulle” (line 15), which in Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary means a “soft fine silky net-like material” (1346). It seems that “her dress connoted a bridal or funeral gown (http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a_f/dickinson/712.htm)”.

Then they “paused before a house” (line 17) and this house is described as a “swelling of the ground” (line18), which is “clearly an image of a fresh burial plot” (http://www.gale.com/freresrc/poets_cn/beciexp.html). The house is a grave, and the speaker can hardly see the roof and the cornice, which is her gravestone. This is where the speaker’s

body will be housed while her soul journeys onward. In Emily Dickinson's Christian belief, after they die, people are waiting for the day of resurrection. And in this poem as well, the speaker's body will stay in the grave, waiting for the resurrection day to come.

“Since then – ‘tis Centuries – and yet/ Feels shorter than the Day (lines **21-22**)”. It is a paradox because centuries are naturally longer than a single day. The speaker says that it “‘tis Centuries” because “some great moments in human life seem longer than they are, and moment of great revelation seem to stretch out forever (http://www.gale.com/freresrc/poets_cn/beciexp.htm).” The moments of the speaker's death, her trip to the afterlife and her waiting for resurrection are one of the moments that seem to last forever. These are the last memories she has of her human life and she seems to hold on-to these memories as the journey goes on.

But however, it “feels shorter than the Day”. This is an allusion from the Bible that says: “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one **day**” (2 Pet 3: 8). If for the Lord a thousand years mean one day, “centuries” would surely be shorter than that. It means, while human beings must wait for centuries, for God the resurrection comes in shorter than a single day.

Then, in the two last lines of the poems, the speaker realizes that unlike life, death is eternal. The meaning of “forever” then becomes clear. Emily uses the word “surmised”(line23), meaning that at first the speaker guesses the destination. But then, “she **looks** at the heads of the horses and sees that they are pointed toward Eternity (http://www.gale.com/freresrc/poets_cn/beciexp.htm) ..

In this poem, the tone is romantic. It can be felt by the dictions “kindly” (line **2**) and “civility”(line **8**). Moreover, the leisurely ride in a “Carriage” (line **3**) reminds the thesis writer of a couple going on a date. The tone is strengthened even more with “Gossamer” (line15) and “Tulle” (line **16**), which seem like a bridal gown.

While it is actually the burial clothes, by describing the speaker's thin gown similar to a wedding gown, death in this poem is linked to marriage. In a romantic trip in a carriage, Emily also describes death as the groom **who** is gentle, kind and civil. He does not force the speaker or terrify her. He accompanies her while she is walking through her three stages of life, with immortality alongside.

In this poem, besides showing a new insight that death is kind and civil as a gentleman, Emily shows the general idea that death is something natural. Life is mortal, but death is eternal. It is the way to immortality. Emily Dickinson in this poem suggests that instead of being afraid **of**, death should be taken happily and easily like a journey, because it **is** indeed a journey to eternity.

3.5. "This quiet Dust was Gentlemen and Ladies" (8 13)

This poem, which is also called "**A** cemetery", begins with Emily's description about the earthly things that sooner or later will fade away because of death. The earthly things in the poem include human beings such as "Gentleman and Ladies" (line 1) and also "Lads and Girls" (line 2). Besides being a reminder of a fact that death does not choose human gender, male or female, the diction "lads and girls" are used to represent the idea that death comes not for old people only.

In line **3**, "laughter and ability and Sighing" are synecdoches that represent all human activities. They all cannot stay everlasting, either. At the end, a cemetery is a place where human beings put their actions to an end and change them all into quietness. Moreover, a cemetery is also the place where **all** the "Frocks and Curls" (line **4**) turn into nothing. Frocks refer to a woman or girl's dress and curls refer to hair. *So*, "Frocks and Curls" are metonymy of beauty. While people are alive, they pay attention to frocks and curls that make them look beautiful. However, they will not last forever and will certainly vanish.

