



## 本科毕业论文

论文题目

论艾米莉·狄金森死亡诗歌  
中的超验主义

作者姓名

XXX

所学专业名称

XXX

指导教师

XXX

2023 年 5 月 10 日

学 生：

(签字)

学 号：

答 辩 日 期： 年 月 日

指 导 教 师：

(签字)

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XXX

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**A Study of Transcendentalism in Emily  
Dickinson's Death Poetry**

By

**XXX**

Under the supervision of  
Lecturer / Associate Professor / Professor XXX

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# Abstract

Emily Dickinson has created more than 1700 poems during her lifetime, of which 600 were on the theme of death, featuring descriptions and narratives from the author's unique perspective on death and her extraordinary approach to it. Transcendentalism arose in New England in the 1830s and became an important ideological emancipation movement in the history of America. Transcendentalism emphasizes the divinity of human beings and believes that human beings can penetrate the material world to reach the spiritual world and communicate directly with God. This idea has been highly praised by many American scholars. The paper first makes a detailed introduction to Dickinson and her death-themed poems. Then it gives a brief overview of Transcendentalism and discusses the Transcendentalism contained in some of Dickinson's death poems in detail. From the perspective of Transcendentalism, this paper examines and evaluates Dickinson's death poems, and makes an in-depth analysis of the causes of Transcendentalism. Finally, this paper will draw a conclusion of the Transcendentalism embodied in Dickinson's death poems and points out its enlightening significance to the development of American literary thought at present and in the future.

**Key Words:** Emily Dickinson; death poetry; Transcendentalism; American literature

## 摘要

艾米莉·狄金森终其一生创作了 1700 余首诗歌，其中死亡主题诗歌占据有 600 首，其特色主要是从作者对死亡的独特见解和对待死亡的非凡角度进行描写和叙述。超验主义兴起于 19 世纪 30 年代的新英格兰地区，并成为美国历史上的一次重要的思想解放运动。超验主义强调人的神性，认为人可以穿透物质世界达到精神世界直接与上帝交流，这一思想受到美国多位学者的推崇。论文首先对狄金森及其死亡诗歌作简要介绍。紧接着对超验主义思想作简要概述，并提取死亡诗歌中的部分诗歌选节对其所蕴含的超验主义予以详细论述。论文从超验主义角度切入，对狄金森的死亡诗歌进行考察和评价，并对其成因进行深入分析。最后，对在狄金森死亡诗歌中所体现的超验主义解读后做出总结并指出其对当下及今后美国文学思想发展的启示意义。

**关键词：** 艾米莉·狄金森；死亡诗歌；超验主义；美国文学

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1. 第一章作家、作品介绍, 如果论文选取了理论视角则加上理论介绍
2. 第二章文献综述, 分国外和国内两部分, 梳理总结前人的研究成果
3. 第三章、第四章为论文主体, 围绕论文的主旨进行由浅入深有逻辑的论证, 所占篇幅最长
4. 第五章结论

# A Study of Transcendentalism in Emily Dickinson's Death Poetry

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Emily Dickinson

Dickinson had been devoting herself to writing since 1862. After her death, she began to receive widespread attention from literary critics, and more than 1000 poems were published, establishing her work as one of the most highly regarded in American literature. Dickinson's poems are famous for their unique, delicate and sensitive description. There are three kinds of poems: love poems, nature poems and death poems. Among them, death poems can be called the essence of Dickinson's poetry, which is the pinnacle of Dickinson's literary creation.

Emily Dickinson was born in a prominent family in New England, where Christianity is the main religion. She grew up in a Christian culture, reading the Bible and being influenced by religious practices. However, in Dickinson's view, religion did not encompass everything, and submission to God is equivalent to cutting off her connection with the world. Therefore, she created her poetry in a different way, with a strong and distinctive anti-traditional style. Dickinson's ideas influenced a large number of American writers and poets such as Pound, Eliot, and Williams, then she became the primary foundation of the American modernist view of poetry and literary art.

