



**DEATH WISH IN POEMS OF ANNE SEXTON
AND STEVIE SMITH**

**2021
MASTER'S THESIS
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE
AND LITERATURE**

Shaymaa Shareef Mohammed ALSALIHI

**Thesis Supervisor
Assist. Prof. Dr. Nazila HEIDARZADEGAN**

DEATH WISH IN POEMS OF ANNE SEXTON AND STEVIE SMITH

Shaymaa Shareef Mohammed ALSALIHI

T.C.

Karabuk University

Institute of Graduate Programs

Department of English Language and Literature

Prepared as Master's Thesis

Thesis Supervisor

Assist. Prof. Dr. Nazila HEIDARZADEGA

KARABÜK

April 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
THESIS APPROVAL PAGE.....	3
DECLARATION	4
FOREWORD	5
DEDICATION	6
ABSTRACT.....	7
ÖZ.....	8
ARCHIVE RECORD INFORMATION	9
ARŞIV KAYIT BİLGİLERİ (in Turkish).....	10
SUBJECT OF THE RESEARCH	11
PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH	11
METHOD OF THE RESEARCH	11
HYPOTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH / RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	11
SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS / DIFFICULTIES	12
INTRODUCTION	13
CHAPTER ONE	19
FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS THEORY	19
1.1. Understanding Death and Death Wish	19
1.2. The Freudian Theory of Personality	20
1.2.1. Conscious, Unconscious, Subconscious	21
1.2.2. Id, Ego, and Superego	22
1.3. Theory of Drives.....	24
1.3.1. Life Instincts (Eros).....	24
1.3.2. Death Instincts (Thanatos)	25
1.4. Death Wish and Self-Destruction	25
1.5. Reasons for Death wish.....	26
1.5.1. Anxiety and Depression	26
1.5.2. Trauma	27
1.5.3. Bipolar Disorder	27

1.5.4. Psychosexual Development	28
CHAPTER TWO	30
CONFESSIONAL POETRY AND ANNE SEXTON	30
2.1. Overview of Confessional Poetry	30
2.2. Anne Sexton, a Confessional Poetess	32
2.3. An Analysis of Anne Sexton’s Poetry	33
CHAPTER THREE	65
MODERN ENGLISH POETRY AND STEVIE SMITH	65
3.1. Modern English Poetry	65
3.2. Stevie Smith	66
3.3. An Analysis of Smith’s Poetry	69
CONCLUSION	82
REFERENCES	87

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that in my opinion the thesis submitted by Shaymaa Shareef Mohammed ALSALIHI titled “THE DEATH WISH IN POEMS OF ANNE SEXTON AND STEVIE SMITH” is fully adequate in scope and in quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science

Assist. Prof. Dr. Nazila HERIDERZADEGAN
Thesis Advisor, Department of English Language and literature

This thesis is accepted by the examining committee with a unanimous vote in the Department of English language and Literature as a Master of Science thesis. April 19, 2021

<u>Examining Committee Members (Institutions)</u>	<u>Signature</u>
Chairman : Assist.Prof.Dr. Nazila HEIDERZADEGAN (KBU)
Member : Assoc.Prof.Dr. Harith Ismael TURKI (KBU)
Member : Assist.Prof.Dr. Raşit ÇOLAK (UU)

The degree of Master of Science by the thesis submitted is approved by the Administrative Board of the Institute of Graduate Programs, Karabuk University.

Prof. Dr. Hasan SOLMAZ
Director of the Institute of Graduate Program.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own work and all information included has been obtained and expounded in accordance with the academic rules and ethical policy specified by the institute. Besides, I declare that all the statements, results, materials, not original to this thesis have been cited and referenced literally.

Without being bound by a particular time, I accept all moral and legal consequences of any detection contrary to the aforementioned statement.

Name Surname: Shaymaa Shareef Mohammed ALSALIHI

Signature:

FOREWORD

First of all, I would like to thank the supreme power the Almighty God, obviously the one who has always guided me to work on the right path of life.

I would like to express my deep feelings of gratitude to my supervisor Assist. Prof. Dr. Nazila HEIDARZADEGAN for her kind guidance, wise comments, and support. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to prepare this thesis with you.

I am extremely grateful to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Harith Turki for helping and encouraging me though out the year. I have no valuable words to express my thanks.

Special thanks to Dr. Mahmood Kadir Ibrahim for his motivation and encouragement.

Moreover, I would like to thank Assist. Prof. Raşit ÇOLAK for his contribution to the success of my studies.

Finally, I bestow my deepest gratitude to my caring, loving, and supportive family.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my lovely aunt, dear mother, and my grandmother “Safya” who raised me, loved me, and encouraged me. Although she is no longer in this world, her memories continue to regulate my life.

I dedicate this thesis to dear Sensei, who taught me how to depend on myself.

ABSTRACT

This study aims at analyzing Anne Sexton and Stevie Smith's obsession with death as established in their poetry, concentrating mainly on Freud's psychoanalysis of the death drive. Examining the writers' personal life and psychological state of mind, revealing the main reason behind their desire to die, and describing the way they reflected this death wish in their poems are the major concerns of this study. The first chapter presents a brief introduction to the concept of death, explaining Freud's theory of death drive and presenting the main reasons for wishing to die and how the unconscious mind develops this desire. The second chapter discusses the American confessional poetess Anne Sexton and how she confesses her death wish in her poems. Evidently, revealing her personal experience enables the reader to discover the inner reason behind this lust for death. The third chapter deals with the English Poet Stevie Smith who successfully admits her death wish in her poems. She reveals her struggles in life and views death as a god who can save her. In both chapters two and three, the poets' selected poems were analyzed in the light of Freud's psychoanalysis theory to display the reason for their death wish. In short, it could be asserted that death became Sexton and Smith's greatest muse; they depict death as a welcome release and a gift for man which provides a peaceful end to life. The psychoanalysis acts as a mean of self-analysis, where both writers confess their desire to 'return to an earlier state', thus presenting death as a kinder and desired friend to be with. Finally, the study concludes that both poets desire death because they want peace and relief from their miserable life.

Keywords: American Confessional Poetry, Anne Sexton, Death wish, Modern English Poetry, Stevie Smith.

ÖZ

Bu çalışma Anne Sexton ve Stevie Smith'in şiirlerinde yer almış olan Freud'un psikanalizindeki ölüm arzusunu temel alarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışmanın başlıca konuları; yazarların kişisel hayatını ve zihnin psikolojik durumunu incelemek, ölüm arzusunun arkasındaki başlıca nedenini ortaya çıkarmak ve bu arzuyu şairlerin şiirlerinde nasıl yansıttıklarını göstermektir. İlk bölümde Freud'un ölüm arzusu teorisini açıklanmış, ölüm isteğinin ana sebeplerini ve bilinçdışı zihnin bu isteği nasıl geliştirdiğini ortaya koyarak ölüm kavramına kısa bir giriş sunmaktadır. İkinci bölümde ise Amerika'da bir akım olan itiraf şiiri, Anne Sexton'ı ve Stevie Smith'in ölüm arzusunu, şiirlerinde nasıl itiraf ettiğini ele almaktadır. Ayrıca açık bir şekilde şairin kişisel deneyimlerini ortaya çıkarmak ve okuyucuya ölüme olan bu isteğin ardındaki içsel nedenini keşfetme olanağı vermektedir. Sexton, hayattaki mücadelelerini ortaya koyar ve ölümü kendisini kurtaracak bir tanrı olarak görmektedir. İkinci ve üçüncü bölümlerde ise şairlerin seçilmiş şiirleri, ölüm arzularının nedenlerini ortaya koymak için Freud'un pskoanalitik teorisi ışığında analiz edilmiştir. Kısacası Sexton ve Smith'in ölümün en büyük ilham perisi olduğu söylemektedirler. Onlar ölümün hoş karşılanan bir teslimiyet olduğunun yanında, insan hayatını sona ulaştıran huzurlu bir hediye olarak göstermişlerdir. Psikanaliz, her iki yazarın da "önceki duruma dönme" isteğini itiraf ettikleri kendi kendini analiz etme yöntemi olarak işlev görmektedir. Böylece onlar, ölümün kendileri için iyi bir arkadaş olduğunu tavsir etmektedirler. Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, her iki şairin de sefil ve berbat giden bir yaşantıdan kurtulmanın, rahata ve huzura kavuşmanın tek yolunun ölüm olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anne Sexton, Modern İngiliz Şiiri, Ölüm arzusu, Stevie Smith, itiraf şiiri.

ARCHIVE RECORD INFORMATION

Title of the Thesis	Death Wish in Poems of Anne Sexton and Stevie Smith
Author of the Thesis	Shaymaa Shareef Mohammed ALSALIHI
Supervisor of the Thesis	Assist. Prof. Dr. Nazila HEIDARZADEGAN
Status of the Thesis	Master
Date of the Thesis	19 / 4 /2021
Field of the Thesis	English Language and Literature
Place of the Thesis	KBU/LEE
Total Page Number	93
Keywords	American Confessional Poetry, Anne Sexton, Death wish, Modern English Poetry, Stevie Smith.

ARŞİV KAYIT BİLGİLERİ (in Turkish)

Tezin Adı	Anne Sexton ve Stevie Smith'in Şiirlerinde Ölüm Arzusu
Tezin Yazarı	Shaymaa Shareef Mohammed Alsalihi
Tezin Danışmanı	Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Nazila HEIDARADEGAN
Tezin Derecesi	Yüksek Lisans
Tezin Tarihi	19 / 4 /2021
Tezin Alanı	İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı
Tezin Yeri	KBÜ/LEE
Tezin Sayfa Sayısı	93
Anahtar Kelimeler	Amerikan itiraf Şiiri, Anne Sexton, Ölüm arzusu, Modern İngiliz Şiiri, Stevie Smith.

SUBJECT OF THE RESEARCH

This study fundamentally aims to clarify Freudian analysis of the death wish in the light of the psychological aspects of Anne Sexton and Stevie Smith's poems.

PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is to highlight how the two writers, Sexton and Smith, revealed their death wish in their poems in different styles, and how it works as a reflection to Freudian's theory of psychoanalysis. The main purpose is to display the inner feelings, lives, childhood, and relationship with people who meant a lot to them, their psychological disorder, their desire to depart, and their mental illnesses.

The study tackles both Sexton and Smith's affiliation to another world, their gloomy ideas about life, their feelings of alienation, and misfit in the society. The study thus aims at answering the following research questions:

- How is the representation of death considered as a psychological state of mind based on Anne Sexton's point of view?
- How is the representation of death considered as a psychological state of mind based on Stevie Smith's point of view?

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

Anne Sexton and Stevie Smith's death wish was analyzed based on Freudian's theory of psychoanalysis. The result of the study enables the reader to understand the reason for those poet's desire to die.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH / RESEARCH PROBLEM

The study focuses on finding how Anne Sexton and Stevie Smith applied the theme of death in some of their works. The study hopes to find how psychology and death wish are correlated with each other by applying theories of psychoanalysis on the works of the two poets in order to show that death meant not only an escape but also a triumph.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS / DIFFICULTIES

The study is limited to the two poets Anne Sexton and Stevie Smith and their selected poems in the current study. To explore other aspects of their poems differently, psychoanalysis, feminism, deconstructionism, and other theories can be adopted for the analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The poetry of the fifties in America and England managed successfully to manifest the poet's anguish, personal suffering, and trauma with the misery of the whole nation. The two poets, Anne Sexton and Stevie Smith, are obvious representatives of this kind of poetry. Their poems express feelings of disconnection, self-destruction, and agony that lead to an intense desire to die. Therefore, the main goal of this study is to explore the feelings of self-destruction and death wish extensively as well as address the question: what are the main reasons behind these emotions and how did both writers express them in their poems?

