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## **Feminine Empowerment and Individualism Analysis in Emily Dickinson’s Selected Poems**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study is a feminine individualistic analysis of transcendentalism in Emily Dickinson’s selected poems, especially the feminine empowerment, individualism and self-reliance. Generally, it pertains to the field of Transcendentalism, which is within the domain of feminism and modernism.

The aim of this paper is to pinpoint the power of femininity and individualism as the most important features in transcendentalism through Dickinson’s work as one of the key figures of modern literature. We get the author’s message and her feminine and individual power through a number of her poems and explaining them in detail. Moreover, it makes understanding how she valued the spirit in terms of individualism and how she achieved her writings by shutting herself alone, believing in her femininity and her spiritual skills. A contextual analysis is given to the poems.

the data relevant to individualistic feminine empowerment are drawn from some well-known English sources. The examples that are illustrated in this study are cited from The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson.

The study is a qualitative- descriptive-analytic and the steps involved are as collecting data on the subject, analyzing the data, setting up the hypothesis, and matching the data with the hypothesis, moreover to mention the style of the paper. Some remarkable concluding points end the paper.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 The Title**

The study is entitled “*Feminine Empowerment and Individualism Analysis in Emily Dickinson’s Selected Poems*” and provides an overview of ongoing research and the key traits of transcendentalism in a study of Dickinson’s selected poems. This is a developing field dedicated to the ‘study of literary feminism’, which involves research in Literature, poetry, poetic analysis, modernism and feminism. The combination of the previous features separates it from other synthetic approaches: an integration of theoretical and practical research.

### **1.2 Research Question**

The study seeks to answer what is the role of individualism and empowerment in female writer’s work? From analyzing the texts, how does Emily Dickinson treat the previous concepts in her writings?

### **1.3 The Aims**

This study aims at carrying out a qualitative individualistic analysis of the role of feminine empowerment in poetry, while paying special attention to the theory of Transcendentalism. The study also aims at verifying feminine independence through self-reliance and individualism, which is one of the key features of transcendentalism.

### **1.4 The Hypotheses**

It is hypothesized that poetic language, as represented by the data collected in this study, is indicative of many of the individualistic studies with respect to feminine perception. It is also hypothesized that feminine empowerment and individualism are key figures of transcendentalism. The present study, thus, seeks to clarify feminine individualistic characteristics in selected poems, which could account for poetic creativity within a literary feminism framework. The important theory of transcendentalism was applied to the Dickinson’s selected poems.

### **1.5 The Data**

The data collected for analysis in this study are embodied in the selected poems of Emily Dickinson. An understanding of the data assists us in determining the findings and conclusions, since Dickinson's poems are indicative of the poetry of the era.

### **1.6 The Procedure**

The work is divided into three sections: section one introduces the study and deals with the title, problems, aims, hypotheses, scope of the study, the data collected and the procedure adopted in conducting the analyses.

Section two, is entitled "Feminine Self-reliance, Empowerment and Individualism as the Main Features of Transcendentalism and Modernism" and represents a detailed theoretical account of the rise, development, and assumptions of Transcendentalism. The chapter is concerned with the relationship between Dickinson's life, Modernism, and transcendentalism as the key feature of modernism.

Section three; is entitled "Dickinson and Modern Features of Self-reliance, Empowerment and Individualism" represents analysis of selected poems of Emily Dickinson's poems.

The sections are followed by a conclusion, which provides a number of conclusions that convey a summary of the major theoretical and practical conclusions arrived at. The most significant conclusion that it reaches is that individualism leads to feminine empowerment and independency in selected Dickinson's poems.

### **1.7 The Scope**

The study is restricted to the literary study of Dickinson's selected poems in terms of individualism and feminine empowerment. The most challenging of the poet's poems has chosen in terms of analysis, and specifically, poems that best reveal the technique of femininity, individualistic features as well as the poet's creativity. Transcendentalism as a modern movement in the study of individualism and femininity focuses on the ability of the female writers in drawing the features in their poetry and themselves.

However, the paper focuses on grasping the basic, initial abilities of an individualistic female poet. A mutual study of experiences is open to current research on feminism, and individualism.

