

The Deathless Death: Emily Dickinson's Deconstruction of Death

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Bachelor of Arts in English Literature
Minor in Creative Writing and Psychology

The Deathless Death:
Emily Dickinson's Deconstruction of Death

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Abstract

This dissertation is a literary exploration of understanding and surviving the loss of a loved one. The two-part nature of this work divides this exploration into a research section and a creative writing section. The research section focuses on Emily Dickinson's perspective of death, and suggests that she deconstructs conventional notions about death, to further her belief in a continuous existence instead. For the purpose of this exploration, I will explore the biographical factors of her life that contributed to this perspective, as well as an analysis of some of her most popular poems. In an effort to completely understand the deconstruction, the research section has been divided into the three main techniques she's employed that makes her work stand apart: introducing death as a persona, the continuum of consciousness, and the separation of the body and the soul. The creative writing section at the end pays an homage to Dickinson's belief in a metaphysical connection with those who passed. It contains ten poems narrating a family's struggle in surviving the suicide of their son/brother.

Dedication

To my Bhai

Emad Syed Naqvi

Because you're my guardian
in this world and beyond.

To my family of warriors

Because you're the reason I made it here.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the entire English Literature and Creative Writing Department for constantly encouraging me and pushing me throughout my academic journey. However, there are four professors especially for whom I have the deepest amount of respect and gratitude.

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After the year that I had, I would not be here without my friends and family all over the world, especially my cousins – Zain, Ahmer, Zoha, Sanam and Fifi – and the friends that are practically family – Amber, Hunia, and Ibbad. I love you guys.

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Introduction

The first section of my thesis is dedicated to the exploration of Emily Dickinson's unique perspective and presentation of death. Emily Dickinson wrote avidly throughout her life, leaving behind 1800 poems that were discovered by her sister Lavinia after she passed away. As a social recluse whose literary talent was mainly discovered posthumously, Dickinson is now the subject of literary exploration and analysis for many, as the following generations have tried to suggest conclusive ideologies behind the complex language. My thesis focuses on exploring Dickinson's quintessential view of death, as her poems indicate that she believes in the continuation of our existence. My study uses Dickinson's poetry to reflect the beliefs she personally held, and demonstrates these beliefs by proposing the idea of a deathless death.

I believe Dickinson is credited with having such a unique stance on life and death, because she doesn't view death in the same conventional ways. While death is often understood as the complete end, she presents a death that is merely a transformative force. Whereas death is meant to be final in our understanding, Dickinson expresses her belief in the continuum of our existence. And finally, where death is seen as a terrifying ordeal, her speakers often have rather anticlimactic encounters where death's importance diminishes. Because her portrayal of death makes us question the conventional death we already know, I propose that Dickinson offers the idea of deathless death to her readership; a death that certainly is significant, but is not final and damaging and as dramatic as we understand it to be.

The latter portion of my thesis is dedicated to my late brother who passed away in May 2018. Inspired by the metaphysical connection that Dickinson alludes to and the positive perspective she holds on death, I have used my family's personal experiences after his passing to

pay homage to the intangible connection we have maintained with him this past year. This section opens up with a preface that narrates how difficult it was to navigate through our grief, and how I found solidarity in Dickinson's expression of similar journeys. The ten poems that follow are in the voices of my immediate family as we learn how to survive a loved one's death, and the metaphysical connection we have maintained with him in this short time. This thesis as a whole is a manifestation of my own journey of outliving my older brother, and using familiar resources such as literary giants and poetry to help guide me.

Biography

As a girl who was born and raised in Amherst, Massachusetts, Emily Dickinson's religious upbringing was rooted in Puritan beliefs that made their way to New England two centuries prior to her birth. By the 1830s, the religious landscape of Amherst was defined by Congregationalism, with a growing popularity of churches and religious communities, as well as the inauguration of Amherst College to educate more ministers (Doriani 20). In an environment that focused heavily on religious practices, it is no surprise that Dickinson's family also took part in religious observations daily, thus intertwining religion tightly with her early life and making it a subject of exploration when studying Dickinson. In her biography, Vivian Pollack also ties religion in while discussing the rise of the literary figure, highlighting different routines and events that were heavily influenced by the family's religious beliefs. Brought up as a Calvinist, Dickinson received her first Bible at the age of thirteen, and often made references to its teachings in her letters and poetry, subtly revealing how much time she must have spent not only learning the religion, but reflecting on it too. Despite the family's regular and active participation in religious activities, Dickinson herself grew farther and farther away from these traditional ties as she grew older. While the community around her was publicly professing their loyalty to Christ to become members of the church, she remained one of the very few who refused to do so. In fact she attended Mount Holyoke Female Seminary for her higher education – a school that was molded by religious influences – and she was still not afraid to show her reluctance to believe. Pollack cites an incident from Dickinson's short time at Mount Holyoke, when all the students were asked to stand up if they had the desire to embrace Christ's message devoutly; every single girl had stood up except for Dickinson herself. Clarifying herself in a letter later on, she says "They thought it was queer I did not stand – I think it would be queerier to lie" (Pollack

83). Her decision to not stand up does not necessarily reflect her rejection of God, but certainly reflects her reluctance to submit to the institutionalization of religion. If her poetry is to be read out of context as well, it is indisputable that questions about our purpose of living, death, the natural world, are all themes that she was invested in exploring. As an educated, well-informed young woman, she would study all the resources around these themes, which included both, the sciences as well as religious studies. Therefore Dickinson's religious upbringing did not end up a complete waste, as she incorporated what she had been taught in order to reflect upon, and come up with her own conclusions about how she saw our purpose in living and dying.