Literature should have different ways of viewing and visualizing death through a variety of perspectives. Some may argue that it is useful to die in a literary work as a reaction to the loss of a dear object or individual. More specifically, death has been part of human experience since the beginning of the world. However, even though scientists, philosophers, authors, and laymen have been talking about this subject, death is a mystery that eludes adequate explanation. It is usually the end of life. Apart from the reality of physical disintegration, people are still in the dark about what causes death. Why is it going to die? Where is death? What is death? What about after death? What is going to happen after death? These are questions that continue to plague people. However, there are no answers and individuals have to witness their own death. Needless to say, death is an omnipresent phenomenon of literature, where the universal appeal of death and its presence in literature can be understood in the poetic language through the poetry of P. B. Shelley:

Death is here and death is there,
Death is busy everywhere
All around, within, beneath
Above is death--and we are death (Shelley, 1905).

Human beings are aware enough of death and its fatal ending because it is inevitable to everyone. Such awareness horrifies one's conscience and will not allow the mind to relax until one finds ways to make sense of death by any means, such as traditions, tales, religions, and doctrines.

This study seeks to explore Anne Sexton's and Stevie Smith's selected death-related poems, so that the poets' life may be intertwined with their poems. First of all, this study

contextualizes various approaches to death in the Western history. The investigation of the American women's confessional poetry and contemporary British poetry shows that death represents a significant aspect.

Death can be described as unavoidable subject and the source of worry. As the child develops cognitively from the beginning of conscious awareness, S/he gradually acknowledges that death is unavoidable, universal and irreversible. Further, death refers to the end of an individual's thought, motion, sensation, and feeling, and this implies the biological meaning of death. This biological characteristic of death ensures for the individuals the existence of death, and thus attempts are made by desperate people to imagine death, which is the end of all imaginations. When imagining death, one would wonder about the meaning of life which is merely a flicker of old and conscious experience. The human mind is complex, messy, and usually inconsistent. By the age of ten, the individual's mind starts to relate the biological concept of death with supernatural thoughts, thereby implying that the mind and the body transform after death to somewhere else and is purified from its old experience. Such beliefs exist in the historical cultures all around the world in different historical periods (Lane et al., 2016). This ambiguous coexistence of both biological and supernatural methods of imagining death creates insecurity and uncertainty in the individual's mind, which later produces anxiety. This kind of worry about the subject of death makes people speak and write about it.

Literature presents and articulates feelings and thoughts regarding the consciousness of death. That is, writers transmit their imagination into words through the art of writing by internalizing their subjective experience and connecting the present with the past and sometimes even with the future. In this regard, literature is a written form of that verbal imagination. Therefore, dealing with the death of loved ones is an important issue among people and this kind of personal experience is an outstanding feature illustrated in literature (Carroll, 2012). In the following chapters, both poets, Anne Sexton and Stevie Smith, reveal their desire to depart after the death of those who meant a lot for them. They create an imaginative sense of their lives, trying to escape from the bitter reality of their lives. Individuals are aware of the fact that death will bring peace to their striving, and it will provide an end to their commitments and obligations. Death will definitively end all the activities and deeds of the individual whether it is

good or bad. Once the person dies, all his unfulfilled desires will be frozen into everlasting emptiness, and it will be merely an irrecoverable past. Accordingly, psychologists identify uncertainty, avoidance, and fear as responses to death (Clements & Rooda, 2000).

When relating Death to psychoanalysis, Freud summarizes his ideas in a paper entitled *Thoughts for the times on War and Death*. In its second section in *Totem and Taboo*, he asserts that man could not admit the finality of death when he is confronting its reality, therefore imaginary ways are constructed by individuals to admit death's reality and at the same time to deny its finality. Freud added the idea of human guilt to his construction:

Man could no longer keep death at a distance, for he had tasted it in his pain about the dead; but he was nevertheless unwilling to acknowledge it, for he could not conceive of himself as dead. So he devised a compromise: he conceded the fact of his own death as well, but denied it the significance of annihilation ... In this way his train of thought ran parallel with the process of disintegration which sets in with death. His persisting memory of the dead became the basis for assuming other forms of existence and gave him the conception of a life continuing after apparent death (Freud, 1915, p.294).

Freud evoked those reflections by the First World War, and his view on death remained same until 1920. When his dear daughter died, he proposed his concept of 'the death drive' in his book *Beyond the pleasure principle*, strenuously denying the relation between his book and the death of his daughter to avoid the idea of exaggeration in human emotions. Freud introduced 'the death drive' because his post-war patients had complained from physical trauma, and accordingly in their dreams, they kept the physical trauma in their unconscious mind. Freud believed that the pleasure principle ought to bring those patients a psyche equilibrium, and there should be a stronger instinct to bring the balance to human psyche (Bowker, 1993).

The postulation of the death drive can be related to the notion that the purpose of life is death, yet there was another important reason for Freud to base his assumption, while watching his grandson, who was only 18 months old, playing a game. The summary of his idea is that the child was playing a game, but the only thing that could be understood is the idea of 'gone' or disappear. As the child throws a toy, he expresses his interest and satisfaction, but when he cannot see that toy, he reveals feelings of pain and sadness. Freud confirm his view of the coming and disappearing of the mother, his emphasis is on the disappearance the time that the child expresses dissatisfaction and

reactivates a painful event. Later, Freud applied this notion to psychoanalysis, specifically to his patients who stop making progress when they start to recall and remember the same symptomatic events. The loss of a loved subject will lead individuals to literally get stuck in their old memories as they 'recycle' the moment of their loss. According to Freud, repetition is a main constituent of the individual's psyche life. Since life is preceded by non-life and leads to non-life, then the goal of life is death. Freud adopted the term 'Thanatos' from Greek which stands for death, and this Thanatos struggles with Eros (life drive) and aims to return organic life to its inorganic state. Eros on the other hand continues to bring back the organic unity to create stability in the human psyche (ibid).

A Fundamental question of this study is why life would require and request for death, and more painfully why both writers Anne Sexton and Stevie Smith would seek death and wish to die. What was the reason behind their death wish? How does Freud illustrate the human desire to die? Anne Sexton and Stevie Smith share a similar wish which is their desire to die and escape from life as it cannot provide them peace and happiness. According to the psychoanalysis, this kind of desire appears when the death drive controls life drive, thereby creating an imbalance in the person's psyche. Although both writers struggle to understand death, and attempt to find the meaning of life to avoid their death wish, each time they view death as a savor and a friend. Hence, this study is an attempt to display the inner feelings of both Sexton and Smith to address the reason of their psychological disorder, their desire to depart, and their mental illnesses.

American poetry between 1950 and 1970 introduced the confessional school which presents a genre of most expressive poets. This school emerged in 1959 with Robert Lowell's *Life Studies* publication. The critic M.L. Rosenthal is the first one who described this genre as the poetry of confession; Confessional poets reveal their inner feelings with imagery, using their personal experience to display the reaction to common emotions or events in life. Both imagery and dream material worked together to shape the body of the confessional poetry. Themes of this highly subjective genre focus specifically on anguish, pain, and ugliness of life, despite its beauty and pleasure. The genre began with poets who dealt with topics, such as death wish, suicide, and depression. The best example of suicide can be Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath, who revealed their struggles, and raised their awareness of the complexity of life. This

expressive genre influenced many poets and changed the focus of modern poetry, including the subject matter. This intensified intertwine with the self, distinct confessional poetry from most of the genres that preceded it, thereby allowing more personal connection to feelings of both the reader and the writer (Al-Shamiri, 2012).

Confessional poets including Anne Sexton choose to write about common experience, such as childbirth, death, and other emotional events which can be understood and appreciated by many readers. This kind of poetry tries to display the poet's feelings and state of mind, clarifying his or her thoughts about life. When addressing Sexton, she creates a style of poetry that enables confessional poets to reveal emotions without restrictions; her poems do not express fear of the secrets or taboo issues. Accordingly, her poetry was filled with many ideas and images about death. In the time when suicide, death and death wish were a taboo to some extent, Sexton was not afraid to write and talk about it especially as a woman, and she tackled different issues which was a taboo in America (ibid).

Modern English poetry generally emerged in the early 20th century, after the First World War, specifically after the publication of the work of T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* in 1922. The term 'modernism' indicates an apparent separation from old traditions. The modern poetry witnessed the experimentation of new forms of expression, which aimed at expressing their feelings and thoughts. More specifically, modernism includes different ways and techniques of expression, such as using imaginative ways to present concrete images for readers in order to feel the experience by themselves and using different significant symbols to display their ideas and emotions for readers who are able to illustrate those feelings intellectually. Furthermore, modernist writers reflect true reality of the world and follow the naturalist way of showing the psychological, private and fantastic neurotic way of presenting unrepeatable first impression of everything by the individual. They also search deeply into the individual's own psyche, attempting to express the deepest and hidden feelings like the Confessional poets (Whitworth, 2010).

Writers of modern poetry express their melancholy and sadness in their poems, and rebel against the excess of idealism of Victorian Romanticism, trying to reach a new style of writing which is about the experience of the writer. Generally, writers of modern English era try to search deeply into the individual's own psyche, intoxication and

madness to change their illogical thoughts of the unconscious to a written language. In this regard, modern poets have considerably displayed death as dilemma that arouses severe anxiety. Thus, death wish appears as common subject in some poets' works such as Stevie Smith. In her poems, the reader can understand her desire for death, as a reason of her depressed circumstances in the modern society. Smith was haunted by the idea of death, where she finds her final peace. In her poems, she addresses human suffering, culture, gender, and politics, presenting the horror of existence in the human mind. Besides, she reveals her death wish which is the drive towards annihilation and explores it through art (Al Ahmed, 2016).

Finally, this study attempts to highlight both Anne Sexton and Stevie Smith's desire to die, revealing their personal experiences to illustrate the reason that leads death instinct dominate life instinct, thus creating unstable personality. This imbalance between those two instincts leads to a death wish and a desire to escape from the world as it cannot fulfill their wishes. Accordingly, Death is the only refuge for both Sexton and Smith.

CHAPTER ONE

FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS THEORY

1.1. Understanding Death and Death Wish

Death in literature induces awful anxiety because it provides an outlet for true self-discovery. Death is often seen as part of a natural cycle of life, rebirth, or as a source of fun through black comedy writings and ridiculous drama that still recognize the high gravity of their subject. Death in literature has several meanings, it symbolizes escape, disappearance into solipsism, alienation, and it is finally the source of meaning and development of literature itself.

The physical as well as psychological behavior occurs at several stages of literary death. Although the concept of death is endless, it never fails to devote a meaning to the creation of literature, because it adds to the emotional impact, twists, suspense, and mysteries. It also closes the line, which is not foreign to most detective literature, ghosts, supernatural stories, and mysteries. In short, in these genres, death must be real in order to be seen as an essential part of human life, and thus it increases its importance as a literary instrument.

Initially, death wish and death instinct may appear similar because violence, aggression, and death are apparent in both of them, but they do not accurately mean the same thing. The Death wish is closer to a psychological disorder than an instinct, while the death instinct is inherited within all human beings. The Death instinct described by Freud as 'Thanatos' is a death drive manifested as a desire to return to the previous state, lifelessness and stasis, and the state of none-existence in which individuals no longer experience anxiety, stress or tension. Besides, the death wish is generally expressed when life events conduct severe troubles and place the person under pressure and depression. Freud was dedicated to the idea that the human mind seeks a return to an earlier state. This return is a motivation towards annihilation, and it generally leads to suicidal desire and death wish (Mills, 2006).

Freud attempts to present a philosophy of the organic process by separating the origin of life and establish death within the psychic etiology. Further, Freud makes death

an internal feature and a motive that originally formulated from within the psyche itself and it is exhilarated by an external impulse. He clarified that all living organisms die for some internal reasons and death must be accomplished by the agent itself.