### **1.8 The Value**

The study verifies the process of understanding transcendentalism via texts and determines the literary perception through instances that are exemplified from Dickinson's selected poems. Thus, it is valuable for the researchers, students, individualistic, textbook writers in literary feminism and literature and those who are interested in the field of literary feminism.

## **2. Feminine Self-reliance, Empowerment and Individualism as the Main Features of Transcendentalism and Modernism**

### **2.1 Transcendental Feminine Self-reliance, Empowerment and Individualism**

Self-reliance or as it is called empowerment and individualism are known as the key characteristics of transcendentalism. Transcendentalists were individuals that believed "the Solution of human problems lies in the free development of individual emotions" (Yeganeh, 2009, p.2). It began at the late of 1830s and reached its peak at 1840, they believed in the purity of the nature and the power of individualism. They developed a lot, that though humans should not depend on churches and others for reaching God. It should be through their own, i.e. relying on self. For them an individual is the highest form of being with reason to create relation with natural world through advancing the relation to their inner world. They achieved the complexity of individuals and human psychology, which was a new way into American literature. The transcendentalists regarded the society as one of the ways to ruin the individual soul. However, they believed in depending on insight instead of going with flow. Thus for transcendentalists, realization comes from knowledge. Therefore, Devoutness should come from the character, not structured religion. For transcendentalists, Insight and experience are more important than reasoning.

The concept of transcendentalism with all its features describe the knowledge of male and female about themselves and the world around equally. "This knowledge



comes through intuition and imagination not through logic or the senses. People can trust themselves to be their own authority on what is right” (ushistory). Therefore, Females side by side with the males, are the active participants of transcendentalism that are involved in the freedom of emotion, empowering self and independent thinking through connecting with inner self and provide their influences, inspiration and ideas to the movement.

## **2.2 Feminine Self-reliance, Empowerment and Individualism in Modernism**

Modernism and transcendentalism are the two concepts that are named together (Lewis, 2019). One of the fundamental characteristics of modern literature is transcendentalism that it attempts to find individual abilities: male and female. It refocuses on reconnection of god, nature and self (Myerson, Harbert and Dawssow, 2010, p. 676).

Modernism in literature is established out of a belief of lyrical expression, emphasizing the individual imagination, culture, sensations, and memories of the poet. An individual in modernist literature is prior to the society, which reclaims that individualism is more interesting than society. Specifically, modernist writers were fascinated with how the individual adapted to the changing world especially the females.

Modern female poets like Margaret fuller, Ednah Dow Cheney, ... and Dickinson as the female transcendentalists continued to intricate the transcendentalists’ interest in nature, confirming that self is in connection with nature. They emphasize on the concepts of individualism, reliance on oneself for the one’s belief, and gender self-formation.

## **2.3 Dickinson as a Transcendental Poetess**

Emily is a female independent poet full of individualism and individualistic point of view. She cannot be easily put in any structure or movement. She is a poet of all the ages; a woman ahead of her time. Her poetry has an efficiency of traveling through time and place. As a remarkable person then as a great poet she was a contribution between a physical and spiritual world. Her life structures most of her poetry. She was in a historical time of women rights changes (Athena Edition, 1996, p.204). And this historical background becomes a source to prove her

feminine power. She lived in a period where girls supposed to behave and dress like girls to find a husband and make family. While Emily stayed in a personal zone without letting her femininity to be spoiled by men domination, as a true and great voice she kept writing a great art to find the spiritual fulfillment within herself. She embodies her womanhood power in individuality (Athena Edition, 1996, p.204). Emily Dickinson is one of the most widely read and famous modern poets. She was born on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1830 into prominent but not wealthy family in Amherst, Massachusetts. Dickinson's grandfather Samuel Dickinson was the founder of the Amherst College and at the times her Father was a lawyer and the treasurer of the college. She lived with her family and studied at Amherst College (The Emily Dickinson Museum, 2009), it is recalled that she was a very bright student; she studied classical Literature and Mental philosophy, which has great impact on her writings. She is an enigmatic character in literature for she had two lives: one before thirty, which was a social and regular life. Then she isolated herself from people and refused to leave home and meet new people. We do not quite understand the controversial reason behind the turning point in her social life; she stays as an unanswered question. Dickinson's family did not disturb the life she chose for herself. She never married for she believed that a husband couldn't accept the way she works, as her father does. She thought that marriage means living with strangers