Beyond her religious backdrop, critics have also drawn parallels between Dickinson's fascination with death, and her isolated way of living. As the middle child, Dickinson spent a lot of time on her own, rarely ever leaving her home. In a letter to her friend Abiah Root, she refuses an invitation to visit as she writes: "I don't go from home, unless emergency leads me by the hand, and then I do it obstinately, and draw back if I can. Should I ever leave home, which is improbable, I will with much delight, accept your invitation; till then my dear Abiah, my warmest thanks are your's, but don't expect me. I'm so old fashioned Darling, that all your friends would stare" (qtd. in Pollack 30). This letter, amongst many, is revelatory of Dickinson's character that otherwise seems to be shrouded in mystery while she was alive. She spent most of her adult life holed up in her family's mansion called The Homestead, and her interactions, other than her letters, were limited mainly to her immediate family. Dickinson's isolation has often been under speculation; one such example is of poet Amy Powell who suggested that calling her a social recluse deflects attention from a possible nervous disorder (qtd in Pollack 32). In fact, after her passing in 1886, when her sister Lavinia found all of her sister's poetry, it was jarring to pair the sensible, witty, well-read lady with the thousands of texts that were unveiled,

preoccupied with death and darkness. Her preoccupation with difficult themes such as death and interconnectedness reveal how much time Dickinson spent pondering upon such ideas, while spending her physical life with minimum interactions with others. To root this interest only in something external would then perhaps be a disservice as Dickinson's life did not have room for externalities. Her poetic expression and interpretation of death is a conclusion that she has reached on her own, based on her own subjective experiences and cognitions, rather than the social influences. This may be one of the many reasons why her poetry is so unique, as it is not tainted by any external expectations, but is a sincere belief that she held dear enough to write a plethora of poems on it. Beth Doriani considers the religious influences and Dickinson's social quirks as she writes "By assuming the voice and stance of the prophet as she drew on biblical and homiletical rhetorical techniques, Dickinson as a woman poet spoke to her culture with a sense of authority and justification, despite that culture's patriarchal slant. Her religious tradition and her innovations upon it were precisely what enabled her to write her distinctive, unforgettable poetry" (2).

Although social influences would not pressure her to conform, Dickinson did suffer at the hands of the outside world, spending a significant portion of her life mourning and trying to cope with the loss of many friends and family members. Despite her regular attendance at church and participation in other religious activities as a young girl, the sudden passing away of her friend at the age of thirteen made her grapple with deep existential questions at a young age that religion did not have satisfactory answers for. Two years after Sophia Holland's passing, Dickinson wrote a letter to another friend regarding her death:

"There she lay mild & beautiful as in health & her pale features lit up with an unearthly-smile. I looked as long as friends would permit & when they told me I

must look no longer I let them lead me away. I shed no tear, for my heart was too full to weep, and after she was laid in her coffin & I felt I could not call her back again I gave way to a fixed melancholy. I told no one the cause of my grief, though it was gnawing at my very heart strings.” (Ward 32)

This heartfelt account of her last goodbye to a dear friend shows how at a very early age, Dickinson was well-acquainted with the reality of death and what it meant to say goodbye to someone leaving this world. If one is to assume that her familiarity with loss due to the passing of her friends and family plays a significant role in forming her perspective on death, then Sophia Holland’s death is the first of many such lessons. Dickinson’s account of saying goodbye to her friend shows the psychological trauma her young-self had to go through. Through her words, readers can see how this was one of the first times she had to say goodbye to someone, as she waits for others’ to tell her how to act while suppressing her own emotions. It was only once she saw her friend in the coffin and understood that she “could not call her back”, that she gave away to a “fixed melancholy”. If this incident is her first close interaction with the dying, then her emotions seem to parallel her understanding of death – with the permanence of her friend’s loss settling in, Dickinson realizes that those left behind in the world to mourn must learn to live with a constant state of sadness as opposed to something one would eventually get over.

In 1850 Dickinson again found herself mourning the loss of another dear friend who passed away prematurely. Her correspondence with Abiah Root shows Dickinson once again struggling with the mystery of death, trying to decipher what it really means to not be alive anymore. Leonard Humphrey was one of her favourite tutors at Amherst Academy who suffered from the congestion of his brain and died within a ten-hour window (Whicher 9-10). Writing to her friend Abiah, Dickinson says “some of my friends are gone, and some of my friends are

sleeping - sleeping the churchyard sleep - the hour of evening is sad - it was once my study hour - my master has gone to rest” (Ward 102). Compared to the letter expressing her grief over Sophia Holland’s death, this letter seems to replace her initial shock with more contemplation instead. In other words, Dickinson no longer seems to be taken aback by the permanence of her loss, but is more focused on what it means to be dead. Equating a “churchyard sleep” with death seems to fall in line with her eventual theory about immortality. This time, instead of focusing on the literal definitions of dying and the coffin, she uses a vocabulary that implies her master is resting, or taking a break as opposed to having reached his final destination. Dickinson’s grief is still not unquestionable, as she weeps for her tutor, but her letters suggest her belief that this moment is perhaps a waiting period or transition before continuing one’s existence.

As someone who lived through the period of the Civil War, it is no surprise that other than her personal losses, Dickinson lived in a world where death was perhaps far more familiar than it should have been. This can explain why, while the earlier deaths came as a shock, eventually Dickinson did adopt a more inquisitive, objective and curious attitude towards death, other than shock. However, her father’s passing in 1874 stands apart from all the others, not only because it was the death of a very prominent person in her life, but also because they had a complicated relationship as well. As a public figure and orthodox religious man, Edward Dickinson was an autocratic, strict father who controlled his children’s interests, activities, reading material, educational choices, and so on (Pollack 21). As a well-respected and intimidating man in his community, he carried that persona into his home with his wife and children as well, thus maintaining his nonsensical and firm demeanor. During his life, Dickinson did not mention him directly in her poetry much but she did talk about him in her letters, revealing snippets of information that hint at how he would dictate his children’s lives and how

Dickinson always felt an emotional distance from him despite his hands-on involvement in their lives (Pollack 29). However his sudden passing away impacted her heavily, as she began obsessing over the riddle of death. For a figure as strong and domineering as her father, it seemed too convenient to simply say he had just passed away – for years after, Dickinson struggled to answer where he would have gone, and this is often reflected in her letters. In one such letter, she writes “I dream about my father every night, always a different dream, and forget what I am doing daytimes, wondering where he is. Without any body, I keep thinking, What kind can that be?” (letter 220). Given her submissive dynamic with her father, oftentimes parallels are drawn between their relationship, and her relationship to the other Father – God. This psychoanalytic approach compares the two relationships, keeping father and daughter in mind, thus comparing Edward Dickinson to God. Without exploring this approach any further, one can also use this comparison to explain why it was so hard for Dickinson to admit that her father was dead. As such a charismatic, dynamic, always-present human being while he was alive, it was difficult for her to imagine him confined in a coffin underground for the rest of eternity. Pollack states that the references of death in the letters after her father’s death parallel aspects of her poetry about death – asking the same questions, adopting a similar attitude in her tone, using similar imagery (Pollack 103). Although he passed away relatively late, losing her father was a defining moment in Dickinson’s life for her, as well as it helped her form her unique perspectives on death. Whereas before she seemed to struggle more with what happens to a person after they leave the physical world, now she seemed more consumed with where one goes. Her dreams about her father reveal that she is not visited by her father in his physical form, but “without any body”, as if he shed his physical barrier to return to his immortal state. Although they had a strained relationship during his lifetime, Dickinson’s father’s passing is one

of the most crucial moments in her life that reflect how she eventually explained death not as an end or beginning of something, but a continuance in a different form.