In other words, at last death changes all human beings into quiet dust. “Dust” here is an allusion taken from the Bible which says, “Dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:19) and also from the prayer in the burial ceremony which says: “In the midst of life we are in death. Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection into eternal life”

In the fifth line, Emily portrays the “Passive Place” as a “Summer’s nimble mansion” (line 5). This line contains a paradox because the cemetery is both passive and active. By “Passive Place”, Emily tries to describe a place inside the cemetery where the dust is quiet and no activities are made. But Emily **says** that the passive place is a “mansion”, which means a “large and stately house” (*Hornby*759), the house of the dead. And summer is the opposite of winter. In winter, the cemetery is covered by snow and activities seem to stop. But in summer the mansion is nimble, which means lively and active. In “summer”, which is the hot season, there are more activities in life.

In the mansion there are “Bloom and Bees” (line 7) that “Exists an Oriental Circuit” (line 8). The diction of “Bloom” refers to flower and also freshness and perfection (*Hornby* 117). So this is a symbol of beauty, just like what people imagine of a blooming flower. Then, “Bees” are the symbols of activity and energy because a bee is an animal that is active and energetic since it buzzes and flies around like it is never tired. Besides, “Bloom and Bees” represent the act of pollination, or the plants’ reproduction cycle by means of bee’s pollination. In <http://www.naturalist.org/bee.htm>, pollination is said to be “the beginning of all seed-making, the first step in the reproduction of all flowering plants.” And as written in *Encyclopedia Americana*. “The primary function of pollination in natural environments is the production of new individuals by seed in sufficient numbers and variety to ensure the survival of the plant species” (358) Bees help to pollinate the flowers so that reproduction cycle goes on.

This reproduction cycle exists in an “Oriental Circuit” (line 8). A circuit is a “roundabout” way (Hornby201) or a circle, while “orient” means “make oneself familiar with a new situation (873). So it means that the circle of life becomes familiar and goes round continuously. But in the last line, everything ends. All lively states and activities cease, and even the circuit will be broken.

The general insight about death that Emily Dickinson shows in this poem is that death is the end of human existence, and it does not choose which to take, male or female, and even old or young. Active and beautiful people turn into dust after they die. Moreover, death is the end of nature such as plants and animals that are active and beautiful. After death takes place, they just cease and become quiet dust. Every life on earth will end up that way. That is why there is nothing to worry about death.

3.6. “Death is the supple suitor” (1445)

In this poem, death is described metaphorically as “the supple suitor” **who** “at last wins” people (line 1-2). In Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary supple means “flexible”(1291), and a suitor means a “man courting a woman“ (1287). So it means that death is personified as a flexible man courting a woman, and he will get the woman’s heart at last, no matter how. The man proposes the woman stealthily, which in Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary is defined as “in a quiet or secret way” (1256). Because of that, the woman does not notice it. She is not aware that death is her suitor.

Furthermore, in line 5 it is explained that at first, the process of the wooing goes “pallid’ and “dim”. The man does not show his affection towards the woman, so that the wooing seems to last forever without any results. But however, he is “brave at last with Bugles” (line 7). Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines a bugle as a “brass musical instrument like a small trumpet but without keys or valves, used for giving

military signals” (148). And as written in Encyclopedia Americana, a “bugle is employed almost solely for military and quasi-military ceremonies” (723). *So* here bugle **is** given as a metonymy of the ceremony of the triumph of death. By choosing the word “Bugle”, it seems that Emily wants the reader to imagine that the courting **man** is in the ceremony to celebrate his achievement. It means that he is the winner of a battle, the battle to win the woman’s heart. He grabs the victory, like in the war, and he is now with the woman in a “bisected Coach” (line 8).

By the phrase “to troth unknown” in line 10, the thesis writer concludes that they are engaged because “to troth” in Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary **is** “to plight one’s troth” which means, “to make a promise to marry somebody” (950). However, it is strange to troth someone whom one does not know. Furthermore, actually “unknown” is the metaphor of the mystery of death. The real meaning of the phrase is to promise to live together with or to agree to marry death, which is a mystery.

In the wedding ceremony or after it, it is said that the “kindred” are “**as** responsive as porcelain” (line 11-12). In this sentence, there is a simile. In the simile “as responsive as” porcelain, Emily compares the response of the kindred to porcelain. But porcelain obviously cannot be responsive. The reason why the two last lines is written that way is because **Emily** wants the reader to notice that the wedding is not a real wedding. It is the woman’s funeral ceremony. And Emily wants the reader to imagine the actual situation of the funeral. There are no smiles and laughter, no jokes and joy. It is extraordinarily formal and cold. Just like what one imagines of porcelain.