### **3. Dickinson and Modern Features of Self-reliance, Empowerment and Individualism**

Emily Dickinson symbolizes transcendentalism, i.e. femininity and individualism. She is the mother of modern American poetry. It can be said that she doesn't exactly fall into any categories, for she has been so real to herself. Being a free and isolated individual that questioned human existence with the relation to the self and God, this makes her to be like transcendentalists. She is named next to Emerson in transcendentalism; her work was much ahead of her time. She chooses solitude as a way to true guidance to connect with universe, but yet doesn't exactly fall into the trap being a transcendentalist, for in some of her poetry she shows the dark side of romantic age.



In 1850 Benjamin Newton, gave Emily a collection of poems including “Give all to love”, “the Sphinx”, “the problem”, “Merlin I” and “Merlin II” all by Ralph Emerson the heart of transcendentalism (Yeganeh, 2009), which affected her poetry and we see the resonation of his poetry in her. Self- reliance, i.e. empowerment and individualism were two main characteristics of transcendentalism, the freedom of the individual to gain knowledge and reach God through their own understandings. They searched for a liberated philosophy. Dickinson’s poetry obviously reflects all the aspects of the literary and philosophical movement of transcendentalism.

Through wide use of ‘I’ in Emily Dickinson’s poems, Dickinson tried to be herself, originating new ideas and refused to be a follower, which shows the strength of her individuality, and the limitless power of human ability to create a link between natural and spiritual world. She searched for high standards of an individual, the conditions that someone going through, the life senses, God, faith, and the place of human’s existence.

Dickinson’s poetry is holding the most essential characteristics of transcendentalism as the study of nature in relation to self-knowledge; natural and spiritual facts, individualism, self-reliance, revolution against materialism, femininity and the relation of a human to God (Yeganeh, 2009, pp. 3-4).

Thomas Wentworth Higginson describes Emily as “a distant and special person, with unique and powerful individual skills” (Hodgins, 1996, p.320). The way he represents her shows the complex simplicity in Emily, which can be regarded as her feminine power.

In her poetry, she deals with death, immortality, self-reliance, religion, nature, self-realization and individuality. Dickinson sees God in nature. (Hodgins, 1996, p.320). The form and the content of her poetry show an individual’s power that cannot be silenced.

Individualism as a woman principle is one of the most shown features in Emily Dickinson’s poetry; she values the self, and thinks that a person should upraise the soul to the high qualities through isolation and being with oneself. The tenderness in her words shows the feminine beauty in her poetry. In her poetry, she had a tendency to attain high qualities of the soul and an ideal human being. She isolated



herself to find the real self within herself. Her separation from people becomes the reason to give us this fruitful literature. The strangeness she felt in others made her to value her loneliness. Her poetry is the reflection of a high valued self and a body with a soul that is fed with knowledge of a true life. The lines of her poems lead us to understand the individualistic desires and goals more. She is the kind of poet whom found her own interests in qualified poetry. She found her supreme soul in the isolated individual self and her feminine great qualities in the greatisolated poet:

I cannot dance upon my Toes—  
No Man instructed me—  
But oftentimes,  
among my mind,  
A Glee possesseth me,

That had I Ballet—knowledge—  
Would put itself abroad  
In Pirouette to blanch a Troupe—  
Or lay a Prima, mad,

And though I had no Gown of Gauze—  
No Ringle, to my Hair—  
Nor hopped to Audiences—like Birds—  
One Claw upon the Air—

Nor tossed my shape in Eider Balls—  
Nor rolled on wheels of snow  
Till I was out of sight, in sound—  
The House encore me so—

Nor any know I know the Art  
I mention—easy—Here—  
Nor any Placard boast me—





It's full as Opera— (Johnson, 1960)