Perhaps the biggest irony in studying Dickinson's portrayal of death is that her own perspectives were revealed to the world posthumously, therefore translating most interpretations into mere speculations. However what is undeniable is that Dickinson's poetry and letters and accounts from her sister Lavinia all reveal her to be someone who was preoccupied with the mystery of death, and what that meant for our life as well. Growing up in an orthodox environment, it is not a surprise that she would spend her time as a young girl musing about Heaven and Hell, but simply being brought up in a religious environment is not necessarily an indicator of a religious person in the future. More importantly, as this thesis will discuss later, her beliefs regarding death do not specifically point to a Bible-approved idea of an afterlife but rather, to a constant state of existence in different forms. While religion may not have dictated her views, it did provide her an intellectual foundation for her to build her own educated and informed opinions. Wendy Martin comments upon this as she writes "Because no existing religion spoke directly to her needs, Dickinson created her own, blending aspects of Calvinism with her own beliefs. She liberated herself from the church, fostered her own sacred relationships, and achieved moments of grace in the garden instead of the church" (26). As a woman who gave her own opinions enough importance then, it does not come as a surprise that the world around her did not interest her enough for her to actively interact with it too regularly. Instead, she seemed more consumed by ideas revolving our existence, our purpose of living, the bigger picture. These ideas were further reinforced by pushing Dickinson to mourn the losses of countless loved ones from an early age, cementing the idea that there is more to this world than the physical one we see around us. Therefore while the world around her did not have control or

impressionable power over her, her life itself did bring together several different aspects that eventually worked together to present us with the unconventional idea of a deathless death that her poetry talks about today.

A Deathless Death:

Dickinson's Deconstruction of Death

Emily Dickinson's writing and her posthumous discovery has sparked a withstanding interest amongst critics and scholars for generations now, especially regarding her preoccupation with the theme of death. Early reception of her poetry "presented Dickinson as a descendant of Puritanism and Transcendentalism. In his 1951 biography, Richard Chase traces the importance of Dickinson's New England heritage" (Martin 125). Like Dickinson, the Transcendentalist movement gave more emphasis to spirituality rather than organized religion, as it believes in forming a personal connection. However, even though it is spiritual in nature, Transcendentalism also focuses more on one's present life rather than a preoccupation with the afterlife, while Dickinson's poetry expresses otherwise. Her poetry expresses an anxiety and curiosity about the nature of death and what that means about our existence.

The previous section explored several factors in her life that made her to confront the question of life and death. As a young woman brought up in a strictly religious and conventional setting, Emily Dickinson carried equal parts of faith and doubt within her, especially when it came to the question of death. From losing one of her close friends in her adolescence to growing up in a world plagued by death, Dickinson's faith and doubt work together to help deconstruct the phenomenon of death in order to better understand it. The plethora of Dickinson's poems present today show us how important it was for her to first deconstruct and unlearn all that she knew about death, in order to reach her own conclusions. The deconstruction process begins with stripping death of its power by denouncing it as an inevitable absolute end. This then sparks the question of the purpose of living and dying at all. However, Dickinson does not just refute previous ideologies, but also presents her own by asserting that perhaps death is not marking the

end of one life and the beginning of an afterlife. Instead, death in Dickinson's poetry refers to the death of our physical self, while our soul lives an immortal existence.

One of the first techniques that Dickinson employs to deconstruct the conventional attitude towards death, is by introducing it in her poetry as several different personas, thus presenting death as a familiar character rather than a phenomenon. Sometimes death becomes a friend, and sometimes death is a kindly stranger, but every metaphorical interaction on paper helps in the deconstruction of death as this unimaginable, larger-than-life, lethal deity. Therefore while religion may have given her the appropriate vocabulary for these explorations, it is a disservice to credit her poignant reflections to a doctrine. Her poetry certainly reflects shadows of her religious backdrop, but it also reflects her own introspection as she highlights the importance of the 'self' in our existence. The lyricism in her writing often adopts the voice of one speaker and maintains that voice throughout the transition of being alive, to dying, and then transcending beyond the death itself. In other words, her poetry shows that despite what one's physical state may endure, there is a part of us that maintains our awareness, and reflects it through a constant state of consciousness that surpasses any physical changes. Beyond the existence of our physical body, Dickinson questioned the existence of herself; what qualified as her 'self' and what qualified as a transitory vessel in this world. In many of her poems, one can argue that she distinguishes between being alive and dead based on the existence of our conscious minds. As this thesis will explore further, the speakers in her poems tend to retain their consciousness during the process of dying and after their death, thus asking the readers to question how final physical death really is. Finally, because so many of her speakers retain their consciousness, her poetry also suggests that Dickinson then saw death as a transition from body to soul, rather than from existence to extinction.

It is a combination of these three different ideas that contribute to creating a deathless death in Dickinson's poetry. In her presentation, death is not an intimidating, faceless stranger, but rather a familiar, recognizable persona that everyone encounters and interacts with as a part of their lives. However, death is not rooted in the physical world, but is personified as a supernatural entity that can present itself in any form it chooses. Moreover, the speakers in Dickinson's poetry show awareness about dying. This is often shown through their state of consciousness that is maintained throughout the physical world, but also once the speaker passes away, thus implying the existence of something stronger than our physical body, that survives a physical death but maintains its awareness. This then leads the readers to understand that perhaps the poet sees death not as a final ending, but as a transition period. In this transition period, we shed our physical body, but a part of us that makes us quintessentially 'us' still survives, hence explaining the idea of separation between the body and soul. The following pages will use Dickinson's poetry as examples to further analyze these three techniques, in order to show how Dickinson did not subscribe to the idea of an afterlife like many of her contemporaries and religious teachers. Instead, she believed death itself was deathless, because our non-physical soul is immortal.