Death is a return to the beginning, a retrieving, and a recapture of its quiescent in an organic state. Freud believed that the unconscious forces which work in repetition were eventually in the service of self-destruction as a desire to return to its original condition. Freud clarified that the pleasure principle is an inclination to free the psyche of agitation and reduce the stimulation levels, so that there is an acceptable degree of stability. Pleasure would be a state that there is no stress and tension. Based on this explanation, death and nonbeing could be the pleasure state and the absolute peace. Freud states that although the unconscious mind aims toward death, it is also capable to choose it towards self-destruction (Freud, 1955). Both Sexton's and Smith's selected poems are investigated to reveal the main reason for their death wish. The Study aims to discover the inner feelings of both poets following Freudian psychoanalysis theory. According to Freud, individuals seek their own death, only when there is instability in their psyche. Thus this study attempts to highlight the serious problems and the unpleasant moments in both poets' life.

1.2. The Freudian Theory of Personality

Sigmund Freud is profoundly indebted to a real-world psychology and a psychoanalysis for the emergence of many of his theories. One of them is the development of the theory that humans have an unconscious part in which sexual and aggressive impulses are in perpetual conflict for supremacy with the defenses against them. In 1897, he began an intensive analysis of himself. In 1900, his major work *The Interpretation of Dreams* was published in which Freud analyzed dreams in terms of unconscious desires and experiences (Freud, 1900). Freud explained the construction of human mind based on two different sets of terms: conscious, unconscious, subconscious and Id, Ego, and Superego.

1.2.1. Conscious, Unconscious, Subconscious

The consciousness can be viewed as three different levels: the conscious, the subconscious, and the unconscious. At the dawn of the Twentieth Century, Sigmund Freud popularized these ideas around the West. ‘Freud’s Iceberg Theory’ uses the description of an iceberg to separate these ‘3 levels of consciousness’ (McLeod, 2015). He aptly illustrated that the human mind consists of three separate levels, using the famous example of the iceberg.

At any given moment, the conscious mind serves the purpose of what the person is aware of. It contains the things the individual is aware of. Individuals may be conscious at the moment, for example, of reading a material, hearing music or a conversation. All mind’s emotions, external experience, feelings, and the memoirs belong to this conscious experience.

The next level of consciousness, the subconscious or preconscious, is the stuff from which dreams are formed. It may be called a storehouse for past experiences, impressions that these experiences create in the mind, and behaviors that are awakened or reinforced by such impressions. Every experience that the individual had, feelings, and perceptions residing in the subconscious mind shape the thinking and the behavior patterns far more than known. Usually, what the person achieves during life span, jobs, and relationships is determined by the patterns that s/he develops over time. The ability to set goals and perform essential daily tasks is both a mental and physical capacity. As such, this pattern becomes learnable through practice and repetition until it settles into the subconscious mind and becomes a permanent part of the individual’s behavior. The subconscious or preconscious mind consists of what can be remembered from memory; the person can easily carry the stored knowledge to his/her conscious mind without any difficulty (McLeod, 2015).

The last level of consciousness is known as unconsciousness. It consists of emotions, memories, and primitive instinct impulses hidden within the person. While the individual is not aware of their presence, they affect his/her behavior. Although the individuals’ behavior seems to suggest the unconscious forces that drive them, they cannot easily access the information contained in the unconscious. Throughout childhood, many different memories and experience gathered in the mind form the

beliefs, fears, and uncertainties of today. However, most of the experience cannot be remembered. They are the unconscious forces that drive the person's conduct. For example, things that might be overlooked in the unconscious include traumatic memories of past events or trauma which is forced out of subconscious. Many lives or feelings can be too dangerous for some people to completely understand and thus mediate the preconscious 'subconscious' portion of the mind. This state of mind is a storehouse of all innate and instinctive impulses, thoughts, anxieties, traumatic memories, and unsolved conflicts (Cherry & Mattiuzzi, 2010).

Individuals experience much as they grow up and feel diverse emotions. However, most of these memories are almost impossible to remember, because they are locked in an unconscious mind to prevent anxiety. Freud reveals that these thoughts, emotions, and impulses are too traumatic and frightening to accept that they are alive; therefore, the preconscious keeps some of the memories and feelings preserved so as to escape the feeling of anxiety.

1.2.2. Id, Ego, and Superego

Freud introduced three components of human identity or psychology called id, ego, and superego. The id is part of the unconscious, and it is guided by the principle of pleasure, which means that it seeks to make everything happy and satisfied, without taking into account anything and anyone. The id is an inherent and instinctive part of the human psyche. This part of the mind is important especially for children because it helps them find their needs, but it is also dangerous. According to Freud, individuals cannot satisfy all their needs, and if they do that they will become prisoners of their own impulses and desires; criminals who embrace and demand what belongs to others (Freud, 1960). In the society, such activities are totally rejected. It induces fear and pain by choosing whether individuals obey their ego or wish. The ego uses the primary method of generating visual representations of the desired object to satisfy the urge without actually satisfying it. The best example is when someone wants something like chocolate or ice cream, but they do not have it at the time, so they visualize the ice cream to relax and soothe their id somehow.

The ego is the aspect of personality, which is influenced by the open control of the outside world. However, unlike the id, it is not born with individuals and it does not

function on the unconscious level of the mind only. The ego emerges from the id throughout childhood, and it works on the conscious and unconscious mind. It also operates within the reality principle, which ensures that the Id demands and drives are objectively, socially, and sufficiently realized and articulated. The principle of reality forces us to follow up and consider everything, losses, benefits, risks, requirements, and outcomes of an action before the person decides whether or not to realize what s/he wants. For example, if you are hungry, instead of stealing a piece of cake, the ego can regulate your overwhelming desire to steal the cake and force you to wait for a piece to buy. This example illustrates that the ego does not suppress the urge, but only tames and slows down the impulse to an acceptable time and place (The Ego: Definition & Examples, 2015).

The superego is an agency that seeks to enforce the striving for perfection (Lapsley & Stey, 2011). It is the last part of the personality to mature around three to five years of age, or what Freud termed the phallic period of psychosexual development. It operates under the theory of morality which makes it accountable for ensuring that the moral principles are fully complied with and that the social norms are upheld. The superego evolves because of the social constraints placed by the family, the friends, and the society upon the individual, such as the sense of what is right and what is wrong, what is permissible, and what is forbidden. The superego contains two components that are the vision of the self and the conscious. The former contains rules which lead to a good behavior of the good things learned by the individual from the environment, and the things that are taught by parents during childhood. For instance, parents teach the child not to lie and steal and obedience to them will give rise to feelings of pride, value, achievement, and pleasure. In contrast, breaking them will lead to a feeling of remorse and deceit. Consciousness includes rules that view behavior as bad and unacceptable. Unacceptable behaviors are completely prohibited and can lead to adverse effects, retribution, and feelings of guilt and disappointment (Stangor & Walinga, 2015). In short, individuals engage in behaviors that comply with the rules of the ideal of ego and behaviors which are unacceptable to the conscience will lead to feeling guilty. Superego often interferes with the individuals' behavior in order to influence and control their actions and attitudes. The collision between the three forces will affect the individual's psychological and mental health in one way or another.

Consequently, if someone has a strong sense of ego, the stress created by Superego can be managed easily and efficiently. Although people with little ego power are torn between these demands, it can be logical for those with too much ego power. The ego must be able to balance the three powers in order to maintain a balanced personality and mental health. When the id is dominant, the individuals will act according to their desires and instincts without taking into account other people and regardless of the acceptability of action or behavior. On the contrary, if the Superego is dominant, it can lead to an attitude that is rather moralistic and over-judgmental, which causes the individuals to reject something that they find unethical, for instance, to be more like a saint.

1.3. Theory of Drives

The theory of drives is formulated by Sigmund Freud during his life. In his book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* which was published in 1920, he divided the human instincts into two major parts which he called: life instincts (Eros) and death Instincts (Thanatos). He assumed that these drives are responsible for many of individuals' behaviors.

1.3.1. Life Instincts (Eros)

Life impulses are often referred to as sexual instincts, dealing with the basic survival, pleasure, and reproduction. Such instincts are important to maintain the individual's life and continuing the species. Cooperation, love, and other pro-social actions are commonly associated with this instinct. This biological instinct helps the individual remain alive. It is responsible for activities, such as breathing, eating, and drinking, which ensure the survival of individuals and ensure that the species are conserved through reproduction. The impulses or Eros of life produce the strength, according to Freud, which he called the libido. Instincts of life often include positive emotions such as passion, friendship, pro-social behavior, and social cooperation. Such conducts promote both the individual well-being and the harmonious life of a cooperative and prosperous society (Capuzzi & Stauffer, 2016).

1.3.2. Death Instincts (Thanatos)

The concept of the death instinct was initially described in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, in which Freud (1961, p.32) proposed “the aim of all life is death”. Freud found that those who have experienced a traumatic incident often re-enact it in support of his philosophy, they occasionally recreate these experiences. He also assumed that this negative energy would manifest itself as violence and aggression if directed toward others. The consequence of the negative energy is described below:

Freud based his assumption on biological or biochemical foundations. Even the smallest cell has two functions: anabolic (constructive) and catabolic (destructive). Analogously, Eros, and Thanatos balance each other. They are complementary and oppositional but not hostile. They influence human relations. We look for new experiences, for doing things, meeting people, entering into various relations, building relationships, advancing in our profession, occupation, etc. All these belong to Eros. But there are situations in which man has to act aggressively, to defend his interest, or do something hazardous. Sometimes man also needs peace and quiet. According to Freud, Thanatos is responsible for such states (Freud, 1960, as cited in Wiszniowska-Majchrzyk, 2011, p. 108).

Freud (1955) stated that Thanatos is a bunch of negative and destructive forces. They should be in harmonious with Eros; they coexist together so that the person can work properly. He also pointed out that the instincts of death are an extension of this imperative, with all living beings having instinctive ‘pull to death’ that is in direct opposition to their instinct for survival, procreation, and fulfillment. Individuals want to die instinctively, but Eros or life instincts overwhelm and control Thanatos to a mentally stable person (Razinsky, 2013) in order to make the individual live a normal and a happy life. Because the death drive is present in all humans, it does not mean that they are going to kill people or hurt themselves; it does not justify it. Yet the person may deep down in his heart want someone to disappear from the face of the Earth and sometimes that person wants himself to be disappeared and vanish which can be interpreted as a death wish. This wish does not come from vain; it is a result for buried unsatisfied desires, miseries, and anxieties.

1.4. Death Wish and Self-Destruction

The death wish is an expression used when the individuals cannot succeed in dealing with life’s problems or difficulties. Extreme proportions of misery and anxiety lead the individuals to desire death as they cannot deal with the reality of their lives. More specifically, the death wish is preferred when some social hardships and suffering

cause troubles. It has been noted that some women folk would reveal this wish because of the domestic pressures which becomes overwhelming, with financial problems, child rearing difficulties and unsettled relationship with the spouse. Some cultures regard the expression of death wish as a taboo; some religions reject such thoughts. Nevertheless, Death wish can be expressed by terminally ill patients who are tired of long term of misery. It has also been established that death wish may be associated with patients who suffer from a psychiatric disorder as depression with hard life conditions. In order to find the exact reason for death wish, some areas should be explored thoroughly, such as the patient's relationships within the family and friends, personality disorder, brain disorders, psychological disorder, including depression, grief, anxiety, the patient's personal tendency to the meaning of life and its suffering (Gadit, 2007).

The impulses of aggression and violence may often be directed towards destruction, which can lead to self-harm or suicide. Suicide is induced by mentally disturbed individuals who choose to take their own lives to achieve non-existence state by becoming depressed of self-destruction. However, this does not only apply to people dealing with emotional and psychological problems; it can also apply to people who are completely well off (McLeod, 2019).

1.5. Reasons for Death wish

Several reasons exist behind self-destruction and death wish as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and psychosexual development which are discussed in the following subsections. When analyzing the poems in chapter two and three those concepts are detected as they are labeled under the reasons for both poets, Anne Sexton, and Stevie Smith, desire to die.

