

# PARALLELISM IN THE SELECT POEMS OF DYLAN THOMAS AND ANNE SEXTON

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## ABSTRACT

*No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. (T. S. Eliot)*

Poetry has always been one of the strongest ways for writers to express emotions that are difficult to say aloud, especially feelings about pain, helplessness, and death. Many poets have turned to poetry to understand their fears, exhaustion, and emotional struggles. Two poets who explore these intense emotional spaces are Anne Sexton and Dylan Thomas. Anne Sexton is an American confessional poet whose writing openly focuses on themes like mental illness, depression, loneliness, and the silent battles of the human mind. Her poetry is deeply personal and honest, and her poem "Wanting to Die" expresses the quiet desire to escape reality when emotional pain becomes too heavy a burden. Dylan Thomas, a Welsh poet, is known for his passionate and musical style of writing. He often explores themes such as life, death, time, and the emotional bond within families. In "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night," he writes about the fear of losing a loved one and presents a strong voice that resists the idea of death and urges life to be fought for. Even though these two poems come from different emotional situations, they share a strong connection in the way they deal with death, fear, and human vulnerability. This paper explores the emotional parallelism between these two poems by focusing on how both the poets present different responses to death; one through surrender and exhaustion, and the other through resistance and defiance. It further analyses the poetic techniques, imageries, and emotional tones used by both the poets, and how these poems can be read as if they are in dialogue with each other. The paper aims to understand how poetry becomes a space where fear of death and the desire to live are expressed in contrasting, yet connected ways.

**Key Words: Death, Vulnerability, Confessional Poetry, Poetic Tones, Parallelism.**

## INTRODUCTION

Dylan Thomas is positioned among the neo-romantics because of his intense imageries, emotional depth, and musical language. His position in literature is strongly shaped by his unique way of blending emotion with craft. Born in Wales in 1914, he attains literary fame not only because of what he writes, but because of how he writes it; with a voice that sounds raw, urgent, and deeply human. His poems do not follow strict modernist rules; instead, they create their own rhythm. This makes him stand apart in the twentieth-century literature, where many poets are breaking traditions, in terms of blending modernity; whereas Dylan is reshaping them with sounds, emotions, and a powerful sense of personal experience. He brings poetry closer to the common readers by relying on human feelings instead of intellectual puzzles. His poems are rich in rhythm, repetition, and vivid imagery. In his work *Poetry in the Making*, the English poet Ted Hughes reflects, "The struggle of being alive in the world is the root of all poetry" (p. 11). Dylan Thomas experiences that in all his poems. His poems show that literature can be emotional without being sentimental, musical without losing meaning, and personal while still addressing universal issues.

## DYLAN THOMAS' VOICE, EMOTION, AND THE ART OF DEFYING DEATH

Death is one of the strongest and most repeated themes in the poems of Dylan Thomas. But he never portrays death as still or silent. In his poem "Fern Hill", he captures the painful beauty of passing of time: "Time held me green and dying / Though I sang in my chains like the sea" (p. 10). In another poem "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London", he writes the haunting truth, "After the first death, there is no other" (p. 34). These lines show how he delineates death not only as an end but also as a moment of awareness; something that forces people to look at their own emotions, regrets, and memories. His poems are filled with loss, but they also show a strange kind of courage, a refusal to accept defeat. All of this reaches its strongest point in the poem "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night", a poem Thomas has written for his dying father. In this poem, grief becomes both personal and universal. He demands that life must be fought for until the very end and the poem is written like a cry, not just a cry of pain, but of love, fear, and helplessness. The poet shows how everyone, no matter who they are, feels the pull of death and the desire to hold onto life. His grief for his father becomes a larger message about human resistance, and this emotional sincerity is what gives the poem its lasting power. By the end, his voice becomes both a son's plea and a universal reminder that life, even if painful, deserves to be held tightly.

## ANNE SEXTON'S VOICE, LIFE, AND THE POETRY OF INNER REALM

Anne Sexton holds a prominent place in modern American poetry, especially as one of the major voices in Confessional poetry. Her writing, being strongly shaped by her personal life, includes her struggles with mental illness, depression, and emotional isolation. Unlike traditional poets who keep distance between the poet and the speaker, Sexton writes about what it feels like to live with pain. Her poetry does not try to hide suffering; instead, it places it directly in front of the reader, making her work both disturbing and deeply honest. She suffered from severe depression and underwent long periods of psychiatric

treatment, and writing poetry became a way for her to survive emotionally. In many of her poems, death is not shown as a sudden event but as a quiet presence that stays with the speaker. Critics have often noted that Sexton's poetry explores the inner life of the mind more than the outer world. As Linda Gray Sexton, the editor of Anne Sexton's works, observes, Anne Sexton's poems are "attempts to give shape to private suffering" (p. 36). This focus on emotional reality makes her poems more intimate, almost like confessions spoken aloud.