1. Different Personas for Death

Agnieszka Salska explains the fear of uncertainty that underlies our knowledge of death, and writes, "From the human point of view, the fact that eternal life has to be entered by way of death looks very much like an unfair business transaction: the exchange of existence whose value we know for one we know very little about at a rate we do not know at all" (50). It is the abstract, unknowable quality of death that makes it truly daunting. Therefore it seems only fitting that in order to simplify the idea of death, Dickinson strips it off its power by making it someone

ordinary and relatable, as she does so in her poem “For Death – or rather”. In this poem, the speaker compares two personas, Life and Death, and poses them as two people to whom the rest of us are heirs, who will eventually inherit their gifts. The poem begins by acknowledging that Life’s biggest gift to us is the opportunity it provides, and so when we are dead, this will be the first thing we lose. She then goes on to list the things that the things we inherit from Death “Are Room- / Escape from Circumstances- / And a Name-With Gifts of Life”, or in other words, a place to rest, escape from life, and a tombstone with our name. Unlike her other poems that also focus on experiences beyond this life, “For Death – or rather” focuses more on the speaker’s irrefutable knowledge of what death entails, but does not speak of it as something that our lives eventually lead up to. Instead, the speaker introduces the phenomenon as one of the two ‘parent-like’ figures for humankind that blesses us with certain gifts. However, through this idea of inheritance, the speaker juxtaposes Life and Death as characters as she concludes the poem with “How Death's Gifts may compare- / We know not- / For the Rates-lie Here-“. These simple concluding lines carry the tremendous weight of unpredictability and uncertainty and fear of the unknown – all of the fears associated with death in the first place. By humanizing death and starting a colloquial conversation in her poem, Dickinson urges us to confront our real fears associated with death. However by applying these fears to worldly anxieties, Death itself is also given the opportunity to step down for the pedestal, and to be explored as yet another part of the deal we made to live this life.

Similarly, her poem “Color-Caste-Denomination” once again introduces Death as yet another persona, and once again focuses on Death’s role in this life first before tackling its greater meaning. This poem personifies Death as a Democratic leader who does not believe in one’s color, caste, or social denomination as determining factors of who they are as people. The

poem begins with the assertion that these distinctions are merely “Time’s affair” and so will be limited to this life, because Death does not see such distinctions. Although the poem does not discuss life after death, the cleverly chosen persona alludes to the idea. Once Death, the democrat, comes into power, everyone’s way of life will be suddenly drastically very different because Death will bring his own policies and rules under his reign. However, while it is not explicitly said, there are words in the poem that hint at a different kind of life that Death will offer us, which consequently hints at the idea of immortality without acknowledging it. The speaker says “If He put away / Chrysalis of Blonde - or Umber - / Equal Butterfly - / They emerge from His Obscuring –” The image of a butterfly works well with the metaphor of transitioning from one leader to another, as well as from one life to another. One leadership, or an earlier life, may have been characterized by different things and different lifestyles that have now encouraged who one is today. But the change in leadership is similar to a caterpillar emerging as a butterfly; still as the same creature, but wholly different as well. By applying this metaphor to life and death, one can see Dickinson’s belief in a constant state of existence that is merely tweaked according to what stage of life we are at now. Death in her opinion is not the marking of the end, or a brand new beginning, but a stage of transition that helps get rid of the residue we carry from our man-made world – such as racism, sexism, social hierarchy – and to move on to a lighter, non-physical existence.

While the previous two poems merely introduce Death as a character, Dickinson’s poem “Because I Could Not Stop for Death” takes that a step further as the speaker interacts with Death’s character personally. The speaker narrates her encounter with Death, a kindly gentleman who offers her a ride when she didn’t stop herself. The poem describes their journey past her life, and takes her to a new home to reside in. It’s in the last stanza that the speaker nonchalantly

reveals that centuries have passed since that day, obscuring our sense of past and present as readers. This obscurity, however, is permissible considering that her carriage was manned by Death, and the speaker had put away her worldly affairs like labor and leisure. The nonverbal but polite interaction between the speaker and Death immediately makes Death seem less like an authority and more like a companion who gives her company as she bids farewell. Maria Magdalena Farland writes “Though commonly read as a passage from life to death, this poem's bizarre spatial and temporal coordinates have often been misunderstood when read apart from the context of the sentimental conventions they employ” (373). While the first three stanzas mainly focus on describing their journey, the speaker lets us know that Immortality is in the carriage with them. This serves as a hint when we read on and find out that centuries have passed been the stanzas, “and yet / Feels shorter than the Day” that she first came here. Our inability to visualize what direction this carriage moves in, and how long it has been since it picked her up, all shows how even when Death is reduced to worldly descriptions, it still remains larger than human comprehension and vocabulary. Although the rest of the poem does induce some anxiety about what our life entails after death, the interaction with kind Death himself helps make the journey seem less daunting. Dickinson’s poem shows her awareness about the fact that even the idea of immortality can seem scary when we do not know what to expect, but it also shows how our fear lies in the uncertainty, not in the idea of Death itself. Instead, Death here is a kind escort that takes the trouble to bring you to the final unknowable future, where everything worldly will cease to exist. In this manner, Dickinson’s poetry does not reject the fear that comes with the idea of dying. Instead, she manipulates that the representation of death to highlight that our fear does not lie in the idea of death, but all that comes with it – loss and uncertainty. By studying death as different worldly personalities that all serve the same theme of death and immortality,

Dickinson allows the readers to compartmentalize their feelings regarding dying by taking death off its pedestal and reducing it to a familiar, worldly interaction instead.

2. Continuum of Consciousness

Much like the personas she creates for Death in her other poems, Dickinson herself also often adopts the voice of a person who is dying in order to use the experience to make further explorations. By adopting this voice, the readers become privy to a dying person's internal state, which Dickinson uses to her advantage to convey her belief about continuing our existence. In fact, Dickinson's poetry also superficially reflects Plato's theory about a continuum of consciousness – while Socrates had deemed consciousness as an indicator of reality, Plato elevated the role and existence of consciousness to the spiritual realm as well, thus believing in a reality beyond our physical world (Jorgensen). Dickinson's poetry highlights this theory as sometimes she creates a speaker that is dying or has just died but their internal state – as reflected by the lyrics – retains awareness of their past and present self.