### 1.2 Death poetry

The purpose of this paper is to examine Emily Dickinson's poetry on the theme of death. Since ancient times, death has been a daunting thing. It is the process of extinction and annihilation of all things in nature, which means that life has reached the end, and the body has been destroyed without being blocked or changed by anyone's will. However, the death described in Dickinson's works seems to be full of hope and vitality. In her eyes, death is not terrible and does not represent the end of life. She enjoys it and immerses herself in the experience of the world through the event or process of death so as to cross over death and get eternal life of the soul, which is the highest realm of death.

Dickinson's death poetry can be divided into three specific categories, which is described through different perspectives on death: the process of death, the author's perception of the imminent death, and her unusual attitude toward death. Dickinson is good at describing the dead world by jumping out of ordinary people's thinking, including her words and artistic techniques, which are huge challenges to the tradition. This is also the special feature of Dickinson's stable position in the literary world in the next century. Dickinson's death poems are closely related to her life experience,

religious culture and the social background of the United States at that time. The poetry is a concentrated expression of the poet's thoughtfulness about the material world and her perception of herself, and the humanism expressed is a microcosm of the transformation of the faith culture of an era and thus of the development of American culture.

### **1.3 Transcendentalism**

As an ideological movement, American Transcendentalism rose in New England in the 1830s. It was a reaction to the overly cold rationalist tendencies of American Unitarianism, which was a rebellion against the antiquated Calvinism. According to the theory of Transcendentalism, everyone has an innate insight, which endows human beings with the ability to infer the ultimate truth through intuition rather than empirical inference. Thus, based on this intuitive insight, man is able to transcend himself and approach the Supreme Being through personal effort.

American Transcendentalism can be seen as a product of the comprehensive influence of European idealism and Asian religions, including Hinduism and Confucianism. The transcendentalists were deeply influenced by Eastern metaphysical thinking in their understanding of the world. They believe that all existence in the world is subordinate to a supreme being, which is called the "over soul". The idea of the supernatural is the core of all transcendentalist tenets. The spirit of Transcendentalism lies in the unrelenting emphasis on the possibility of man's innate self-perfection. This idea is rooted in the transcendentalists' belief in the inherent divinity of man, which is based on their beliefs that man possesses the insight to know "ultimate truth" through intuition. Transcendentalists believe that the mission of religion is to publicize the potential divinity of human beings. In the process of emphasizing people's self-improvement, Transcendentalism gradually transformed into a purely spiritual religion in the service of the individual.

Since Transcendentalism affirms the divinity of human beings, Dickinson's death poetry is an expression of eternal life after death, reflecting a questioning attitude toward religion and God. Transcendentalism emphasizes intuition, instantaneous and intense sensations and reactions, that is, imagery. In Dickinson's poetry, death is a strange and vivid imagery, transcending the confines of the material world to achieve spiritual immortality. Dickinson wanders in the spiritual world to communicate directly with God and to understand the true meaning of life.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Abroad**

As a famous American poet in nineteenth-century, the importance of Dickinson's poetry has been well recognized, with Bloom giving her considerable praise in *The Western Canon*: "With the exception of Shakespeare, Dickinson is the writer who has shown the most cognitive originality among Western poets since Dante."(Bloom,

1995) The foreword written in *The Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1924), edited by the famous American writer Aiken, was very influential in Dickinson criticism at that time, summarizing some important themes in Dickinson's poetry and the influence of Transcendentalism on Dickinson.

Dickinson lived at a time when Transcendentalism was in the ascendant, and several scholars have examined the influence of Transcendentalism on Dickinson. In book *Circumference and Environment* (1968), William R. Sherwood argues that Dickinson finds the embodiment of God's spirit in nature, a return to the Puritan tradition rather than being influenced by Emerson's transcendentalist tradition. He argues that Dickinson never treats God on par with nature as the transcendentalists thought, and Cythia Griffin Wolff, in her biography *Emily Dickinson* (1986), argues that Dickinson questions the Puritanical view of nature. Wendy Martin compares the differences between Emerson and Dickinson in her book *Three American Poets: Ann Bradstreet, Emily Dickinson, and Adrienne Rich* (1984). It is argued that Emerson seeks wholeness and unity, while Dickinson is only concerned with the moment of manifestation, and in Dickinson's case, the moment is eternity.