1.5.1. Anxiety and Depression

Freud mentions that three major forms of anxiety exist: Neurotic, realistic, and moral (Pekker, 2012). The neurotic anxiety is motivated by the fear of retribution when fear of threat and danger are expressed. It is an irrational fear that they take control of the id's impulses. The realistic anxiety is rooted in the real world. In fact, it is the fear of incidents and injuries that might happen. For example, if a person is near a threatening dog, he might be afraid of being bitten by a dog. It is easy to get rid of this anxiety; the

person must distance himself from the object. The moral anxiety stems from the fear of the individuals for doing something that might contradict with their own moral principles and the codes of the society (ibid).

McLeod (2015) illustrates depression as a mood disorder which restrains the individuals from living a normal life, within their family or at work. Because of the frequency of diagnosis, Seligman (1973) refers to depression as the ‘common cold’ of psychiatry. In his book *Mourning and melancholia* (1917), Freud mentioned that the loss of a parent or loved one could be linked directly to some cases of depression. Depression often happens as a reaction to the loss of an important relationship; it is more like a grief for that loss.

1.5.2. Trauma

Trauma can be defined as a disturbing and shocking experience, whereby a person can never overcome it (Joseph, 2012). It is a psychological, impassioned response to terrible experience or an event that is deeply disturbing, such as being implicated in an accident, losing a loved person, an injury or going through a divorce and separation. The person’s mind will pass through a shock period and then denial of the traumatic situation. The person’s reactions involve unforeseeable emotions, confusing relationships, flashbacks of the terrifying experience, and physical symptoms, such as nausea or headaches. In some cases, when the individuals cannot continue their lives normally, this causes to have feelings of hopelessness, isolation, and severely damaging ideas like a death desire to end their suffering (Levine, 2014).

1.5.3. Bipolar Disorder

The bipolar disorder is a kind of manic depression. It is a mental illness that might bring a complete change in the life of the person who suffers from it. A sudden mood change is one of the obvious remarks of this illness; the person’s mood can change from the highest point of happiness and hopefulness to the lowest point of depression, sadness, and hopelessness. This kind of illness has many symptoms that have negative effects on a person’s daily life. The person can have feelings of worthlessness and will not enjoy the things s/he used to like earlier. Besides, individuals with a bipolar disorder have delusions which mean that they believe in things that are not real or true, or they can have

hallucinations which mean imagining things that do not exist. As a result, most of them have a death wish or suicidal attempts during the period of depression (Teixeira, 1992).

1.5.4. Psychosexual Development

Freud claimed that when growing up, every child goes through what he called the psychosexual stages of development. He assumes five phases of psychosexuality: oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital (Adrian, 2007). Freud pointed out that challenges, distinct patterns, and problems generally displayed at these stages had lasting, although commonly unconscious, effects on the rest of one's life. In the earlier state of development called the oral phase (from birth to 2 years old) the child learns how to trust others and be dependent with the caregiver who is usually the mother. If this stage's key tasks are not accomplished adequately by the child, interpersonal relationships will probably be disturbed and manifest as adult problems later in one's life (Ivy et al, 2011). According to Freud, the main tasks of the anal phase (2-4 years) include the acquisition of self-control. Toilet training can be illustrated as a parent telling the child when and where s/he can go to the toilet, and it is the person's first real encounter with self-control and authority. The phallic period (4-7 years) is the third stage of the psychosexuality process. In this stage, the child learns to understand and be aware of the sex roles and their importance. Freud's Electra Complex for girls and Oedipus complex for boys are also stereotypic. At this point, the child is aware of the physical differences between the two sexes. Freud believed that this phase is pivotal for girls to be aware of their roles as women in the world, besides their sexuality. If a person is fixated at the phallic stage, s/he will develop a phallic character that is "reckless, resolute, self-assured, and narcissistic" (Stevenson, 1996).

In the fourth stage which is called the latency stage (5-11 years), youngsters display a high sense of social curiosity because their sexual impulse is quieted, and the sexual instinct becomes less dominant. During this stage, the youngsters strive to build new relationships with others (Ivy et al., 2011). Seligman (2001) as cited in (Ivy et al., 2011, p.184) pointed out that children who successfully fulfill the demands of this stage typically enhance feelings of empowerment, while those who could not negotiate with the demand of this stage may develop low self-esteem feelings. The final stage which is referred to as the genital stage by Freud is believed to start from age 11 and continues

throughout the individual's life span. During this stage, adults are challenged to deal with several important issues, like establishing their personal identities, positive and sexual relationship (ibid).

If the person moves from one psychosexual stage to another without any difficulties or problems, the person is healthy. If not, it will be fixated at that particular stage.

If a child progresses normally through the stages, resolving each conflict and moving on, then little libido remains invested in each stage of development. But if he fixates at a particular stage, the method of obtaining satisfaction which characterized the stage will dominate and affect his adult personality (Stevenson, 1996)

It is important to mention these psychosexual phases of development of the person as a way to understand and explain the mental illness and the emotional disturbance. The above analysis illustrates the concept of death and death wish in English literature. The philosophy of death and death wish is a deep-rooted phenomenon because it is associated with the inner core of psyche. With the view of understanding the personal and literal views of the two poets, Anne Sexton and Stevie Smith, about death, Freudian Psychoanalysis of death drive is chosen to analyze and understand the concept. In following chapters, the poems of Anne Sexton and Stevie Smith in the light of the Freudian Psychoanalysis theory of death drive are discussed.

Anxiety, depression, trauma, and bipolar disorder are all factors mentioned in the following chapters when analyzing the poems, as both Sexton and Smith suffered from different types of psychological disorders which lead them to desire death. The term conscious is presented while refereeing to some events in both poets' life as their previous experience, feelings, and unhappy situations. But the unconscious part is mentioned because all the hidden motives are not revealed, for example when both poets imagine their own death in the form of dreams. The unconscious mind repeats the hidden desire to escape and leave the kind of life which is nothing but merely repeated pain and agony. In the poems, Freud's concept of death drive can be easily tackled as the poets firmly repeat their desire to die. The fact that leads the concept of life drive to be weak, and almost controlled by death which had the main role in both poets' mind.

CHAPTER TWO

CONFESSIONAL POETRY AND ANNE SEXTON

This chapter, with reference to Anne Sexton's confessional poetry, explores the subject of death wish in the American poetry. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the representation of death in the Confessional Poetry of the 20th century due to grief and suicide, based on the writing of Anne Sexton. This study would contextualize poetry, taking into account Sexton's biographies, her social and socio-cultural history, the status of women at that time, and her thoughts on depression and the practice of suicide in the 1950s and 1960s. Subsequently, the literary concept of which Sexton is a part, Confessional Poetry, is introduced. This is followed by an analysis of the poet's works addressing numerous topics, such as the portrayal of different psychiatric circumstances, the discussion of suicidal tendencies, and the literary growth that she continues until her death. Thus, this study aims to explore Sexton's poetry, revealing the overall possible motives behind her death wish.

2.1. Overview of Confessional Poetry

The American poet and critic M.L. Rosenthal was the first one who tackled and explained the term 'Confessional' in his review of Robert Lowell's work *Life Studies* (1959). This collection of poems covered many aspects of Robert Lowell's personal life including family and marriage problems. It was the first book to be referred as the confessional poetry because his inner life was filled with internal turmoil, which he turned from traditional poetry to a more self-serving poetry of personal experience. The result was his *Life Studies Collection*, an extraordinary book that transformed modern poetry and paved the way for younger confessional poets. Both of his poems *Waking in the Dark* and *Home after Three Months* discuss problems with mental illness. This collection, which is entitled *The Poems of Repentance* is among the landmarks of confessional poetry in American literature. Rosenthal emphasized on the "self-therapeutic" impulse for confession, and he found this presented in Robert Lowell's collection (Rosenthal,1974). Such poetry interrupted modernity's commitment to impersonality and revived poetry for the vigorous discovery of oneself and for the direct disclosure of one's own experiences. Robert Lowell, John Berryman, Sylvia Plath, Allen

Ginsberg, Anne Sexton, and W.D. Snodgrass are some of the most prominent confessional poets.

Confessional Poetry is popularly known as ‘poetry of the personal’. It began as one of many artistic movements in America after the World War II. It is a literary art movement as well as a new style of poetry emerging in the U.S. in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s (Nelson, 1945). It is a personal style of poetry often used by a first-person narrator. By using this particular perspective, the vast majority of these poems are likely to reflect the life of the poet itself.

Confessional Poetry is a postmodern branch that emerged in the United States in the 1950s. The most significant aspect is the blatant autobiography, often viewed as self-deprecation. Taboo topics such as sexuality, alcoholism, mental health, and family relations are also discussed. The emotional experience of a denominator poet draws on the experiences of the person and current situations, providing bad emotions, such as anxiety, anger, sadness, and powerlessness. Sonnets are frequently related to love and epics laud bravery, whereas confessional poetry occurs and deals closely with intimate human pains (ibid).

Confessional poetry was first introduced in the 20th century, and it was practiced and recognized as autobiographical poetry to the poet’s life. The autobiographical analysis focuses on the personality and experience of writers, representing a time in which various issues and ideas of age are taken into account. However, confessional poetry is neither social nor spiritual; it is merely emotional and can be characterized as personal poetry. M. L. Rosenthal states that the major theme of the confessional poems is the private life of the poet himself “under stress of psychological crisis” (Perloff, 1970, p. 471).

According to Irving Howe (1977), confessional poems appear in the form in which the writer confesses something to the reader about his life without thinking about the imagined event or persona. Essentially, the purpose of the confessional poetry is to relieve the hidden parts of one’s heart in order to enable the reader grasp the poet’s personal life and untold stories, such as sexual desires, psychological disorders, personal faults and physical privacies including abortion, menstruation, and intercourse. The new confessional poets eliminate the mask that they were hiding behind in the old fashion of

writing poems and they reveal the personal lives of the poet. In *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Abrams and Harpham (2014) state “Confessional poetry designates a type of narrative and lyric verse, given impetus by the American Robert Lowell’s *Life Studies* (1959), which deals with the facts and intimate mental and physical experiences of the poet’s own life” (p. 56). According to David Perkins (1987), confession refers to a kind of poetry that reflects the personal experience of the writer and “reveals experience or emotions that are more or less shocking, hatred of one’s parents, children, spouse, or self, lust voyeurism, suicidal fantasies, madness, horror and fascination with death” (p. 410). Hence, confessional poetry is highly regarded as the poetry of the self, pouring the writer’s distresses, misery and traumas into verse and shattering the inviolable boundary of taboo issues.

2.2. Anne Sexton, a Confessional Poetess

Anne Sexton is considered one of America’s most influential poets in the 20th century. She is substantially recognized as a Pulitzer Prize-winning Poet. By the end of her poetic career, Sexton was the best paid female poet in America. She was a major poet of the Confession Poetry movement.

Sexton revealed her personal feelings in her poetry, and confessed the agony of depression, death wish, and suicidal mother’s emotions for her daughters. She filled her poems with characters and plots about death, myths, and ordinary tales in a supernatural way. Sexton’s poetry portrays the female body and afflicts it with disease, madness, feelings of abandonment, the agony of losing family’s love, and ideals. This female depressed poet who seeks death everywhere was born in England, Massachusetts in 1928. She married Alfred Muller Sexton II, had her first daughter in 1953, and struggled with psychological and physical issues. After she gave birth to her second child in 1955, she began to suffer from postpartum depression. She slides into terrible spells of depression as she describes, and she became perplexed, agitated and under the control of feeling ‘unreal’ and ‘lost’ (Middlebrook, 1991, p.31). Sexton took medications but with no progress. On the contrary, she was suffering from anxiety and anger. Despite the support provided by her family, her state got worse, and she was finally hospitalized for treatment in July 1956. In November of the same year, one day before her twenty-eighth birthday, she attempted to commit suicide by ingesting an overdose of

barbiturates ‘sleeping pills’. This overdose forced the separation of Sexton from her children. Her therapist, Dr. Martin Orne, encouraged her to write poetry as a part of her treatment, and eventually that led Sexton to be one of the most successful female poets of her generation. Middlebrook (1991) states that this event in Sexton’s life was a turning point; it provided her a reason to live and share her experiences and personal life through her poetry.