Her wide collection of poetry allows us to explore this phenomena of retaining consciousness through different kinds of speakers. While in some poems the speaker is confused to have just crossed over, other poems offer a slightly more anticlimactic version of dying from the perspective of the person about to cross over. This is reflected in her poem "I heard a Fly buzz – when I died", which narrates a dying person's point of view right until the moment of death. One would imagine a person's last moments to be rather dramatic, but the speaker adopts a rather neutralized voice and chooses an even more neutral subject, like a fly, to focus on. Although the setting does acknowledge familiar tropes such as signing a will and mourning loved ones in the room, it deflates the tension and sense of fear repeatedly in each stanza by referring to the fly that stands in between the speaker and the light. Unlike some of her other

poems, this one does not explore the moment after death, thus only providing valuable insight regarding how Dickinson sees the moment of death itself to be. By posing as a dying person, and perhaps drawing from her own experiences of loss, the poet imagines a person's last moment equivalent to any other mundane moment in our lives as opposed to something monumental. This specific treatment also then subtly alludes to the idea that death itself is not as monumental and conclusive as we perceive it to be; it's just another moment in our long, continuous lives.

However, unlike "I heard a Fly buzz", her other poems often acknowledge the experience of dying as well, attempting to use familiar vocabulary to encapsulate an experience so much bigger than us. Once again, tracing the conscious thought makes it easier for the readers to follow the speaker, and to see where the persona resides after leaving the physical world. This experience is documented in her poem "I Felt my Life with Both my Hands" – a poem in which the readers are introduced to a possibly female persona who has just died and is realizing that she no longer belongs to the physical world. The previous poems that this paper has studied thus far have supported Dickinson's idea of a deathless death by distancing it from conventional associations like fear and the end of all. However, by reflecting consciousness in her poetry, she is also able to acquaint us with yet another idea about death. As this poem shows, it can be suggested that Dickinson believes death to be, then, the shedding of our physical manifestation but the existence of our consciousness: "I turned my Being round and round / And paused at every pound / To ask the Owner's name— / For doubt, that I should know the Sound— / I judged my features—jarred my hair—" Now that the persona has shed her physical body, her vocabulary for herself changes, as she juggles between words like "being" and "life" to describe herself. Moreover, without a worldly body, she no longer has a worldly name. The lines above show the readers her struggle to remember who owned this body, but her consciousness carries

enough awareness for her to remember that she should “know the Sound” or the name. Karen Sanchez-Eppler comments on this in her own book, “if the thing claimed has no features and no dimensions, what does one own, after all? Bodilessness similarly defies the codification offered by language, reducing "name" to a nonconnotative "sound"” (119). These disconnections between the two states of being show how different the two realms are, hence making it difficult to comprehend anything beyond our human, physical world. Having said that, despite the difference in the two realms, the persona seems to carry awareness from her past state of being, into her new one. In fact, in the last stanza she says “I told myself, "Take Courage, Friend / That—was a former time— / But we might learn to like the Heaven, / As well as our Old Home!" These concluding lines confirm the idea that this is a persona carrying residue from her past life, which means that even when she died, she retained her consciousness while shedding her physical self. This shedding has now prepared her for the next part of her life, but her awareness of the past as she goes into the future shows Dickinson’s belief in our constant state of existence, as opposed to the end of one life and beginning of a completely new one.

Similar to this poem, Dickinson also wrote “I’ve Dropped my Brain”, another poem that traces a bodiless persona’s continuum of consciousness posthumously. This poem’s first stanza describes the physical differences, or rather lack of physicality, in the persona’s being as of now “I’ve dropped my Brain—My Soul is numb— / The Veins that used to run / Stop palsied—’tis Paralysis / Done perfecter on stone”. Much like “I Felt my Life with Both my Hands”, here is yet another persona coming to terms with her new state of being, but she has not lost her consciousness from her previous life either. In fact, her awareness becomes perfectly clear when she is able to distinguish that she is no longer a “breathing woman”, but is now “Endowed with Paradise”. As the poem reaches its conclusion, she accepts her new “Being” and understands that

man-made limits such as Time cease to exist or matter to her now, thus showing her readily accepting the next phase of her existence. However, unlike the previous poem, here Dickinson also seems to give an insight in the process of dying as well:

Not dumb—I had a sort that moved—

A Sense that smote and stirred—

Instincts for Dance—a caper part—

An Aptitude for Bird—

Who wrought Carrara in me

And chiselled all my tune

Were it a Witchcraft—were it Death—

I've still a chance to strain

These two stanzas give insight to another moment that is not touched upon as often – here the persona admits to having a sense that something “smote and stirred”, she had “instincts for Dance”, and other combinations of feelings that are similar to spontaneous movement. She then questions whether it was witchcraft or death, but the fact that she is questioning it does not mean that she doesn’t know what happened. In fact, her curiosity has been peaked only because she had awareness throughout the process of her transitioning into a new state of being. This poem alludes to the idea that one does not only carry residue of memories to their new way of being, but that during the process of physical shedding, our consciousness remains intact. This explains how the persona is using different feelings to relate what death felt like to her, but they are all positive connotations. This therefore suggests that we may be conscious during our moment of

death, thus reinforcing the idea of deathlessness in death. Dickinson's poetry transcends its role as literary art, as it embodies an unknowable experience like death, and expresses it through our common, relatable, human language. The fact that she breaks down our death into several moments, and then freezes her personas in those moments helps regain her authority as someone to relay experiences about death. Her ability to reflect a continuum of consciousness within her personas makes the experience realistic and relatable, convincing enough for the reader to follow her lead into this deathless death.

3. Separation of Body and Soul

So far, the interaction with death as different personas, and the continuum of consciousness has helped us understand how Dickinson views death as a part of our lives. However how she views death is merely an extension of how she views living creatures like humans, how she views the purpose of our existence in this world, and how she understands what we are made up of. As an educated woman whose environment was heavily influenced by religion, Dickinson's answers to herself seem to serve both, her intellect and her personal beliefs. In other words, she viewed the body and soul as two separate entities that reside together but are completely different. Unlike her contemporaries like Walt Whitman, Dickinson did not force an integration between the two parts of herself – she believed them to be wholly different and to exist separately for a reason. This is evident in her poem "I am afraid to own a body", where she expresses her anxiety regarding owning a body and a soul. Karen Sanchez-Eppler writes "Indeed, what interests her about identity is precisely its unresolvable doubleness. Instead of forging mergers she seeks to describe a "Double Estate," one in which human identity is suspended between the irreconcilable but inseparable requirements of a body and a soul" (107). Indeed, it is important to pay attention to the 'doubleness' within this poem, as it also applies to

the body and soul. When the two coexist to make a human, the speaker asserts that neither are better than the other, for she is afraid of both equally. The fear then lies in the integration between the two, because she prefers to reside in the doubleness they seem to provide. The doubleness carries freedom within it that allows one to be human but also to transcend beyond what our physical world has to offer us. It is this doubleness that allows us to be “Duke in a moment of Deathlessness”, for if our souls are separated from our body, then they will rise above when our body will shed, thus making “God, for a Frontier”.