## 2.2 At home

The domestic Dickinson research is still at a lagging level; it was only in the 1980s that Dickinson officially entered the field of view of domestic scholars, and most domestic studies of Dickinson have drawn on foreign research findings. The research paper mainly focuses on Dickinson's seclusion lifestyle, various themes of poetry, including love, nature, religion, etc., as well as her unique style and genre. There are only a few of professional studies on the connection between Dickinson's poetry and Transcendentalism.

As we entered the 21st century, treatises on Dickinson began to appear in China. Wei Zhaoqiu's *The Influence of Emerson's Transcendentalist Thought on Emily Dickinson* (2001) points out that Emerson was perhaps the main source of the transformation of Dickinson's thought in that era. Wang Xiu'e's *Transcendentalist Tendencies in Emily Dickinson's Poetry* (2003) succinctly illustrates the crucial connection to Transcendentalism in Dickinson's three major categories of poetry and the imperceptible anti-transcendentalist attitudes that exist within Dickinson's mind. Liu Shoulan's *Dickinson Studies* (2006) is the first comprehensive introduction to Dickinson's poetry in China, providing a more detailed and comprehensive introduction to Dickinson's life, poetic themes, style of her works and an overview of Dickinson studies abroad. The difficulty of Dickinson's poetic language is a major problem in Dickinson's poetry research. The publication of Pulong's translation of *Dickinson's Complete Works* (2014) marks a new stage in the translation of Dickinson in China, which is the first translation and publication of Dickinson's complete poetry in China, and plays an important role in promoting Dickinson's research for domestic scholars. In November 2014, the Dickinson International Symposium was held at Fudan University. This was the first Dickinson symposium held in China, opening up a new horizon for domestic Dickinson studies and the poetry translation.

### 3. Transcendentalism represented in the Death poetry

The concept of death in Emily Dickinson's poetry is quite different from the meaning of death that ordinary people think. Death in Dickinson's poetry is not an end concept, but a diachronic concept. The author spreads out the imagery of death in a specific space, and experiences the pain and sorrow of it in detail.

Dickinson expresses Transcendentalism quite concretely in her death poetry, where death is extracted from its carrier and becomes a highly abstract concept, no longer an object to be feared but a savior itself. Facing death squarely and surpassing it, the author's attitude towards death is never limited to sadness, but even has a cheerful and open-minded sentiment. After analyzing Dickinson's death poems, we can experience the eternal value of transcending the threshold of life in the poems, which is a deep interpretation of Transcendentalism that transcends the tradition and gets rid of the secular.

#### 3.1 Transcendentalism in the process of death

The greatest characteristic of Dickinson's poems about the process of death is that she's good at concreting the unknown process of death, as if she is experiencing the lifelike process of death. This process has two forms: first, death is the extension of space; second, death appears in the image of "over soul".

In *I heard a fly buzz when I died* writes that:

*"I heard a fly buzz when I died;  
The stillness round my form  
Was like the stillness in the air  
Between the heavens of storm.*

*The eyes beside had wrung them dry,  
And breaths were gathering sure  
For that last onset, when the king  
Be witnessed in his power.*

*I willed my keepsakes, signed away  
What portion of me I  
Could make assignable, — and then  
There interposed a fly,*

*With blue, uncertain, stumbling buzz,  
Between the light and me;  
And then the windows failed, and then  
I could not see to see."*

(Emily Dickinson, poem 465)

The poem narrates that people wait for the coming of God to save her soul and go to heaven for eternal life. It expresses the process of death in the author's

imagination and explores the meaning of death. This tentative assumption of death raises a question about God.