The poem "Wanting to Die" is one of Anne Sexton's most direct and unsettling explorations of death. In this poem, death is not described through violence or drama but through a calm and almost detached voice. The speaker does not present dying as an act of anger or rebellion, but as a form of exhaustion. Anne writes, "Since you ask, most days I cannot remember. / I walk in my clothing, unmarked by that voyage" (p. 51). These lines show how the desire for death exists quietly in the background of everyday life, making it more frightening and at the same time more real. What makes "Wanting to Die" especially powerful is that it does not try to justify or romanticise the desire for death. Instead, the poem presents death as something familiar and strangely comforting. The poet describes suicide as "a special language" (p. 52), suggesting that those who experience such thoughts understand something that others cannot easily explain. This idea turns death into a private emotional space rather than a public tragedy. Through this poem, the poet allows readers to see how emotional pain becomes a heavy burden that death begins to feel like a relief rather than loss.

### THE THEME OF DEATH IN POETRY

The concept of Death has always been one of the strongest emotions in literature. Every age, every poet, and every culture keeps returning to it not because it is challenging, but because it is universal. Writers use the theme of death to explore fear, love, loss, memory, and even the meaning of living. Sometimes it appears as a physical ending, sometimes as a quiet metaphor, and sometimes as a way for the poets to speak directly to life itself. Altogether, in literature death becomes a lens through which the poets and the readers alike try to understand human emotions and the fragile nature of existence. Across time, poets have portrayed death in different ways. Shakespeare, for example, illustrates the courage and fear that exist together in human beings when he writes, "Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste of death but once" (p. 84). Emily Dickinson, in her poem "Because I could not stop for Death" brings a gentle, and almost a calm presence to death, describing it as a suitor, "Because I could not stop for Death – He kindly stopped for me" (p. 76). Walt Whitman, in his poetry collection *Leaves of Grass*, characterises death as part of the same circle that connects every human being, turning it into a moment of reflection rather than finality as he says, "And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier" (p. 33). These voices show that death is not just about endings; it is also a way to think about life, the choices, and the emotions that connect the people to the world. Dylan Thomas and Anne Sexton illustrate death as one human truth and turn it into very different but deeply connected experiences. The former writes with urgency and a sense of resistance, pushing against death while mourning the loss of loved ones; the latter, in contrast, shows the quiet exhaustion and deep emotional pain. From these two representations, one can see how literature takes the same idea and turns it into multiple voices, tones, and emotions.

### PARALLELISM IN THE POEMS OF ANNE SEXTON AND DYLAN THOMAS

"Wanting to Die" and "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night" have the same theme but the way of depiction is different. Anne's poem pictures death as a friend, but Dylan's poem pictures death as something bad that you should fight against with a lot of energy and feeling. The difference between these two poems is really interesting. Both poets are dealing with the fact that we are all going to die. One poet gives up and the other fights it. This changes the way the poems sound and feel. These poems show kinds of fear and sadness. Death is a part of both the poems but it makes the readers feel different things. The poets use imageries and symbols to help the reader understand life and death better. This creates another layer of similarity between them. Anne writes in a tone of detachment. This makes her suffering comprehensible. Dylan Thomas uses symbols of fire and light to make a point. The line "Rage, rage, against the dying of the light"(P. 18) represents fighting and having energy. The two poets depict death and how life becomes very fragile. They explore the fear of dying and the struggle to live which make their poetry appealing universally. Dylan Thomas uses repetitions, vivid pictures, and rhythms in his poems that match the strong feelings of sadness and the ways to encounter them. On the other hand, Anne Sexton's poems have a slow and careful pace, with pauses and simple language that show quiet pain and reflection.

### CONCLUSION

A single reading of Dylan Thomas' poem "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" and Anne Sexton's poem "Wanting to Die", elucidates that poetry is a genre for people who wish to express their honest emotions. These two poems show two different ways that people comprehend death and how they feel at the thought of death. Through their use of imageries, rhythms, and tones, both the poets allow readers to confront mortality in a deeply personal way while recognizing that these experiences are shared across humanity. The interplay between form and imageries, in these poems highlights how two different voices can be engaged in a literary dialogue, speaking across time and personal experience about the human encounter with death. The parallelism between their works demonstrates that even opposing responses to death, resistance, and surrender can coexist in the literary landscape, enriching the human understanding of life, loss, and the enduring power of poetic expression. Thus, it examines the symbolic meaning behind the titles of the poems and how they create a parallel connection even before the poems are read.

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