However if the body and soul are to be respected as two separate entities, and the soul is what survives our physical death, then it brings attention to the question regarding the purpose of the physical body. Her poem “The Body grows without” attempts to answer this question, as she talks about the shelter the body gives to her soul. Offering her body a certain level of respect as a vessel as well, she elevates the role likely to that of a temple – a room that is given its special status because of what it holds within. The speaker also imitates the doubleness of existence within the role of the body, sometimes referring to its protection as secure, and other times as ajar. It is important to note that while she gives her body respect for sheltering her soul, she uses the words “It never did betray”, introducing the hint of a negative connotation. This encourages the readers to think that while the poem is merely talking about the doubleness of life, the speaker is also inferring that the security of her body can often feel like imprisonment of her soul. It lends our attention to the fact that while the body is like a home, a home can be the opposite of liberation as well. Like the previous poem, Dickinson acknowledges the idea of doubleness again, but she also talks about experiencing this doubleness during your physical lifetime can be suffocating, for all you crave is your soul’s freedom. In this manner, the poem helps convey two intertwined ideas to the readers together. Not only does it fall in line with her

other poems that highlight her belief in the duality of our existence, it also shows how different our two parts are, and therefore cannot be merged into one. It is this concept that makes her death poems easier to comprehend, for they confirm the separation of one's body and soul after the physical body sheds away.

The separation of the body and soul is specifically paid attention to in her poem "Death is a dialogue between", in which we see the Spirit communicate and part with "dust". The dust in this poem serves as a suitable metaphor for the body, while the spirit is yet another synonym for the soul that continues its existence. Indeed, the poem is a conversation between a dying persona, and Death, where Death asks the person to "dissolve" but the spirit insists it has "another trust". As the spirit walks away at the end, all it leaves behind is an "overcoat of clay". In other words, although Dickinson was steadfast in her belief that integration of our two selves cannot happen, she did understand that one was contained within another, which gave the illusion of life. Therefore, when the vessel was not able to hold the spirit anymore, the spirit shed the physical part and continued forward. Once again, this metaphor is very specific in conveying Dickinson's belief about our mortality, as the only mortal image in this poem was of a physical shell made of earthly mud. However, the essence of ourselves that allows our existence is not something that even flounders when Death pays a visit. Instead, Death is merely an interaction that frees our soul for it to continue its existence, with its full awareness and consciousness, but without its limits. The limitations that the speakers in the other two poems were experiencing, are now not applicable to this soul as it has been freed. Death then becomes a metaphor for liberation, and an event that lies on the rite of passage for all mortal beings, but only to strip away their mortal exterior and to release their immortal self until it chooses to manifest itself in a physical form again.

Conclusion

Emily Dickinson's unique perspective on death is not one that is birthed out of nothingness. Although it is not critical for writers to draw inspiration from their own lives, it is hard to separate Dickinson's biographical details from the literary work she produced. She may have grown up to reject a lot of what she was initially taught – such as institutionalized religion – but their presence in her life contributed to her later work. Her reflection upon these teachings and values is what allowed her to deconstruct the conventional notions about death, in order for her to then form her own opinion.

The deconstruction of death is a consequence of how Dickinson viewed the living. Her portrayal of death is an extension of how she views the 'self' – the part that makes us quintessentially us, and more than just physical, biological beings in this world. The 'self' is often referred to as the soul in her poetry, and is the one part of human beings that survives our physical death. The idea is that the soul is what continues on with its existence, while changing its form of manifestation – therefore death is merely an incident that allows us to change our form, and continue our journey. This does not allude to death as an end, or an afterlife as a new beginning. The concept of continuation is central to understanding how Dickinson viewed death, and she highlights this by employing three main techniques that were discussed in this thesis.

The first involves the introduction of death as a persona. This plays a significant role in reducing the drama and the fear around death the event, thus she presents death in countless different, albeit familiar, forms. The constant interaction with a regular persona called death lessens its alien status and makes it less daunting. This helps us understand that perhaps our fear does not lie in the event of death itself, but the unknowable future that lies ahead. Her second technique suggests the continuation of our consciousness, hence suggesting that we will continue

to exist after our death, as ourselves, but without our physical form. The continuum of consciousness is different from a thought process, because it implies that one carries their consciousness and their awareness through their state of change, and to their new way of being. Her poetry expresses her belief that one retains their sense of self from this physical world, and carries that awareness into their new state of being, thus rejecting the idea of two separate lives – one ending and another beginning. Finally, the separation of the body and the soul is a familiar idea expressed by other writers and other doctrines as well. However, in Dickinson's case, it's like the third piece of a puzzle that, when put together, form her perspective as a whole. While the idea of a separate body and soul is not unique to only Dickinson, it is indeed an important concept she explores in order to solidify her perspective. She uses this as an explanation for the change in our state of being, completing her theory of a deathless death.

It is important to understand that a deathless death does not reject the idea of dying, as that is not what Dickinson believed. She lost loved ones, and despite her beliefs, she suffered and mourned their losses. However her inability to accept death as the final end allowed her to reflect upon those she was mourning, and develop her own perspective that does not reject death, but merely strips it off its finality. She guides her readers to a view of death that allows them to appreciate the loss, but also nourishes the hope that everyone who dies a physical death will continue to be a part of our universe, just in a different form.

Creative Writing Section: Preface

Exactly one year ago, I was working on a very different kind of text. At the end of my penultimate semester in college, I realized that I had been so busy with the academic workload, I hadn't written for the sake of my craft in a while. After a few futile attempts at unsuccessful prose, I decided to give free writing a chance and eventually found myself deep in the pits of an exciting story. I wrote for a week, and in that week, developed a beautiful, heart-wrenching narrative about a Pakistani family reuniting at a family home in America to mourn the loss of one of the children who had committed suicide. At the end of the same week, I flew to Boston to join my family for an emergency – my older brother had committed suicide.