Sexton’s poems provide a bridge to her personal pain and as many Confessional poets did, Sexton suffered from a background of mental illness. She channeled her talents and began to write poetry on her psychiatrist’s recommendation, and she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for her book *Live or Die* (1967). In *To Bedlam and Part Way Back*, she revealed her deep emotions derived from childhood, hospital treatment sessions, her family, her mental illness, and the presence of death. Her womanhood was a key theme in her writing, and at a time when issues like menstruation, abortion, and alcohol were treated as private issues, Sexton tackled them head-on.

In the introduction to her book *The Complete Poems*, Maxine Kumin (1999) indicates that the details of the troubled and tumultuous life of Anne Sexton are well known. During that time, no other American poet had publicly cried so much in private. This clarifies the fact that Sexton revealed her inner thoughts to allow the readers to understand her dilemma and recognize the sources of her pain.

2.3. An Analysis of Anne Sexton’s Poetry

Writing Poems helped Sexton cope with her personal problems and escape from the reality. She expressed her trauma in different ways, thus releasing her suppressed feelings. In *Her kind* which Sexton wrote in 1960 for the manuscript of *To Bedlam and Part Way Back*, she stands against the social norms that women suffer from. She identifies three major roles women have been throughout history, ‘a possessed witch, housewife, and adulteress’ each one is alienated, feels depressed, and seeks death. In her essay *Confessing the Body*, Elizabeth Gregory (2006, p.41) mentions the fact that Sexton is out of the older ways of life through “indicating a more general willingness to be public about things the culture usually shames its members into silence about”. She also adds “their kind does not die of shame; instead they contest the rule of shame that has enforced the age-old silence about female experience (ibid)

Sexton imagines death as a way that leads to liberation. She tries to illustrate the reason that makes women feel persecuted, and she finds it easy to identify herself with women who died because of the conventions of her society. *Her Kind* is a recollection of all what Sexton experienced in the past. She remembers all the roles she used to assume in her life and all the miseries that she passed through. The poem is a portrayal of women who used to struggle in a society that regards her as an outcast, such as a possessed witch, a housewife and a prostitute. These women feel consistent insecurity and psychological stress, which leads to death wish. This struggle indicates that these female figures are not afraid of death. These female characters are no more than reflections of Anne Sexton herself, since the poet uses the persona 'I' in order not to leave her readers confused about the identity of the speaker in the poem. The ideas of death and abnormality loom large in the poem and take control of the speaker's mind. Thus, Sexton describes three types of women who suffered and rebelled against the social constrictions. Each stanza in the poem ends with the refrain "I have been her kind" (Sexton, 1981, p.15) which refers to the speaker's identification with the female characters described.

Sexton describes herself as a 'possessed witch' in the first stanza, referring implicitly to her drastic experience in life. "I have gone out, a possessed witch/ haunting the black air, braver at night" (Sexton, 1981, p.15), She calls women in general as witches and states that all what they get from the society is oppression and condemnation. She emphasizes the idea of being powerful, strange, and extraordinary. These traits reveal the absence of fear of death. The allusion to witches and the witch trials that took place in Salem in sixteenth-century America brings to mind the agony and punishment these witches faced by the hands of their persecutors. Despite the pain that the witches suffer from, the poem does not indicate any fear of death. These witches suffered being misunderstood by their society and accused of being devilish powers of seduction to men. This suffering led to their alienation from the rest of the society, which resulted in deep depression that made even death itself a better option than living. Sexton dwells in a dream world that constitutes her glimpse of hope quite isolated from the living, thus achieving her death wish. Her isolation from the social community expresses her wish to escape from a society she cannot fit in. In spite of various description of characters provided in her poem, she is often depicted as alone writing to express her deep desire to escape from the world through death (Middlebrook, 1991).

As mentioned in chapter one, Freud emphasized the idea that id and ego should be in a balanced state, and if they are not, it will lead to an imbalance in human psyche which is obvious in Sexton's case. The ego which is in charge of dealing with reality is not capable of moderating between the requirements of the reality and Sexton's unconscious desires. This imbalance within her psyche leads to a maladaptive personality as indicated by Freud. Sexton could not cope with the reality of the society, thus she tries to rebel against the norms and traditions by isolating herself.

After providing the image of women as 'a possessed witch' Sexton moves on to present women as 'a housewife' to show the traditional role of women in the society. Her wish was to live happily with her kids and husband, but she could not gain all her desires, but rather she experienced lots of depression.

All I wanted was a little piece of life, to be married, to have children. [...] I was trying my damndest to lead a conventional life, for that was how I was brought up, and it was what my husband wanted of me. But one can't build little white picket fences to keep nightmares out. The surface cracked when I was about twenty-eight. I had a psychotic break and tried to kill myself (Sexton, 1985, p.84).

Sexton refers to traumas and sufferings that she experienced in her life as nightmares, namely her unsuccessful marriage and her troubled relationship with her parents. In *Her Kind*, she describes how she has "found the warm caves in the woods" (Sexton, 1981, p.16). Warm caves located in the woods could stand for wooden coffins. Since she lost all her hopes, these caves can be the only place where she can achieve her dreams. While sitting in her home, she imagines herself within a safe space which is distant from her old miserable place where she felt pain. Instead of being the conventional housewife who cooks for her family and does the usual household chores, she portrays herself fixing "the suppers for the worms and the elves" (Sexton, 1981, p.16). She creates a sense of strangeness in the poem when she mentions that she is preparing food for worms, showing that the human body decays after death and is consumed by worms. This quotation could refer to her death wish which would render her body as food for worms after her death. In this sense, her resurrection would be seen as a subterranean continuation of her life after death. Besides, she explains that this type of women 'the housewife' is misunderstood by the society.

According to Sexton, this type of woman 'the housewife' is misunderstood by society. The third image of woman presented in this poem is a prostitute. This image

serves as a metaphor the speaker identifies with in the terms of loss and empathy. The general assumption held about prostitutes is that they are good looking and carefree. Psychologically, however, they often feel lost and condemned by the society. The poem refers to them as waving their nude arms at villages going by to show their carelessness and mindlessness of what people around think of them. In the line “learning the last bright routes, survivor” (Sexton, 1981, p.16), Sexton reminisces all her old days and roads that she passed through. Death is envisaged as liberation from her imprisoned life. This last type of woman that Sexton describes in the poem is not quite distinctive from the image of the witch mentioned before, since both types of women were socially misunderstood. Witches are accused of belonging to pagan times when the devil was thought to control the human mind. Similarly, Prostitutes are likewise misunderstood by the society as engaging in wrongdoing and pleasure fulfillment (Pollard, 2006).

These three types of women described in the poem and discussed above are manifestations of the death wish that serves as a relief from the social injustice they are bound to face. This injustice makes them unashamed to face death.

First, this poem can be understood on the ground of the theory of drives formulated by Freud. According to him, if death instincts ‘Thanatos’ dominates, an individual starts thinking of self-destruction. Hence, this poem can be put under the subject matter alienation and estrangement. Sexton was fixated at a very young age, where she went through many traumatic events that implanted in her strong sense of alienation and estrangement. “a woman like that is not ashamed to die” (Sexton, 1981, p.15) reflects Sexton’s wish of dying and insisting desire of fulfilling her death instinct.

Second, this poem can be interpreted based on the Freudian psychoanalytical concept of conscious, unconscious, subconscious. Her mental distress and trauma are the outcome of the conflict between the unconscious mind and the conscious one. Sexton in this poem justifies the Freudian concept of unconsciousness and the belief that the Freudian unconscious is relevant in the light of the modern day consciousness. The plight of women in the society is already there in the mind of the poet, which she presents through three personas: witches, a housewife, and a prostitute. The past becomes the unconscious mind of the poetess, which guides her present situation. In the unconscious mind, there are images of witchcrafts and their trials in the 16-17th century Europe and

in Salem USA, lonely suburban housewives, who feel like trapped in a cage, and finally a defamed and disrespectful prostitute or an adulterous woman. These three important personas that the poetess presents through a series of images actually define the life of women. The poetic persona in the poem through the embodiments of a witch, a cave-dweller, and a rustic woman contrast with her conscious mind: her femininity and existence in the society. The poetess confesses it at the end of all three stanzas: "I have been her kind" (Sexton, 1981, p.15). This contrast leads her to the death wish. This sort of the psychological trauma leads her whining for death as a better option than living in her social environment. This poem examines the attempts of Sexton to meet the social expectations and standards imposed on women in the early 20th century. Women had to live in a certain way during this period—becoming females, moms, and homemakers, with little room for wiggle to be something else. In other words, a woman's path was paved, but it was extremely narrow, luminous but hard-lit, waiting at the end for a lobotomy. However, the voice of women in *Her Kind* does not want, or perhaps cannot, reduce itself to the strict concept of women in the society.

This poem can be also analyzed on the basis of the Freudian psychoanalytical concept of Id, Ego, and Superego. The three women that Sexton presents in this poem share one major thing in common which is the solitary life they live and how isolated and misunderstood they are as women. The first woman is a witch, the perfect manifestation of the Id that is so instinctual and devilish. The second one is the housewife; a woman who is tamed by the society and always follows her superego by fulfilling what is expected and dictated on her, such as taking care of the household and the children. The third one is the adulteress, who for a while followed her Id and sought to fulfill its sexual desires which cause her feelings of guilt, thus leading her eventually to willingly embrace her death without hesitations. It is also evident that Anne Sexton was unfaithful to her husband; she had so many affairs with a lot of men, and one of them was her psychiatrist. Her infidelity towards her husband was manifested by the superego through feelings of regret and self-loathing.

In *The Starry Night* which is a lyrical poem, Sexton interprets Vincent Van Gogh's famous painting *The Starry Night*. This poem is written in 1961, and it describes Sexton's interpretation of the great psychological turbulence of the famous artist Vincent van Gogh (McSpadden, 1984). Sexton wrote this poem after her mental break down, and

she addressed Gogh's painting because it took her attention, and she could have a glimpse of his endless suffering and extreme desire to die. Sexton shared the same thoughts with Gogh, and this led her to express exactly what the great artist wanted to convey. The poem begins by an inscription from one of Gogh's letters to his brother Theo who was his best friend "That does not keep me from having a terrible need of—shall I say the word—religion. Then I go out at night to paint the stars" (Vincent, 1959). Gogh wrote this letter to his brother when he was painting *The Starry Night* in 1889 in French. He clarifies his need for something eternal and spiritual by describing religion to show his desperation in life and his desire to die.

The small town that is seen in the picture is portrayed from Gogh's point of view about life and how he sees the landscape outside his window. Some critics said that he could not actually see the landscape of all the town and his paintings were merely derived from his own imagination. Sexton starts her verse by "The town does not exist" (Sexton, 1981, p.53). The town exists, but for Sexton, the town does not represent life and it is something dimmed for her. She wants to escape from life and the only thing that gives her reassurance is imagining death. The small town that is described by Sexton as 'silent' does not get the attention because this is how Gogh wants his viewer to see it. The town is not as important as the sky because it merely reflects life which is insignificant for both Sexton and Gogh (McSpadden, 1984).