In the above example, Emily presents the value of individuality. She shows how she is living a life of her own without following the instructions of the society. While women in that time were supposed to behave according to the society and man's needs. The poem is represented with a very strong imagery, and she pictures her simplicity and valuing it with her own high and unique spiritual world. Emily tries to value the individuality through reason, which is one of the strongest features of transcendentalism (Yeganeh, 2009, p.2). The poem like most of her other poems is entitled with the first line. It's a complete feminine description of a ballerina:

In the first stanza, she shows how confident she is, by living a life based on her wishes, a life that fits and pleases her. When the reader reads the first line she/he thinks of dancing on a stage performed. But then in the next two lines, we understand that it is a spiritual dance. It is a dance performance for her own by her own imagination. She feels that she is more important than any other public audience and by her own should value the performance. The visual imagery in the first line is the image of a ballerina (Drury, 1995, p.137), which makes the reader to visualize a beautiful lady dancing ballerina.

The second stanza again values her own abilities and tells us that if she would have been able to dance ballet, her own astonishment would make the ballerinas to envy her amazing skills. She presents that even the art of ballet would not accept her perfectness. Through these lines we conclude that she feels sorry for the other women living in her time for they are hiding their real abilities and concentrate only on man's needs. As in the third part of her poem she tries to differentiate her own perfection with the other ballerinas though she doesn't possess anything fancy, the fancy clothes or the fancy way they hoop to the audience. Women in that time dressed and behaved like dolls and represent themselves in a way to attract men in order to get married which was the only goal of women back then (Drury, 2009, p. 256). She is proud of herself being her own audience and performer, as she describes her glee in not being called again for another encore. The sound of the audiences' applauds "auditory imagery" and the appearance of the ballerinas "visual imagery" the two types of imagery



presented in this stanza, indicate her interest in the relation between eyes and ears.

Finally, she introduces us with her new world a heaven, which she belongs to and it's of her own. she takes us back to one of the characteristics of transcendentalism, which is the human relation with God from their own way. And it can also indicate her abilities in writing poetry for she asked that her writing to be burned after her death.

The Soul selects her own Society —  
Then — shuts the Door —  
To her divine Majority —  
Present no more —

Unmoved — she notes the Chariots — pausing —  
At her low Gate —  
Unmoved — an Emperor be kneeling  
Upon her Mat —

I've known her — from an ample nation —  
Choose One —  
Then — close the Valves of her attention —  
Like Stone—(Johnson, 1960)

*The Soul Selects Her Own Society* presents us with individuality and the isolation she chose in her life, as soon as we find the true self and we understand our inner self when isolate from people. It's a poem of three stanzas and she introduces us with the absolute and stable individual. The unlimited trust in the individual and in self-realization is the strongest characteristic of her poetry:

she represents us with the soul going back to the liberation of choosing self-individualism, shutting oneself all alone and finding the spiritual understanding of the self. She embodies the soul as a structured body. The visual imagery is obvious that we visualize a person going to a room and shutting the doors then starting to worship. Her own society is depicted through her isolated individuality. And her



divine majority is the practice behind her shut doors.

In the second stanza she describes the stillness the soul chooses while worshipping alone in her room, in this poem she introduces us with the ups and downs we face in life, the challenges we take and the struggles we face, i.e. self-reliance.

Lastly, she describes the individual state as a big nation being complete to her, and as if her physical and spiritual parts are two different people. She states that she knows the soul that is her own. She declares that the soul chooses the isolation for the sake of the liberation and stays still. She likens the soul to a stone. Reaching the final decision to isolate and depend on her individual decision. However, the double versions of Dickinson in this stanza the one that is isolated through the eyes of the society, and the great Emily as a poet who is not recognized by the public.

Me from Myself—to banish—  
Had I Art—  
Impregnable my Fortress  
Unto All Heart—

But since Myself—assault Me—  
How have I peace  
Except by subjugating  
Consciousness?