There are still very few words to describe what it was like to watch my fictional characters live out through my very own family that weekend. Perhaps it would have gone on longer had I written any more, but needless to say, I abandoned that piece of writing – and writing at all – for the rest of the summer. It was terrifying and unforgiving to even consider that I may have known about this on some level, and had done nothing. That the universe was sending me signs I willingly chose to ignore, and now I had lost my best friend.

And then I realized – the universe spoke to me. I didn't know what to call it, if it was God or something even larger, but I knew there was a cosmic energy out there that had connected us before. Which meant that maybe there was a cosmic energy that could still connect us. Idealistically, this sounded great but every avenue I knew to reach my brother seemed dissatisfying to me. Science broke him down too literally, and religion took him back to God and away from me. But since writing and literature had been my avenue to the universe before, I began exploring what they had to offer me. That's when I became acquainted with Emily Dickinson.

In Dickinson, I found the solidarity I had been searching for. Like me, she was intrigued by death beyond just the loss; she was interested in exploring what that meant for her loved ones now. She often spoke about maintaining a metaphysical connection with those that passed on, and how hyperbolic our narrative around death really is. Her dynamic poetic approach to the topic of death knocked it off its pedestal as this daunting, lethal enemy and instead presented a perspective I could accept.

We are made up of the same energy that makes up this universe, and we manifest ourselves in different forms – death merely allows us to change our form and continue our existence. Finding the affirmation that he was still a part of my universe, I waited for signs from him; on desperate days, I chased them down. I spent the summer sitting on his bed, wearing his football jerseys, smoking his cigarettes – watching the paper burn and the tobacco disappear and the butts pile up in his ashtray, but the heavy cloud of smoke would always stay still, lingering above.

But Dickinson's theory hinges on the one part I had looked past – bodilessness. My brother's death changed how he would manifest himself in this world. He was no longer six-foot tall with a dark, flushed complexion overshadowed by his cheeky smile. Instead his death allowed him to dissipate into the universe, his energy mixing and scattering, and every now and then on a lucky day, colliding with mine. Like the wisps of smoke that linger around long after the source has been extinguished, my brother's essence hovers around us in the world we live in, and it is through my writing that I can reach him again.

This collection of poetry is the very beginning of my family's journey as we navigate through this grief and let the universe guide us to him – to the galaxy of smoke.

An Ode to the Galaxy of Smoke

Gut Feeling

You swam and slept in me
in a little home of rubber and love
Too young to be your god
too small to be your home
and yet I was

Born in me the size
of a coiled fist
I longed to spread my legs
and pull you out
balance your head on my palm
hold your being against mine

But you made me wait
stretching your legs
realizing your worth
spreading into your space
until one day
my insides went quiet
as you giggled outside
against my chest
vibrations permeating
through my heart

You had more growing to do
running to experience
memories to make
laughs to share
friends to discover
nuances to learn
tears to hide
bravados to maintain
masculinity to prove
secrets to bury
facades to present
lies to mask your truth
that you would gladly be
shrinking to hide
once more in the crevice
of your first home

You're six feet too tall now
and six feet too deep.
We say our last prayers
and I wait for the earth
to rip apart and spit you out
I wait for you to crawl
out of the dark –
But you kept us there for years.

“He chose for himself”
“Let him go”
I smile and nod gracefully
but keep my lips tight
They don't need to know
that it's not aversion to food
but just clearing out an old room;

that you only left
so that I could once more
feel you
hold you
keep you
where you chose to return
deep in the crevice
of my womb

“We die to return
to that which created us –
I belong to you.”

The Day You Died

The day you died
I made a list
to remember you by
writing down all
that made you, you

Bitter powdered cocoa smell
stirred in with laced tobacco
crescent-like half a smile
loud, cackling, hyena laugh
tall, lanky, binding hugs
flushed hot chocolate skin
the grooves of your glasses
indenting your stubby nose
purpled lips from years of smoking

The day you died
I made a list
to hold all that
you were
but tonight
it feels too light

The teeth violently grind
and I line the green crystals
just like you taught me
neatly in the paper's fold
licking the line
rounding it into a tube
lighting one end
and exhaling the other
holding the list foolishly
thinking it can hold all of you

The day you died
I scrambled to capture you
shoving you on paper
before you slipped away

The mint plays on my tongue
and the smoke settles deep
I think of bedtime stories
with angels on our shoulders
and godmothers all watching

and late loved ones as stars
away from this world
and out of my reach –
my palm crumples the list
only to let it float right down

The day you died
I thought of how
I could keep you
in this world with me
when all you wanted
to do was leave

But the last of the smoke
pushes out with resistance
I stub the end out on the list
till the blank canvas in the dark
glows eerily from the center
with a scattering of ambers
kissing and igniting the paper
and for a second I wonder
if the sequins of stars above
are the millions of cigarettes
you stub through the sky every night
just to keep us in your sight

“I’m your galaxy
in this world, above and more –
from the stars to this smoke.”

The Beneficiaries

You died too young
to split yourself into
a will
and yet we tore you
apart enough to have
to share

You left Baba a few
stacks of guilt and
a plethora
of memories to sift
through before he learns
they're empty

You left Amma a hundred
ounces of fear stirred in
with love
that she uses as a measuring
stick to justify how nothing
compares

You left our only sister
unshielded from the dark,
a dash
of perseverance to make up
for stealing all her hope

I inherited your mask
for we have the same face –
a curse
to remind me I can never leave
you the way you left me

Clutching gifts like Christmas
Eve has dawned but the socks
don't fit,
we sit every night with our
inherited share and bargain
with God
for a better exchange
knowing perfectly well we got
exactly what we asked for.

“You may wear my face,
but its colored in with you –
You’re better off already.”

Makeover

Since you left, my morning routine
now has a new addition;
I brush my teeth, wash my face,
comb my hair, and stamp my forehead:
“He died.”

It saves me the trouble, really,
of having to explain why
I look like I have allergies
in all the wrong seasons
and why I may sleep all day
but you can find me wandering
deserted streets after three a.m.