First of all, Dickinson magnifies the process of death, as she savors the pain, fear, and transcendental ascension in the presence of her own imaginary death. In her writing, death is sometimes an extension of space, and when time stops, only death is left to pervade and expand in space. In this kind of artistic conception, we will feel the breath of death rising from all around and becoming an omnipresent entity. In the poem, “fly” is magnified as the only symbolic image, which represents the coming of decadent death. In the last moment of life, one should be quietly waiting for death to come, but the sound of flies breaks the tranquility, and at the same time breaks the connection between human beings and the earthly world.

Secondly, in this death-themed poem, she poses herself as an observer, feeling the process of separation between spirit and body, the demise of the body and the cessation of sensation. What she observes here as a spectator is the human self-consciousness, similar to the “over soul” in the universe. When conscious activities have drifted away from the human body and experienced the process of death, “I” separated from the body and became an observer, as if another “I” existed in my brain, my mind and soul. Experiencing death and perceiving the disappearance of my body is actually the “self-nature” that exists outside of everything in Transcendentalism, which is integrated with the “over soul” of the universe.

In *I felt a funeral in my brain* writes that:

*“I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,  
And Mourners to and fro  
Kept treading treading till it seemed  
That Sense was breaking through*

*And when they all were seated,  
A Service, like a Drum  
Kept beating beating till I thought  
My mind was going numb*

.....

*And then a Plank in Reason, broke,  
And I dropped down, and down  
And hit a World, at every plunge,  
And Finished knowing then ”*

(Emily Dickinson, poem280)

In this poem, the author herself becomes a “dead” person at the end of her life, feeling everything around her: the heavy footsteps of mourners, the dull prayer like a drum. All this noise around her is in stark contrast to the approaching of silent death, and the brain of the “dead” begins to “going numb”, and finally, “I dropped down, and down!”.

The narrator here is similar to an observer, and all sensory are infinitely enlarged, the death of the body does not hinder the continuation of the spirit, it seems that there is another “I” peeping at the whole funeral, the process of death is extremely clear.

Dickinson experiences the activity of the subconscious, and her perception of death or the awareness of the deeper thought of human beings is close to the explanation of human consciousness at the time of death in Oriental mysticism. As a matter of fact, this feeling of seeing the disappearance of the body without any painful emotion seems to stay away from the secular world, and perceiving the existence of the soul is the self-consciousness of human beings advocated by Transcendentalism, that is, the “over soul” in the universe.

### 3.2 Transcendentalism in the perception of death

Dickinson’s poetic feature of describing the perception of death is that death is not limited to a transitory experience, but a shortcut to eternal life. The concept of death can be personified directly, it can be a real existence. People can feel and touch it, and even live in the same world with death. The soul of the dead will jump out of the quadrant of life and reach a real existence that is eternal and immortal.

In *Because I could not stop for death* writes that:

*“ Because I could not stop for death  
He was parking pick me  
The carriage was just the two of us  
And “eternal life” with seat*

*We slowly, he knew that without the need for rapid  
I also put aside work  
And leisure, to return  
His manners*

*We passed the school, coincides with the recess  
The children are noisy, on the playground  
We passed the fields of gazing grain  
We passed the setting sun ”  
(Emily Dickinson, poem712)*

The poet recalls in the voice of a person who has passed away for centuries, the experience of the “death” that invited her courteously as a coachman. Here, the quiet voice of the receiver implies the immortal belief of the poet, which is the companion who accompanies her on the road to another world. “Death” is personified by the poet as an inevitable conqueror, a servant of “immortality” and “eternity”.

First of all, the most important aspect of the poem is undoubtedly the profound thinking of the meaning of death. Dickinson talks with death directly in the poem, understands and experiences human consciousness or intuition, and integrates into the universal consciousness. In fact, she is telling the reality of people’s consciousness and psychological experience, which shows that she has become transcendent and comfortable with death. Dickinson’s insight into the pain and suffering of life in her poetry also shows her wisdom and her penetrating and intuitive sense, and her consciousness has traversed everything and gradually merged with the Great Self of the universe.