Vincent Van Gogh painted his masterpiece by using oil on a canvas board that gives a rough, swirl and semi-blurred view. At the edge of the oil painting, there is a dark large figure 'black-haired' tree as Sexton describes, as if it is looking at the sky and the silent village at the same time. The image of the tree may represent loneliness because it stands alone and looks gloomily to the sky as if complaining and suffering. This is how Sexton describes the tree and this is how Gogh wants his painting to be imagined. This old cypress tree shows the movement of the wind, and its presence is a clear evidence of Gogh's ideas to fulfill his death wish similar to how Sexton describes it. A cypress tree is usually found in cemeteries and associated with grief. In the Christian tradition, the Cypress is a symbol of death, life, and resurrection, and it is associated with underworld and it connects the earth and the sky because it is standing tall as it reaches towards heaven and has a deep root (Coder, 2011). The green leaves symbolize

new life as if death is the end of the journey. Gogh and Sexton escape from life by imagining death and the things related to it.

Sexton depicts her death as immoral and is almost mixed with violence, boiling in the hot sky. Van Gogh searched for life a lot, but he never belonged to his time and the same thing happened in Sexton's case. This was the reason that she could express exactly what Gogh wants from his viewer to see in his painting. He painted the picture while staying in a mental institution to recover from his mental illness, after he cut off his own ear. His state of being different is obvious based on his painting that shows a great sense of alienation and turbulence. Van Gogh uses blue and black to color the night sky with a swirl of yellow, orange and violence to represent the moon and stars that are shining. The colorful painting is not a reflection of the painter's life; it is actually how he sees life after death. The sky is full of life and movement, while the town is silent and is unaware of the spiraling of nature. The night seems more colorful than the day, green, blue, violet, and lemony color brimming with energy: "The night boils with eleven stars" (Sexton, 1981, p.53).

The starry sky takes more than half of the portrait, and the night boils with eleven shining white and yellow. In the line "Oh starry night! This is how I want to die" (ibid).

Based on this explanation, death and nonbeing could be the pleasure state and the absolute peace for Sexton. She expresses her death wish by mentioning the exact way that she wants to die, but she does not want to die simply because she has a desire to merge with the sky. Because of her great soreness even her death is different. This reflects Sexton's deep desire to die and clarifies her suicidal nature. Sexton focuses on her emotional response while looking at the picture of Van Gogh: "It moves. They are all alive" (Sexton, 1981, p.54).

In the second stanza, Sexton becomes more descriptive with the landscape that Van Gogh paints. She imagines the sky as constantly moving and the moon protrudes in its 'orange irons'. Sexton's desire to die and her suicidal nature is shown in a more violent way than Van Gogh's. Freud (1955) states that despite that the unconscious mind aims toward death, as in Sexton's case that is also capable to choose it towards self-destruction. Sexton and Gogh have some hidden wishes to die then eventually they transfer their wish to be real by committing suicide. Sexton's idea about death and her

unrecovered state is clear in “The old unseen serpent swallows up the stars” (Sexton, 1981, p.54) as if she wants to die in a way that something swallows her to end her misery in a blink of eye. She uses religious imageries of the serpent that resembles the devil, and the moon pushing children “like a god, from its eye/This is how I want to die” (ibid)

She uses the refrain “This is how I want to die” (ibid) again to emphasize on all the ways she wants to die to clarify death wish as her target. She had a terrible need for that wish, and she wants to get it in a glorified way which can be done through suicide as long as she cannot know the time that she will die naturally. Mcleod (2019) asserts that the impulse of aggression and violence may often be directed towards destruction, which can lead to self-harm or suicide. Suicide is induced by mentally disturbed individuals who choose to take their own lives to achieve a non-existence state by becoming depressed of self-destruction. Sexton does not want to die in a normal way; she wants to be “sucked up by that great dragon, to split from my life with no flag, no belly no cry” (Sexton, 1981, p.54). She also describes her deep desire to die with no cause just simply to depart her miserable life. She does not want anyone to feel pity for her, because this is what she wanted to be. She wants to die with no flag as if she did not belong to her country, land or even earth. This is the reason that she refers to flag because it is a symbol of peace and unity, but unfortunately, she feels neither peace nor bond to her life.

Sexton wants to die with no belly, and this shows her femininity, where belly represents the place where women give birth to a baby and life starts there. She expresses her desire to die without giving more birth to a new generation who may face the same miserable moments of suffering. She wants to stop all the activities of human beings. It is possible that she wants to indicate to the same idea again where she wanted to die in a way that people will not lament her death because she wants to leave willingly and bravely by her own decision.

Sexton is not afraid of death and unknown and she has a rebellious nature because of her death wish. She reveals that she is engaged with the same unsatisfied need for the spiritual that Gogh suffered from. Thus, their death wish is not an ordinary one because they consider themselves deserve a better kind of death that nobody will feel sorry for them because it is their own choice. Life is depicted in another way

according to Sexton and the only thing that she wants to achieve is rigorous wave to relief.

In *The Starry Night*, Sexton presented her death motive more strongly. The poetess presented two personas in the poem. The first one is *The Starry Night* painting of Van Gogh, which is in the unconscious mind of the poet and the second persona is the present state of the affair of the poetess, which is running in the conscious mind of the poetess. As mentioned earlier, the poetess is the victim of hellish personal life. Sexton describes Gogh's painting as a reflection of her terrible desire to die. She poignantly compares her with Van Gogh's painting. She suffers from mental illness and finds her recovery in death. Thus, Sexton creates a dismal tone "like a drowned woman into the hot sky" (Sexton, 1981; p.53) She imagines herself dead and fades away in the sky.

The analysis of *The Starry Night* on the basis of the Freudian psychoanalytical concept of Id, Ego, and Superego shows that the poetic creation of her trauma and mental agony is the consequence of imbalance of 'Id' and 'Superego'. According to Freud, the complex behavior of human beings is formed in these three parts. A person whose mind is dominated by the superego releases his/her mental agony through artistic creation. Sexton found her relief in writing poetry to tell what she felt, and similarly Gogh did by means of painting.

In *Consorting with Angels* which was published in *Live or Die* in 1966, Sexton deals with gender stereotype by using a different imagery. She uses a vivid imagery and steady references to femininity structures to present a traditional portrait of the woman and show her deep desire to die and leave her miserable life. The poem begins with Sexton's declaration that her identity as a woman cannot satisfy her "I was tired of being a woman" (Sexton, 1981, p.111) because a woman's domestic role in life is always related to spoons and pots. According to Freud, the phallic stage of the psychosexuality process is pivotal for girls to be aware of their roles as women in the world besides their sexuality. If a person is fixated at the phallic stage, s/he will develop a phallic character that is reckless and resolute (Stevenson, 1996). The imagery of cosmetics and silks both indicate to women's femininity and their endless efforts to please men through looking neat and beautiful. In the line "the flies hovered for the scent" (Sexton, 1981, p.111),

even the flies were interested in her perfume, but she got tired of being a woman repeating all those things frequently. She clarifies the reasons for her desire to leave the world behind as she cannot have a genderless world. As a reason for this unfulfilled desire to get a life as imagined, she transfers her wish to come true in a dream. She describes her desire of genderless world in her dream, as it is the only realm that she can achieve her wish and live in a fantasy. Life is not meaningful for Sexton as she lives in an imaginary world, where everything is created by her own *rule*. Thus, she wants to die to accelerate her real departure from life (McSpadden, 1984).

Freud believed that the unconscious forces which work in repetition were eventually in the service of self-destruction as a desire to return to its original condition. Accordingly, the pleasure principle is an inclination to free the psyche of agitation and reduce stimulation levels, so that there is an acceptable degree of stability (Freud, 1955). Pleasure would be a state that there is no stress and tension, and thus Sexton tries to travel in her imagination far from the unbearable reality of her life. That is, death and nonbeing could be the pleasure state and the absolute peace for her.

Sexton lived during a time where women's role in the society was as sexual objects, and they were suppressed and repressed fighting for their rights. She mentions her father and her husband who represent the male gender and her source of pain as an emphasis on her struggle to release herself from gender controlling. She imagines herself transferring from the life she is living in "a city made of chains" (Sexton, 1981, p.111) into the life she visualizes. The chains present commitment and refer to Sexton's interest in violence and pain as shapes of heightened experience. Sexton lives in a city that is controlled by men and she wishes to die and lose her gender as a woman because only at that time she could be free from the chains. According to Freud, if the child fixates at a particular stage of the psychosexual phases of development, the method of obtaining gratification which characterized the stage will affect and dominate his/her adult personality (Stevenson, 1996). This fixation creates a mental illness and emotional disturbance for Sexton.

"In that dream there was a city made of chains/ where Joan was put to death in man's clothes" (Sexton, 1981, p.111). The imagery of Joan of Arc indicates the idea of women being depressed through all decades. Joan, the French peasant girl, who could

achieve sanctity by neglecting the social structures of her sex, claimed that she had a vision from God to take back her home. In 1430, soldiers of Burgundy arrested her and gave her to the English enemies. Joan was wearing men's clothes, and this led the Church to demand her death and that she should be killed. Maybe she wanted to protect herself from being attacked. Finally, Joan was burned on a stake in 1431 at the age of nineteenth. After she died, the English showed people her burnt body, then they burned the body two times again to turn it into ashes (McSpadden, 1984). The imagery of Joan clarifies Sexton's disturbed soul of being a woman and her desire to be genderless as if she imagines herself in another life in line with her wishes. This could be a reason for her death wish in her unconscious, and she cannot get her wishes in life because she is a woman.

By getting rid of her feminine identity, Sexton unbounds herself from the house chores that is related to her gender. She wants to become like the angels, who are defined by scholastic as pure forms with no gender. The reason behind her depictions of angels in most of her poems is that she lives in an imaginary world. All she can see is ideas and dreams from life after death. She portrays her life being in jail surrounded by chains, and the only free creatures in her world is the angels who are genderless, who are unbounded to the society's rules. "no two made in the same species" "performing God's functions" (Sexton, 1981, p.111). Those angels are only doing what God demands from them. The idea of angels is associated with the identity as angels cannot be limited by established roles. Each one of them is completely individual and differs from the others. Further, each angelic being makes its own identity only by living as there are no roles. Finally, the angels act as a source of powerful muse which enables her to consort with the strangeness of pleasure and collusion of that word.

This poem can be analyzed through the Freudian Theory of life instincts (Eros) and death Instincts (Thanatos). Usually, Eros and Thanatos should be harmonious; they coexist together, so that the person can work properly. As a result of Sexton's mental state and alienation, she suffers. The uncaring nature of her uncaring parents obliged her to live what no other child at her age was supposed to experience; she was treated harshly by them and was even sexually abused which made her grow with the fear of abandonment and being left alone. She was living in a hell, was abused by her parent, and lost her beloved Nana. Besides, she was mentally ill and cheated her husband. For

such a woman, death is the perfect escape from all these miseries. Also, her gloomy wish for death may be interpreted under the idea of being a woman. The alienation that Sexton portrays in this poem is of a woman who is living in the sixties and seventies century, right before the women's movement in America emerge. As a result, she is tired of being the one who is exploited by men and then they leave her. Sexton's disturbed psychological state and her disappointments in life are the reason of her lust for death and belonging to another life that could be better than the one that she is tired of.

According to Freud's Psychoanalysis, the origin of dreams includes impulses from the external world, personal experience, mental activities of the unconscious mind during sleeping and organic impulses within the person's body. The human mind reveals the unconscious through dreams. Thus, psychoanalysts depend on dream's interpretations as a clue for treating their patients. He asserted that emotional memories in the content of dreams and those emotions can be a gate way to know more about the dreamer's state of mind; consequently, a therapist may be able to recognize a patient's affective memories as traumatic experiences through emotional essence in the dream content. Freud (1900) believed "a dream is the fulfillment of a wish" (p.122). In this regard, Sexton selected many dream imageries to show her unconscious desire. One of the most striking images in presenting her wish for a genderless world is "Last night I had a dream/ And I said to it...You are the answer" (Sexton, 1981, p.111). The use of dream imagery allows Sexton to seek her fantasy world. Therefore, Sexton adds dream to her poem to emphasize her elusive desire and to strength her believe about the only way to survive from imaginary, fantasy and unreal world is the path of death. Sexton relates her desire to leave the world with religious ideas and images of women from the past decades to emphasize on her pessimistic view of life.