In the first three lines, the tone of this poem is romantic, supported by the phrase “supple suitor” (line 1) and the word “wooing” (line 3). After that, the tone turns to scary and terrifying because of the use of the words “pallid” (line 5) and “dim” (line 6). But

then, by the words “brave” and “bugles” (line 7), and also “triumph” (line 9), the tone shifts again to victorious.

In this romantic poem because it is linked to engagement, Emily Dickinson brings a new idea about death, that death is a suitor. He is not terrifying; instead he comes to people with an approach like a man courting a woman. He personally goes towards everybody. Moreover, Emily shows general ideas that death is supple, or flexible. It means that he fits all living beings no matter their condition -- rich or poor, healthy or sick, and he does not choose whom to take. *Also*, death comes quietly and “dim” so that nobody notices that he is near. But “he is standing right behind you, and he is always there” (<http://www.internet-95.com/company/starship/afterlif.htm>). Finally this poem shows one undeniable fact that death always “wins at last”. Sooner or later everybody dies. Emily suggests people not to fear death because death treats people gently and kindly, like a man courting a woman.

3.7. “As from the earth the light balloon” (1630)

In this poem Emily Dickinson imagines the release of the “spirit” (line 5) from the body and it is compared to the “light balloon” (line 1) that “asks nothing but release” (line 2). There is a simile. A balloon seems to always want to fly away from earth. The flying balloon ascends to the sky like the spirit flies to heaven, which **is** represented by “soaring Residence” (line 4). In addition, the release of the balloon itself can symbolize freedom and cheers. **So**, the first four lines of the poem mean that like a balloon, a spirit joyfully flies away from earth to heaven.

Then, “dust” in the fifth line is an allusion from the Bible which says, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:19) and also from the prayer in the burial ceremony which says: “In the midst of life we are in death. Earth to earth, ashes to ashes,

dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection into eternal life...”

(<http://www.borrowed-time.com>) Just here is an allusion of a “body”. “The spirit looks upon the” body “that fastened it so long with indignation,” (line 5-7). With the word “fastened” Emily tries to describe life as something depressing. The spirit is “fastened” or tied up with life but finally it gets free.

The “spirit” is an allusion from the words quoted from the Bible: “Thus saith the Lord unto these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord” (Ezk37:5-6), and “And I shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: than shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord’ (Ezk 37:14).

All living things have a body and a soul, but only human beings have a spirit. It is the spirit that enables them to be connected to their Creator. In the spirit that flies away to heaven, Emily puts within it a state of mind or mood altogether. She emphasizes the spirit’s feeling while it **is** leaving its body. It is **angry** to the dust, shown by “indignation” (line 7) because it is fastened to it for so long. Yet, since it is released or unfastened from the dust, shown by the relief of the “balloon” (line1), it is joyful. The tone of this poem shifts here, from **angry** to joyful.

Then, there is again a simile, shown in line 8 “**As** a bird”. Emily compares the angry spirit to a bird that is cheated of its song. A bird is mostly related to songs and Emily wants to say that a tied spirit is just like a bird without a song. It is just like a caged bird. Caged bird is sad since it does not have freedom so that it cannot sing. But when it is free, it is happy and able to sing.

In this poem, there is a new idea about death which is clearly seen. Since life is sometimes depressing, “death is looked upon as a joyfd release”

(<http://csulb.edu/~snider/dickinson.shamanism.html>). Just like a balloon that ascends to the sky, the spirit is flying up to heaven. Emily Dickinson's optimistic behavior is strongly stressed here in this poem because she states "soaring Residence" which means that heaven is where all the spirits dwell. It is a general idea that when Christian people die, their spirit **will** go to heaven. Instead of being depressed **of**, Emily suggests death to be **looked** over as a releasement from depression, while spirits fly and gather in heaven.