Secondly, the whole poem reveals the theme of the eternal existence of a soul after the demise of the physical body. It expresses the poet's confusion about the world of life and death, and her longing for the highest realm of the human soul. The poet's intuition to death is accompanied by her reflection on death and her realization of the philosophy of life: eternal life is the source of liberation from suffering and the highest pursuit of life. What "I" pursue here is immortality, mankind just like God will never die. Death itself is real and palpable, while God is not an illusory imagery. As Transcendentalism proclaims, God is present in all things and embodies the will of itself, and what is truly valuable is always the existence of the real world.

### 3.3 Transcendentalism in the attitude toward death

The characteristics of Dickinson's poems about her attitude towards death are as follows: death is not painful, but a yearning for eternal life, through which she can reach the other side of happiness. Dickinson regarded human death as a special honor. In her poems, the coming of death is accompanied by joy, the deceased himself receives honor, dignity, and a ticket to the other world at the same time. Thus Dickinson does not portray death as a dreadful image when she describes its imagery; life and death are often as expected, life as pain and death as relief. Death is not the end of life, but the threshold to eternity.

In *I died for beauty* writes that:

*"I died for beauty—but was scarce  
Adjusted in the Tomb  
When one who died for Truth, was lain  
In the adjoining Room—  
He questioned softly "Why I failed?"  
"For beauty, "I replied—  
"And I—for Truth—Themselves are One  
We Brethren, are, "He said—  
And so, as Kinsmen, met a Night—  
We talked between the Rooms—  
Until the Moss had reached our lips—  
And covered up—our names—"*  
(Emily Dickinson, poem 449)

First of all, in this poem, Dickinson believes that the eternal life of the soul can not only rely on God's blessing, but also rely on herself to build a colorful inner world. While life is beautiful, death is the ultimate destination of that beauty. Enjoying death is the only truth, and feeling death is the embodiment of nobility. By being close to death and burying the body in the earth, the soul can live forever, pain and pleasure are the same, anxiety and expectation coexist.

Secondly, Dickinson believes that death is the bright path to joy and happiness, and so is the essence of Transcendentalism, to establish the world of true happiness on earth through death. Transcendentalism sees the natural world as a symbol of God, in which the spirit of God overflows. Death is the only shortcut to the world of bliss, where man can communicate directly with God through the medium of death, so as to



obtain the access to happiness. Death is symbolic, and the external world is the embodiment of the spiritual world. Obviously, Dickinson draws on the Transcendentalism about the sublimation of immortality from death, she enjoys death and even loves death, wanders in her own spiritual world, introspecting herself and comprehending the true meaning of life. Through the intuition beyond experience and without proof, Dickinson realizes the truth of Transcendentalism.

#### **4. Causes of the Transcendentalism demonstrated in the poetry**

Emily Dickinson's poems are mainly written after the mid-19th century. Both the social unrest and the prevailing Transcendentalism have an impact on Dickinson. The death-themed poems reflect her inner contradiction, loneliness and uneasiness.

Through reading Emerson's works, Dickinson completely abandoned the Puritanism thought she had accepted since childhood, and fully agreed with Emerson's new proposition that the importance of soul lies in that it is the source of immortality. At the same time, this proposition alleviated her sense of guilt against Puritanism, and the behavior of ridiculing or doubting God was reasonably explained.

Dickinson does find beauty in death and excavates the eternal truth in it. But for her, God is real and illusory at times. "The unity of heaven and man" is like a false pretense, which makes Dickinson conflicted, determined but hesitant when she feels death. Transcendentalism is not only Dickinson's spiritual support in her poetry creation, but also her soul mate in the material world. It penetrates into all aspects of her life, making her constantly explore the essence of death and boldly guess and question God.

Finally, this chapter will analyze the causes of Transcendentalism's influence on Dickinson's death poems from three aspects: ideological inheritance, religious belief and social background, which explore the causes of Dickinson's ideological transformation, contradictory beliefs and personal life experiences.