And since We're mutual Monarch  
How this be  
Except by Abdication—  
Me—of Me? (Johnson,1960)

*Me from Myself-to banish* is a poem of self-reliance, empowerment and self-conflict, Dickinson divides herself into two parts either her spiritual and her physical part or her angelic or dark side, she tries to find the truest self from this division. The conflict of her consciousness that leads one to individual growth and division. In this poem she engages two different types of self and compares them, which are completely different “Conceit” (Drury, 1995, p.159).



The poem extends the idea of the previous poem, she wants to vanish herself from the one everyone knows and to create another self:

In the first stanza, she represents us with her individualistic will of banishing a part of her; either it is the soul she dismisses from the body. For when she says 'Me from Myself' we feel she is a division of two parts but in one real individual. She then doubts if she has the ability to make this division, and giving it life and meaning.

Second stanza represents us with the conflict between myself and me as two soldiers fighting with each other and only my bringing one under the control of consciousness to reach the peace. She is watching them fighting to find the peace in herself. In this stanza the tone of the poem changes into very philosophical layers. She is struggling with her double ones.

The poem ends with the sense of the individuality strengthens. She reaches the point that 'Myself' and 'Me' are Mutual of the same structure, she asks how to separate them, it's only by dismissing the Me of Me which goes to a bigger structure of dismissing the self from self.

They shut me up in Prose –

As when a little Girl

They put me in the Closet –

Because they liked me “still” –

Still! Could themself have peeped –

And seen my Brain – go round –

They might as wise have lodged a Bird

For Treason – in the Pound –

Himself has but to will

And easy as a Star

Abolish his Captivity –

And laugh – No more have I –(Johnson,1960)

The speaker presents us with a third person pronoun, which is vague and not clear



whom she is talking about. She again separates herself once more by presenting them as they, and being separated by them. The speaker tries to value of being isolated and being by herself. She even tries to go to the desires of silencing women and seizing their freedom, the poem presents us with the idea of the followers of New England when they worked on man and women equality. She believes that even isolating her from the rights would not make her to lose the abilities, because she is a strong and true individual. She considers herself as the other from the whole:

Emily is the representative of women in her time, which they have been shut, to not let them be free in expressing their abilities. The image of a little girl shut up in a room is created in the first stanza “visual imagery” (Drury, 1995, p.137). Moreover ‘They’ can be regarded as men and trying to silence women to keep them nameless (Beard, 2017, p. 38).

In the second stanza, Emily tries to state that trying to keep her still is useless, the brain is likened to a person going around (Drury, 1995, p.159). Furthermore, she indicates that no matter how they try to keep her still, but for the individual power is too much cannot be silenced. She also compares herself with the bird no matter how much they try, can’t cage the individual for in herself she got her boundaries and a free mind.

In the last stanza she personifies the star, giving it human qualities as looking at the earth. And she declares that a woman can be freed if she chooses to be. The individual is free to choose the individual liberation if she has the will. She states that the bird can escape the cage as easy as she saved herself from the stillness they chose for her.

I took my Power in my Hand  
And went against the World—  
‘T was not so much as David —had—  
But I—was twice as bold—

I aimed my Pebble—but Myself  
Was all the one that fell—

Was it Goliath was too large—  
Or only I too small? (Johnson, 1960)

In this two-stanza poem Emily presents us with her individual power to show that how to stand against others and being a unique soul. She is comparing herself with 'David' and 'Goliath'. The dilemma of a personal state and the fight between the spiritual and physical part of oneself is a way to prove individual power. Again a hand is regarded "Synecdoche", a part of the body standing for the whole. Capitalizing the four words 'Power', 'Hand', and 'World' and 'Pebble' emphasizing this three makes the poem more important. The strange capitalization in the poem is practiced by her:

In the first stanza, she presents us with individual power, and using that power to resist and stand against all, she gives power a materialistic feature and as if it is something can be hold. She compares the power to David in the Bible as the philistine giant, according to one tradition slain by David (1 Sam. 17). She thinks that her power is even greater than the power of David which is a "Biblical Allusion" (Drury, 1995, p. 16).

Additionally in the second stanza she tries to tell us, that the individual power might not stand as it is and we might fall, she tries to again mention the biblical story of David and Goliath, which tells us about her inner dilemma and her doubt about the story. And she compares herself with Goliath, again the poem continues with individual comparisons with others. The Biblical Allusion continuous in this Stanza as we have Goliath (Drury, 1995, p. 16).