3.8. "Death is like the insect" (1716)

By using a simile, death in this poem is compared to an insect. "Death is like the insect" (line 1). Emily uses an "insect" and not other animals because insects are usually so annoying that people are trying various ways to exterminate them. Specifically, the insect in this poem is classified as "vermin" (line 12). In

<http://www.bartleby.com/61/57/V0065700.html> vermin is defined as various small animals or insects, such as rats or cockroaches that are destructive, annoying, or injurious to health. Like people trying to eliminate vermin, and "through medical science people hope to be able to eliminate death" (<http://www.ucg.org/articles/Adeath.html>).

Death is seen as something that endangers life, proved in line 2 of the poem, which says that death is "menacing the tree". The tree here is believed to be a link between heaven and earth, symbolizing life and immortality

(<http://www.home.eznet.net/~ldkocher/tapestries/tree%20of%20life.html>). *So* the insect, which is described as menacing the tree, is the symbol of death, which is endangering life.

Then, the insect is said to be "competent to **kill**" the tree (line 3), "but decoyed may be" (line 4). In Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary competent means "having the necessary ability and authority" (235), and decoyed means "tricked into a place of danger by using bait" (311). By these two lines Emily wants to remind people that although annoying and not

wanted, death has the power or authority to take lives away. But it sounds that there is a hope death can be tricked by using baits so it can be killed.

The bait here is a metaphor of knowledge or medical science. People fear death because they lack knowledge about death and what comes after it. Therefore, people try to find cures for illnesses so that death can be eliminated.

There are various tricks to kill death in this poem. The first one is by using “balsam” (line 5). A balsam in Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary is a “tree yielding balm” (79) or “sweet-smelling oil obtained from certain types of tree, used for soothing pain or for healing” (78-79). The balsam **is** used to cure the tree from the damage done by the insects. It can lead the readers to the idea that the “balsam” is actually a “balm” which **is** also used to “embalm” or “preserve a dead body from decay” (392) so that people “can be brought back to life when the cure for what killed them is finally discovered” (<http://www.ucg.org/articles/Adeath.html>).

The next trick **is to** “seek it with the **saw**” (line 6). With the knife, the tree can be burrowed to find the insect and **kill** it. *So*, the saw *or* the knife can be a symbol of surgery knife, a way to cure certain diseases. Besides, the saw here is also a symbol of physical strength and power” (http://www.metmuseum.org/explore/symbols/html/el_symbols_mbknife.htm), the human efforts using physical strength and power to prevent death from taking place.

The other trick is by preventing the insect from menacing the tree. “Baffle, if it costs you everything you are” (lines 7-8) because when the insect has already menaced the tree, it is already too late since it is indeed difficult to kill it. Rather than fighting the insect, Emily says that it would be better if one prevents it from damaging the tree with all efforts in the first place. Emily suggests baffling, trying to confuse death by not thinking too much about it

so that the fear of death would not be obsession or paranoia, which may “cost” oneself “everything in life”.

“Then, if it have burrowed out of reach of skill” (line 9-10), which means if the effort to stop or to eliminate death does not work, and if medical science and knowledge cannot win over death and death still reigns, Emily gives a suggestion to “Wring the tree and leave it” (line 11) because “‘t is the vermin’s will” (line 12). In this case, it is not “take it or leave it” but “take it and leave it”. It means everyone has to take or accept the fact that they cannot do anything to save it anymore so that they have to “leave it” to “the vermin’s will” to die.

At first, the tone of this poem is dreadful. The writer can draw this conclusion because death here is compared to an “insect” (**line 1**), which for many people is scary and annoying. Then “menacing” (line 2) and “kill” (line 3) also supports that tone. But it changes to desperation. Since death cannot be stopped, “ring the tree and leave it, --“(line 11) to “the vermin’s will” (line 12).

In this poem, Emily shares a new insight about death **by** comparing it to an annoying insect that menaces a tree, which is a symbol of life. Death here is pictured **as** endangering life. She also expresses the general idea that death for some people is scary. **And** then, because people’s life is manipulated by their own fear of death, they try to stop death or to find prevention for it in various ways such as by medical advances, surgery or baffling. But, death is powerful. Although people try to fight death with whatever means available, **Emily** recognizes that some circumstances are beyond hope. In the end, human beings have to give up and surrender to its will. Emily in this poem means to **say** that people do not need to fear death or to fight over death since it is useless and wasting valuable time in life.