##### **4.1 Ideological inheritance**

Transcendentalism is a complex doctrine, which is based on the philosophical ideas of contemporaneous German philosophers such as Kant and Fichte, as well as German and English Romantic literature, and is also influenced by Plato, Indian classical philosophy, Buddhism and the French philosopher Pascal. Transcendentalism holds that God is not separate from the world, but exists in it; that the human soul can communicate with God; and that nature and the human spirit nurture and reflect each other. Emerson set off a revolution in the field of Theology and religion which dominated people's thoughts. He re-examined the Christian doctrine, which pitted the church against the soul, and claimed that salvation occurred within the soul. He called for a new type of personal relationship with God by abandoning sterile traditional practices and beliefs, and Transcendentalism was thus promoted.

Dickinson's transcendentalist intellectual enlightenment was mainly due to the influence of Emerson, whose writings she loved to read since she was young, and

whose ideas became the cornerstone of her intellectual enlightenment. Emerson believed that man was created by the image of God, and the supernatural and ever-present God of the universe was operated in the human soul. Thus, human beings are sacred and can communicate with the supernatural to achieve spiritual perfection. Dickinson is therefore advocating to be strongly supported by Transcendentalism, inspired her in the poetry creation and injected soul into her death poetry. Since then, she has reached a state of transcendence and integration with nature.

## **4.2 Religious beliefs**

Born in a devout Puritan family, Dickinson was deeply influenced by the Puritan world outlook and the concept of death. Dickinson's father was a faithful proponent of Puritanism, so her family was also influenced by Puritanism and the Puritan tradition, which had a complex and contradictory view of death. On the one hand, due to the influence of Christian tradition for a long time, Puritans believed that death was the release of the suffering of life and the gateway to another paradise. On the other hand, because of their beliefs in man's original sin, they saw death as God's punishment for man's sins, and thus feared eternal damnation in hell even after death. This contradictory view was one of the reasons for the formation of Dickinson's paradoxical view of death. For her, death is not only the punishment of original sin, but also the relief of suffering. She believed that the way a person dies can suggest the state of her soul, and that a peaceful death was a sign of God's salvation. So when one of Dickinson's most admired friends died, she wrote to her friend to inquire about the state of his soul: "Sir, please tell me whether he is willing to die, and whether you think his soul has returned home." (Dickinson, 2000:125)

Looking at Dickinson's death poems, the reader can feel her strong yearning for death and her wish for a path to eternal life, but she also sees the spread of disease and the disaster of death in the world. For one thing, she deeply believes in God, for another, she is deeply distressed by God's insurmountability and intolerance. This kind of contradictory psychology is the root of her loneliness and isolation in her lifetime. If her belief in God is compared to a ship floating on the sea, then the self-consciousness of human nature is like a person who is lost on the vast ocean. In this sense, Dickinson's Christian sentiments are more often expressed in a desperate attempt to escape from the greed of the earthly world and the pain of losing her faith. Indeed, Dickinson's profound thoughts are often the result of the inevitable interplay between mankind and God. For example, in dealing with the ultimate problem of the outcome after death, although Dickinson recognizes the illusory nature of God's existence, she has been trying hard to create a transcendent and peaceful home for the soul with religious sentiments, that is, the return of life to nature, which is one of the sources of Dickinson's influence from Transcendentalism.

## **4.3 Social background**

Dickinson lived in a period of extraordinary historical change, when the United States fought and won the War of Independence in the second half of the 18th century. After that, the United States began a process of territorial expansion. At the same time,

inspired by the War of Independence, American people began a westward movement. People moved to the west to develop the western economy, and it can be said that the territorial expansion and the westward movement contributed to the rapid development of the United States. During more than 100 years of the westward movement, Americans gradually became opposed to conservatism, advocated innovation, and attached great importance to the actual situation. According to American historian Henry Commager, “the interaction of inheritance and environment shaped the character of Americans, who were innovative in their thinking and dared to take risks and experiment” (Commager, 1950). Born in America during this period, Dickinson’s innovative ideas in the context of the larger society were deeply imprinted in her mind, gradually producing a new soul. Therefore, her poems were not bound by the tradition, but were free from the traditional thinking. She imagined the emperor as a thief and robber, and the God of death as a gentleman and pursuer, which broke the traditional mode of thinking and being a maverick.