In the poem *Sylvia's Death* which was written in 1963, Sexton laments her friend Sylvia Plath. She portrays Plath's suicide as a reason of life's misfortunes beside revealing her depression, anger and agony to promote the fatality of the event remembered. By referring to death, Sexton defines an attitude, a circumstance, a wish, a decision and an irremediable practice that show the female's most agonized existence.

At the beginning of the poem, Sexton groans Sylvia's death by drawing a portrait of the domestic life that Sylvia used to have. The first stanza of the poem begins with

“O Sylvia, Sylvia, with a dead box of stones and spoons” (Sexton, 1981, p.126) depicting household entrapment as a way of death in life. Sexton confesses her own idea about the slavery of domestic life where she is imprisoned in a house like a box ‘with two children’ to be raised and feed them. Sexton is questioning Sylvia as if she were alive standing by her, “where did you go?” (Sexton, 1981, p.126), asking her about the last letter she wrote to Sexton. Reminding Sylvia about what she once told her “about raising potatoes” and “keeping bees?” which shows a kind of loyalty to her duty as a housewife and a mother like all female generations from the ancient nations revealing the great similarities, starting with raising children, harvesting, the preparation of food, cleaning, nursing and healing, and many economic and traditional charges of domestic duties.

Sexton is astounded by Plath’s courage as she puts all her duties behind and “crawl down alone” silently into the death without revealing her suicidal desires in her letters to her friend. Sexton addresses Plath as a thief because she crawls to death without waiting or telling her friend about her intentions. In revealing her firm desire to die, Sexton blames Plath because her death brings more sufferings to her as she needed dismissing from life. In the line “The death I wanted so badly and for so long” (Sexton, 1981, p.126), she admits her death wish and certifies to a possible suicidal attempt. With a melancholic tone, Sexton asserts her suicidal wishes that emphasize her own death anxiety and her profound rooted belief that death is the only way to get relief (Abu Madi & Neimneh, 2015).

McLeod (2015) asserts that depression is a mood disorder which restrains the individual from living a normal life, within his/her family or at work socially. This kind of mood disorder restrains Sexton from living her normal life. According to Freud (1917), the loss of a parent or a loved one could be linked directly to some cases of depression. As in Sexton’s case who lost her aunt whom she was sharing a close bond. It is rumored that Sexton may have been abused inside her house by her own parents, which left deep impacts on her character. This may be linked to her depression in life as a reaction to the loss of her relationships, and it is more like a grief for that loss.

Sexton clarifies the kind of death wish that she used to share with her friend Plath and the immense impact of their thoughts that have taken over their psyche as a result of over thinking. Sexton and Plath used to share their ideas and wishes to die while they

were drinking alcohols as a result of their depressed living as housewives. Sexton laments Plath's death "the death we drank to, the motives and the quiet deed?" (Sexton, 1981, p.126). They both were unconcerned with their roles as mothers, and they were regarded as 'doubly deviant' in incompatibility with the traditional role of a mother and a woman.

The death wishes are hidden and buried in both Sexton and Plath's unconscious mind because of being under the control of alcohol. This self-destructive attitude of alcoholism is viewed as an essential reason to face health problems and mental disorders. The depressive disorder in Sexton's poems is directly influenced by the reality that she is a mother and a wife. This kind of depression is clarified as an extensive emotional state described by feelings of despair, discouragement, pessimism, despondency, and sadness. The chemical composition of the women is the main reason to be at risk of suffering from depression and that her body changes after giving birth. Sexton believed that women's misfortunes are based on the idea of getting married and having children which may motivate them to have suicidal tendencies (Abu Madi & Neimneh, 2015).

Sexton describes the house where families live in by indicating to the window in the wall. She imagines it like a prison where little light and air come in from that window. This image clarifies the poet's depressed soul as she sees the world gloomy and dark like a prisoner waiting to be relieved from the jail. The poet continues to give more details about the prison. She portrays a 'crib' which indicates to the existence of a baby child who needs to be taken care of. This adds a different kind of burdens for the mother who is more like a maid. In this poem, Sexton confesses her anguished thoughts describing the idea of motherhood like prevention from happiness which led her suicidal intentions to grow more by time. Despite the fact that both Sexton and Plath tried hardly to hide their death wishes "under our heart, our cupboard" (Sexton, 1981, p.126), their tired souls and gloomy thoughts overwhelm them, and death does its job.

Sexton shows envious thoughts about Plath's death because Plath is relieved from the prison that she used to suffer in. She reveals her anguishing thoughts and depressed mind by lamenting her existence in life more than being sad about Sylvia's death. She attempts to commit suicide several times, but in each time, she failed. On the

contrary, Plath was able to do it successfully. She was relieved from the absurdity living of her life and death drove her away to her silent grave.

The analysis of this poem adopting Freud's theory of psychoanalysis shows that the chain of events and thought fit well. The contrast between unconscious persona and conscious persona is visible in this poem. Sylvia Plath's domestic family life and mental illness is unconscious persona and Anne Sexton's domestic family life and mental depression can be considered as conscious persona. Sexton relates Sylvia's suicide with her distressing domestic life, which is like Sexton's own depressed life. Sexton associated Sylvia's death with her depressing domestic life, which is an exact copy of her own life.

By analyzing this poem for detecting the concept of Freudian death drive or death motive, it is found that Sexton was controlled by Thanatos. Depression in Sexton's poems is directly influenced by the fact that she is a wife and a mother. Sexton is faded up with the typical domestic duty of a housewife that somehow shows a kind of devotion to her job as a mother and a wife, thus projecting her own attitude towards the slavery and the imprisonment of the domestic life. She cooks, feeds the children, and raises them; therefore, she goes to the extreme that she hates the idea of motherhood.

Sexton reveals the tabooed issues of praising the female body with great repose and spontaneity. In *Menstruation at Forty*, she involves issues related to women as Maxine Kumin (1999) states in the following words "she wrote openly about menstruation, abortion, and masturbation, incest, adultery and drug addiction at a time when the proprieties embraced none of these as proper topics for poetry" (p. 34).

However, the compilation of this poem evoked the critics' anger as Salvio (2007) wrote "A poem titled *Menstruation at Forty* was the straw that broke the camel's back" (p.36). Sexton was self-assured about her status as a poet in an interview in 1971 with the journalist Kevles, stating "I talk of the life-death cycle of the body. Women tell time by the body..." (Salvio, 2007, p. 36).

The female body in Sexton's poetry depicts sufferings, crises, and pain. As a result, she prefers death because her identity as a woman is a source of suffering for her.

In her poem *Menstruation at Forty*, she summons the female identity through describing the body and depicting her status as a grotesque figure. The poem is intensely physical, and it shocks the reader with its explicit depiction of the speaker's dreams and hopes. Sexton celebrates and laments the female body by highlighting the conflict between the female desire and the society's conventions with specific references to motherhood pain which was a taboo issue to discuss at that time.

This poem is regarded as one of Sexton's well-known poems written during the weeks in which she attended therapy sessions with Dr. Orne in November 1963. While reading this poem at the first glance, it appears to deal only with identity issues, but it also addresses Sexton's personal struggles "Dilemmas that animated both her work and her therapy" (Skorczewski, 2012, p.22) which caused her a deep desire to escape from her life. The poem begins with "I was thinking of a Son/ The womb is not a clock" (Sexton, 1981, p.137). Sexton realizes the fact that she is not pregnant which brings thoughts of suicide and death to her mind as she dislikes aging. Skorczewski (2012) states that Sexton laments the loss of a son that she might have had and laments the loss of her youth. In the poem, despite using active verbs in the first stanza, the image of autumn elicits a time of maturity and getting ready for an end or decline. The speaker reveals her desire in life, but it is late for her and the only thing that she could wish for is death because it is not the time of procreative potential. She refers to her birthday and death at the same time to remind the reader of her anguish. Her dilemma could be solved only by fulfilling her wish to die.

This time I hunt for death,
the night I lean toward,
the night I want.
Well then—
speak of it!

It was in the womb all along (Sexton, 1981, p.137).

The speaker addresses herself in the third person after she claims 'I hunt for death' as if she searches for revelation to avoid part of her wants. She 'leans toward' and desires 'the night'. The speaker introduces a second voice, which interferes, but cannot help; she can only talk about her desire. Sexton clarifies her capacity to give birth and take it in her poetry. This creative capacity may help her fight the impetus to kill herself (Skorczewski, 2012).

In the second stanza, Sexton moves towards imagining the daughter or the Slavic son she might have had. Thus, this poem begins as a monologue soaked in death changes the tone towards a dialogue in which Sexton mourns the son she would have. In the poem, the speaker kills the son she has created, and then mourns his death. Sexton drifted towards her desire to die in stanza one, then she conjures up a dialogue to satisfy the desires of the second voice. The story takes her away from death into the life of imagination, that is an unrealistic world to escape from her own life. Sexton succeeded in turning her actual story into a poetic one. She earns some control over the strong feelings that might approach her towards untimely death. Referring to her baby as 'it' that was in her womb is only an image or an invention because Sexton herself was not sure if she is pregnant or it is only her imagination.

Aside from Sexton's intense subject matter, she strengthens her poem by different images derived from her unconscious like her poetry. In a book titled *Contemporary Poets of the English language*, Sexton comments "I prefer to think of myself as an imagist who deals with reality and its hard facts" (Murphy & Vinson, 1970, p. 978). Reality could not fulfill Sexton's desire; rather, only imagination could provide her peace of mind. In *Anne Sexton Biography*, Middlebrook (1991) mentions that Sexton was tired after the birth of her daughter. Moreover, she was disoriented, agitated, and subject to fits of feeling 'unreal' (p.31). Her psychiatrist Dr. Martin Orne states "she was a very difficult patient; she pushed the world of reality away" (Ibid 41).

Sexton refers to the death of the baby that she might have, and at the same time she refers to her death too, as she says in this poem: "And two days until mine" (Sexton, 1981, p.137). According to her, menstruation is a 'red disease' as she mentions in the last stanza, which comes 'Year after year' to fulfill its aim of procreation. Writing this poem on the 7th of November, a couple of days before her birthday on 9th November, Sexton subsequently creates feelings of getting old and shows the inability of her body to fulfill her maternal needs or instincts. She is motivated to describe her experience of motherhood that she will never have again as it fades away "All this without you—/two days gone in blood. /I myself will die without baptism" (Sexton, 1981, p.137). The speaker continues describing her gloomy situation "full and disheveled, hissing into the night, / never growing old, /waiting always for you on the porch" (ibid). She describes her dependency on her unborn child, because its birth appears to be pivotal for own life,

mentioning that her wish of having this baby “the never acquired, /the never seeded or unfastened, /you of the genitals I feared” (ibid) is fulfilled. The adverbs ‘never’ and ‘always’ refer to the speaker’s disappointment and agony as she is condemned to non-existence and death (Skorczewski, 2012).

Menstruation at Forty describes the speaker’s biological and social death as a reason of her inability to procreate and invent a new child, thus highlighting as well as illustrating the rejection that she experiences from her social milieu. Sexton seeks death as she cannot taste life anymore. A critical analysis of the poem *Menstruation at Forty* in the light of the psychoanalytical plane reflects that her mind was primarily controlled by death instincts (Thanatos). According to Freud, the first phase of this mental phase is affected by ‘anxiety and depression’, the second phase is effected by ‘trauma’, and the third one is controlled by ‘Bipolar Disorder’. Sexton felt that the female body is meant for suffering, crises, and pain. She dislikes aging and mourns her loss of the son that she might have had. Besides, she highlights the conflict between the female desire and the society’s conventions. The society of the sixties and seventies was limited for women to the domestic sphere. In a patriarchal world like this one, every woman would inevitably feel out casted and alienated and not allowed to fulfill her desire. Thus, Sexton is tired of her biological and social death. Life instincts are sometimes considered as a sexual instinct which helps the individual remain alive. In this poem, Sexton is struggling between life and death and she portrays life when she talks about menstruation and abortion. According to Freud, libido or life instincts often includes positive emotions which are not obvious in Sexton’s poems. Therefore, she tackles the issue of life only to describe it as gloomy and dark. Freud (1930) asserts that there is no Thanatos (death drive) without fusion Eros (life drive), and mentions:

Even where it emerges without any sexual purpose, in the blindest fury of destructiveness, we cannot fail to recognize that the satisfaction of the instinct is accompanied by an extraordinary high degree of narcissistic enjoyment, owing to its presenting the ego with a fulfillment of the latter’s old wishes for omnipotence (Freud, 1930, p. 144).