## **Conclusion**

Studying modern literature cannot be fulfilled without Emily Dickinson. While Dickinson is discussed it cannot be fulfilled, if the Feminine, self-reliance, empowerment and individualism are not considered. Her poetry consists of high morals and deep human relations with oneself. She isa unique and highly qualified feminine individual that well reflected in her poetry. The spirit, being true to oneself, self-realization, immortality and passion are subjects of her great poetry. She was investigating for the true spirit, and was after finding her double that was



within herself. In this paper through the poems, the soul of her poetry has been analyzed to understand the core purpose of the poet, to the point that she was in struggle with her double and trying to choose the right one. The paper gives a clear understanding how she valued individualism and the power of her femininity and subjected it in her writings.

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## شیکردنه وهی دهسه لاتی مینه یی و تاکه رای له کومه لیک دیاریکراوی شیعی

### ئیمیلی دیکنسۆن

#### پوخته:

ئهم تووژینه وهی تیشک دهخاته سهر که سیتی تاکی مینه یی سهرده می ترانسیدینتالیزمدا له ریگه ی هیئانه وهی به لگه ی شیعی و به دیاریکراوی چهند شیعیکی ئیمیلی دیکنسۆندا. ئهم باسه جهخت له سهر نیشان دانی هیز و دهسه لاتی مینه و تاکه گه رای و پشت به ستن به توانای خود دهکاته وه و له هه مان کاتدا تووژینه وه که دهچیته بازنه ی شیکردنه وهی فیمینستی له چوارچیوهی ترانسیدینتالیزمدا و هه و لدهدا له هیزی مینه یی و تاکه رای وهک گرنگترین ئاکاره کانی ئه و سهرده مه له ریگه ی شیعه ره کانی دیکنسۆنه وه وهک یه کئ له گرنگترین نووسه ره کانی ئه ده بی مؤدپن بکۆلێته وه.

ئهم کاره به ره و تیگه یشتن له هیز و دهسه لاتی تاکه که سی شاعیر له ریگه ی ژماره یه کی دیاری شیعه ره کانی و شیکر نه وهی وردی بیان په لکیشمان دهکا و سهره رای هه موو ئه مانه ش ده رگایه که بۆ تیگه یشتن له شیوازی به زرراگرتنی روحی نووسه ر و چۆنیتی به ره و پيش بردنی نووسینه کانی و باوه ری به هیزی تاکه که سی و مینه یی خوی.

### تحليل فردانية التمكين الأنثوي في قصائد إيميلي ديكنسون المختارة

#### المخلص:

تعد هذه الدراسة تحليلاً أنثوياً للفردانية المتعالية في قصائد إيميلي ديكنسون المختارة ، وخاصة التمكين الأنثوي والفردية والاعتماد على الذات. بشكل عام ، تتعلق بمجال الفلسفة المتعالية ، التي تقع في مجال النسوية والحداثة. الهدف من هذا البحث هو تحديد قوة الأنوثة والفردية كأهم سمة من سمات الفلسفة المتعالية من خلال عمل ديكنسون كأحد الشخصيات الرئيسية في الأدب الحديث. يقودنا هذا البحث إلى فهم قوتها الأنثوية والفردية من خلال عدد من قصائدها وشرحها بالتفصيل. علاوة على ذلك ، فإنه يجعل فهم كيفية تقديرها للروح من حيث الفردية وكيف حققت كتاباتها من خلال الانغلاق على نفسها ، مؤمنة بأنوثتها ومهاراتها الروحية. وتم إعطاء تحليل سياقي للقصائد. خلال هذه الدراسة، اذ تم الحصول على البيانات ذات الصلة بالتمكين الأنثوي الفردي من بعض المصادر الإنجليزية المعروفة. ووثقت هذه الدراسة بالاستشهاد بالأمثلة الموضحة في هذه الدراسة من " المجموعة الكاملة لقصائد إيميلي ديكنسون ". الدراسة في الحقيقة هي





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