In the meantime, Dickinson was so shocked and bored by the many young soldiers who died in the American Civil War at the time that she chose to live a reclusive life in which she imagined death to the fullest. This ethereal way of life gave her a great deal of imagination and enabled her to deal extensively with the theme of death in her poetry. Dickinson was far from the real world, living in a personal seclusion. She also aspired to fame, but her dreams were restrained. She was frustrated with the real world and couldn’t find an outlet if she wanted to escape, so death as a symbol naturally became a way for her to vent. Through the writing of the theme of death, Dickinson expressed the confusion of the existing value system and the exploration of the meaning and essence of life.

To sum up, Dickinson observes and analyzes death from different perspectives in her poetry, which shows the poet’s contradictory view of death. The dual influence of the external environment and her own experience also give Dickinson an enduring fascination with writing about death. “Poetry is Dickinson’s emotional voice, and her poems deeply affect us. Her observation and experience of death makes death no longer terrible and unacceptable. Her expectation of eternal life makes people believe that no matter how short life is, it can be extended to infinity by passing through death. For her, death is no longer a dreadful taboo, but a metaphysical reflection on the nature of life.

## **5. Conclusion**

### **5.1 Restatement of the main idea**

This paper provides an in-depth analysis of Emily Dickinson’s death poetry from the perspective of Transcendentalism. It can be seen that Dickinson’s refined writing condenses her thoughts on death into a limited number of lines, allowing us, the future generations of readers, to perceive the meaning behind death poetry. Dickinson’s poetic language seems to be out of order, but there are still logical leaps in some

places. If we savor the meaning carefully, we can see the profound thinking of the theme of death and the Transcendentalism embedded in it.

The fusion of poetry and Transcendentalism can be divided into three kinds: death is a manifestation of “over soul” existing in the universe; death is an immortal entity standing in the real world; death is the existence of transcending all things from pain to achieve happiness. Through the analysis of Dickinson’s death poetry from different perspectives, the influence of Transcendentalism on Dickinson is fully reflected through her own life experience, religious belief and social background. It is the uniqueness of these three dimensions that constitutes the particular style of Dickinson’s death poetry, which is also the real value of studying Dickinson’s literary output.

Dickinson has repeatedly pondered the idea of Transcendentalism, and has reached an unfathomable level of exploration of the “self nature” in Transcendentalism, that is, the human consciousness - the deep and subconscious. She recognized that the human soul and immortality existed, and that the soul could transcend the physical body and become one with the “over soul” that pervaded the universe. In Dickinson’s eyes, death is not only a new birth, but also it leads to eternity and immortality, a kind of eternal change that never ends.

## **5.2 Suggestions for further study**

This study of Dickinson’s death poetry has deepened our understanding of the 19th century American society and the humanistic and spiritual sphere, and is of great significance for future generations to study the development of American literature. In her attitude toward death, Dickinson is more interested in seeking eternal life through death, and therefore her descriptions of death have a hint of brightness. She does not stick to death itself, but rather uses it as a way to reach eternal life and as a station for the purpose of her writing. Dickinson has reached the pinnacle of the 19th century poetry both in her understanding of death itself and in her description of death.

It is undeniable that the narrow scope of Dickinson’s life allows her to express her emotions only through the scenes of her own life. As a result, her poems are monotonous in image and weak in expressiveness, and it is impossible for her to move the rapidly changing external world into her own field of poetry. Her language style is sometimes too cryptic and difficult to understand, which limits the influence and dissemination of her poetry to some extent. Although Dickinson’s poetry began to be read by a large number of literary scholars as time progressed, Dickinson’s research in China is still extremely scarce, and the research materials are very insufficient. This paper is only an analysis of some of Dickinson’s death poems in the limited materials available, adding a small dimension to the study of Dickinson in domestic, and we look forward to the professional research results of more scholars in the literary world in the future.

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