It serves as a reminder
to those around me that
your jokes are still funny
even if I don’t laugh;
that I still enjoy your company
even if I sit there silently;
that I haven’t become morbid
but just a realist –

The stamp does push people
away;
some get uncomfortable
so they blurt out the wrong thing,
while others would rather not indulge
and keep their distance as if
my grief is a contagious disease
they may catch if we get too close

Then there are those who’re around
just enough but have become blind
to the stamp on my head –
they’re confused with my boredom,
bored with my cynicism,
cynical of our relationship –
but simply, they just forget

On an ordinary day of classes turned
into lunch breaks with friends,
turned into binge-watching shows,
to running mundane errands, to

grabbing beer in the evening before
finally getting back into bed –
on such ordinary days where I am
just another ordinary friend, it
becomes hard to remember that
I may fit outwardly but my insides
are as fragile as the remnants
of burnt paper caught in a gust of wind

I prayed the day you died
that we don't die with you
but if I am to survive in this world
without you, then I will carry you
with me wherever I go
for I refuse to move on,
I will just move forward
and if that makes me different
from all those around me,
then thank God.

“Trade in the stamp for
an angel on your shoulders –
easier to pull off.”

Sunday Paper

House for Sale:

A quiet street for families
in a friendly neighborhood
just eight streets away
from the sea.

The large courtyard
a nucleus to our home;
teak wooden swing
shaded by seasonal trees
hanging low beneath
years of late nights
and gossip
and barbecues.

The basement is tucked
under; a wooden haven
warm with memories
of movie nights
and snooker matches,
haunted by the heavy
stench of whiskey
and smoke.

Antique treasures restored
as modern coffee tables,
sideboards and a dining table
decorate the lounge,
marrying aestheticism
to the intangible
feeling of nostalgia.

The top floor swivels
around the home,
encompassing the courtyard;
the bright red and yellow
hallway our very own
yellow brick road
to our three bedrooms.

Behind the stairs
at the end of the hall
is my son's room, but now
open to interpretation –

it could be a sanctuary
of comic books and movies,
hidden cigarettes,
and late-night
rendezvous.

It has been storage
for the suitcases we brought
back from Boston,
his life packed away,
scattered around an
empty room, his bed
covered with sentimental
empty consolation prizes
we hold on to.

My wife uses it as
her meditation garden,
blooming with pictures,
his memories mimicking
the presence of life,
his desk still cluttered
with evidence that
he was once here –
the shadows in the dark
make me wonder
if he still is.

House for Sale:
Four large empty bedrooms,
a dog house and a cat bed –
looking for a family
to make it into
a home again.

“That was my palace –
the five of us is my home,
then, now, forever.”

In the Company of your Memories

Candles lit
indulgences
rolled,
one year later
I sit by you.

A stillness.
A silence.
Gravity subject
to defiance.

Motionless
sucking the air
a rainless tapestry
overhead

Candles lit
indulgences
rolled,
one year later
I think of you.

Escaping lips
rising from wicks
abandoning
matchsticks

Born out of pain
only to leave
shortly after.
Seemingly bold
unafraid, unstirred
yet so quick to flee –

Candles lit
indulgences
rolled,
one year later
I finally see you.

Your still bedroom
purposefully quiet
Your unwinding
an act of defiance

Fooled by
being unbound
insides set ablaze
and you escape –

Nothing but
wisps of cotton,
dancing farewells,
and then

A stillness.
A silence.
No trace at all.
Just a ceasing of
existence.

Candles melted,
indulgences
exhaled,
one year later
I begin to understand you.

“Like smoke, I pushed out
to be free; like smoke I too
merely vanished –“

Breadcrumbs

There are days that I am sure
you're the trail of shadows
I leave behind
irresponsibly
but they still follow
faithfully

There are nights when I leave
rooms dark and empty
waiting at the door
patiently
for a glitch of movement –
just barely

There are moments that I think
my cigarette pack now lasts
twice as long
foolishly
when a stranger asks to bum one
randomly

There are times that I sit still
enough to tell apart the
cluster of birds singing
gleefully
till your voice emerges
inexplicably

There is a lifetime to be sure
you're the trail of shadows
that stays close
subtly –
despite all this distance
you're still quite
brotherly

“I am eternal;
Life and Death mere taunts, I’m now
eternally yours.”

A Whole New Wardrobe

If I must be
a prickly needle
Your death
must be
my thread.

I keep myself
tucked away;
at a safe distance
for upon contact
they bleed
and I stay stoic –
pain means
nothing
to me.

Your death
is a mess
of yards and yards and yards
of fabric
drowning
engulfing
suffocating me,
unless I dare
to poke,
to rip through.

If I must be
a prickly needle
Your death
must be
my thread.

In every poem
I'll hide you
within the swirls
of my cursive mess
in notebooks –
I will dream
your dream
out loud until
every stadium
waves a flag

of your silhouette –
I will carve in
all the surfaces
on which you left
mere impressions –
And if I must grieve,
no other mother
should ever
have to grieve
alone.

If I must be
a prickly needle
Your death must be
my thread

I will swim
my way across
this mess of
grief and loss and uncertainty –
of your death –
I will thread it
through me
so everything I do
is stitched with you.

“Unlikely pairings
of chaos can make magic –
look at five of us.”

An Ode to Your Keef

I dropped your grinder today and watched the crystalized green explode into a Hiroshima-like bubble before the air swallowed it whole, leaving me with a half-empty brass skull with teeth that crushed your buds all across the world on chilly February nights like this one, after a long day of work and pasting smiles and faking small talk; I bent over the inanimate face cracked open and peered at the silver-green insides lined with copper dense with the smell of herb so strong that I could practically hear the spark of your \$1 lighter as it lights your late night friend before you pass it down to me too – I held the two halves of the face and put it together, feeling its magic dissipate from within my clasp, too aware of how familiar this is to the morning I wrapped your face in the coffin feeling your skin under my fingers for the last time but knowing that all the magic from within was already long gone – like the you that rests with the tombstone, this little grinder twinkles to remind me of how it once held remnants of you but a blind eye in the wrong moment stole that from me and you dissipated into the world while I crouch over an empty grinder.

“I was emptying
myself but unknowingly
knocked you over too.”

Where I'll Be

“where the sky rests
on the rounded dome;
where the boat glides
over the rough sea;
where the matchstick ignites
that first, feisty spark;
where the flowers still bloom
neglected in the dark;
where fine tobacco is licked
into thin paper tubes;
where one plane flies higher
than flights of birds;
where the first drop of rain
hits the tallest landmarks;
where the moon's flare
is brighter than fireworks;
where keys in the pocket
jingle to mimic a melody;
where the leftover snow
glistens between all the green;

any plain that seems too vast
but never too lonely;
any time magic interferes
with the daily routine;
any moment that introduces
the mundane to divinity;
that's where to look
that's where I'll be.”

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