This diffusion is an obvious sign for the existence of death. Sexton tackles the issue of menstruation as she approaches aging, suffering from anxiety and depression. She cannot continue her life normally and that causes to have feelings of hopelessness, isolation, and severely damaging ideas like death desire to end their suffering (Levine, 2014).

In *Wanting to die*, Sexton's lust for death is more obvious as the title suggests. This short poem from the collection *Live or Die* creates a vivid conversational tone since it was written as a kind of response to a letter from her psychiatrist, Wilder. There was a paradoxical bond concerning death between Sexton and Wilder who was sick with lupus. However, this disease does not cause death as Sexton thought when she first knew about it.

The poem is a response to Wilder's letter that posed a question addressing Sexton "What could drive a prize winning poet, mother of two with a comfortable life to suicide?" (Middlebrook, 1991, p. 215). She confesses to Sexton about her ideas of death and thinks that death will take her life in any moment; therefore, she loves life. Sexton in that time was not thinking about committing suicide; rather, she was spending time writing about it "We live at such contrasts ... me testing death ... me raging at the fruit, the plump moon ... the bread that I took for a kiss, the love, an infection" (Middlebrook, 1991, p. 215). A few days after writing this letter, Sexton organized her thoughts and revealed her obsession with death.

In this poem, Sexton vividly describes her desire to commit suicide as well as her addiction to drugs. The poem generally revolves around the idea of death and suicide, and the tone of the poem is intensively depressing, and it produces dark and morbid imagery. It provides the reader with the reasons that make the poet think of suicide through specific imagery and personifications of death. The poem has been recognized as one of Sexton's literary work that is written as a suicide note, because it describes the poet's attempt to explain to her readers the reason behind her death. Beginning with melancholy and rueful voice, Sexton chooses to answer Wilder's question about the gloomy ideas of death that she holds. "Since you ask, most days I cannot remember" (Sexton, 1981; p.147). The speaker portrays herself as walking through life unconsciously, unaffected and unimpressed by the world around her. In the second line, Sexton describes her confused mind "I walk in my clothing" (ibid), and she walks aimlessly in life, thus feeling empty and revealing her wish to die which represents a 'voyage' for her (Rosezenga, 2013).

According to the speaker in the poem, the act of forgetting is not a mundane impulse. Rather, it is a routine in her mind. She is unable to remember her suicidal

thoughts since it is implanted in her unconscious mind. More specifically, her desire for death is the only passion that she feels that is the “unnamable lust returns” (Sexton, 1981, p.147). Sexton describes her desire to die as ‘lust’ that never ceases to return (Deiudicibus, 2003).

In her poem, Sexton acknowledges God “I have nothing against life” (Sexton, 1981, p.147) as if she is speaking directly to God. She illustrates her desire and she is aware that God created everything in the universe for a reason and everything is there for a purpose. However, Sexton’s purpose in life has been compelled by her desire to die and her urge to die does not necessarily mean that she blames God or she has not enjoyed life’s transient pleasures. She knows “the grass blades” that represent the vitality of life and she has no hatred for it, but she prefers death more (Rosezenga, 2013).

The Superego operates under the theory of morality which makes it accountable for ensuring that the moral principles are fully complied with, and that the social norms are upheld. Sexton could not deny the existence of God; she is aware of her suicidal tendencies which are against the role of God. The superego rejects the unacceptable behaviors which are completely prohibited and can lead to adverse effects, retribution, and feelings of guilt and disappointment (Stangor & Walinga, 2015). In short, individuals engage in behaviors that comply with the rules of the ideal of ego. Behaviors which are unacceptable to the conscience will lead to feeling guilty. Superego often interferes with the individuals’ behavior in order to influence and control their actions and attitudes. The collision between the three forces will affect the individual's psychological and mental health in one way or another. Accordingly, the superego tried to control Sexton’s behavior. Even though she is aware of her unrealistic thoughts, she could not bear the misery of her life. Thus, the superego is the main source of Sexton’s feeling of guilt.

In the third stanza, the poet turns to the topic of death despite her acknowledgements of life’s pleasures, “But suicides have a special language/ Like carpenters they want to know which tools. / They never ask *why build*” (Sexton, 1981, p.147). Sexton presents the difference between those who have death wish like her and other people who value their lives. She connects those who want to die to carpenters, showing the art of suicide as a vocation or trade. the poet’s intention needs skills and

talents to achieve the task of suicide successfully because she failed many times while performing it. Generally, the simile of the 'carpenter' may indicate to Christ. Maybe victims like Jesus and suicide are similar in their passion to die. Hence, she tries to illustrate the temptation that death holds and translates her death wish into words that the reader can understand (Deiudicibus, 2003).

Sexton summons up her old persona which is a glamorous witch as she mentions in her earlier poems. In the fourth stanza, the speaker presents the idea of an enemy that differs strikingly with the preceding stanza's unification of the ideas of suicide as one group. She describes her endless battle and conflict with suicide "Twice I have so simply declared myself, / have possessed the enemy, eaten the enemy, / have taken on his craft, his magic" (Sexton, 1981, p.147). It seems that Sexton may refer to her undeniable suicidal nature confessing her unsuccessful attempts to commit suicide twice. She declares her need for death. Freud assumed that the negative energy of death instinct would manifest itself as violence and aggression, thus this kind of aggression can be seen in Sexton's poem when describing the enemy (Freud, 1960, as cited in Wiszniowska-Majchrzyk, 2011)

Sexton addresses the enemy as a male gender which may indicate Sexton's feelings of patriarchal oppression or that she has this desire to die because of male gender's dominance in societies. The word 'enemy' is repeated to draw the emphasis on the fact that the speaker is aware of how serious and malicious her thoughts of death are, but it is like 'magic', and she cannot control it as it fascinates her (Deiudicibus, 2003).

In the fifth stanza, Sexton is incapacitated after she got involved in the enemy, and she is filled with knowledge about the enemy's magic. The final line presents some relief, yet it is not convincing "I have rested, drooling at the mouth-hole" (Sexton, 1981, p.147). The vulgar and barbaric concept of 'mouth-hole' draws a disturbing image of some useless and dumb orifice. The speaker is unable to take care of herself and control her suicidal tendencies so that she cannot rest in her own flesh.

Sexton describes her body as filthy and disposable since it is not a sacred place; it is like a prison for her "I did not think of my body at needle point/ Even the cornea and the leftover urine were gone. / Suicides have already betrayed the body" (Sexton, 1981, p.147). These lines provide a morbid view of the dead body, being sewn for

postmortem exhibit. Sexton describes the corpse where lips sewn shut, muscles tension disappears, and nothing stops the mouth gape from being opened. She presents an ironic image which is the 'mouth-hole' that is artificially held shut after death in order to have a proper appearance. In contrast, in life, Sexton is involved in her obsession to die to the point that she did not care about closing it. In this poem, the image of death seems to offer Sexton the balance and the ability, unlike the images of life that only increase her suffering and struggle. The unconscious mind develops her desire to die and the death drive controls this development.

Sexton continues explaining the lust of suicide and death addictions from the time the person is born. She describes suicide as newborn fetus that captures the dreadful entrapment of an active mind in a passive body "They can't forget a drug so sweet / that even children would look on and smile" (Sexton, 1981, p.147). She describes the effect of failed suicide attempts on the mind and how it leaves the victim overpowered and fascinated by it. The poet's diction is compelling because it uncovers the almost unavoidable truths about suicide. The death wish is fascinating to the suicide that interrogates her strange compulsions in an incompatible world where life is depicted unconditionally sacred, and the image of children smiling turns grotesque. Sexton embeds the image of innocent children among the living dead, smiling while they consider their own ends "To thrust all that life under your tongue! – that, all by itself, becomes a passion" (Sexton, 1981, p.147). Sexton compares suicide to the habit of taking pills and implies that eventually it can become a passion. She describes for her reader the conditions of death "death's a sad bone" (Sexton, 1981, p.147), but for her it is a liberating force that can relieve her from her agony. According to the psychoanalysis and the death drive, Sexton struggles to achieve a non-existence state as she becomes depressed by self-destruction as a reason for her emotional and psychological problems.

Sexton attempts to vindicate her reasons for meditating suicide. Not only her death wish reoccurs, but also suicide waits for her, which implies that she has battled her suicidal tendencies for years. The speaker transforms death from a male to a powerful female entity that waits from ages to relieve her from her rusted memories. Death has become the speaker's only choice of relief from the old emotions and memories. She thinks that death will solve her dilemma and bring her peace. It will heal the grief that life has inflicted upon her. Sexton presents life as a kind of suffering and

depicts her own body as a bad prison that should be emptied of life. Through writing poetry, she found liberation for her physical self away from this cruel prison.

At the end of the poem, Sexton portrays suicide attempts as means to release the imprisoning flesh “leaving the page of the book carelessly open” (Sexton, 1981, p.147). In this poem, Sexton gives death and life exchangeable faces. She describes death’s abrupt presence and life’s fast end. She ends the poem talking about things and words that left unspoken and unfinished and are travelling to the unknown. She left her reader knowledgeable about the reasons of one’s will to die and why life is not always wanted.

The analysis of the poem on the psychological ground propounded by Freud shows that Saxton hates her life because there was no reasons or motivations for her to live. Her life comes to a worthless affair “and the love whatever it was, an infection” (Sexton, 1981, p.147). This is one facet of the analysis, which is based on the concept of ‘Id’. Obviously, the readers agree that the treatment of death wish is psychological and for interpretations a psyche theory is needed. The poetess herself mentions in this poem “They never ask why build” (Sexton, 1981, p.147). This line is the shortest, but it manifests the essential idea of the poem, because the death desire for the person who wants to die is not questionable. It is not something that others can force the suicidal person to change their thoughts since it is inevitable destiny for them. Although being a wife or a mother was a better choice for Sexton, still she accepted her suicidal thoughts because mainly its origin was internal rather than externally forced by the society.

A further analysis of this poem based on the Freudian theory of death drive, it is evident that the poet’s mental state shifted from the death wish to the death instinct, as she uses several suicide images in the poem. The image of the suicidal death seems to offer Sexton the balance and the ability, unlike the images of life that only increase her suffering and struggle. The feelings of alienation and insignificance stimulate in her the “lust” of taking her life. Obviously, this is not the first time that Sexton experiences this ‘unnameable lust’ for death.

Suicide note is a death poem, included in Sexton’s collection *Live or Die* (1966). The title indicates what the poem is all about, that is the desire to die or slowly engage in death. Despite the fact that the poem is similar to many of her suicide poems, it is an artfully constructed and restrained note left to someone who will wonder about her

successful suicide attempt. Sexton brings new images to illustrate her state of mind and the irony is that she committed suicide nearly ten years after writing this poem. Accordingly, the reader is left perplexed whether she is the persona of the poem or not and whether this poem was a suicide note left to someone after her death (Colburn, 1988).

The poem begins with Sexton's wish to die. The desire for dying is viewed as a matter of choice and not because she is egocentric person, leaving behind many remnants of her life to be construed by her daughters and their progeny. The poem reveals the desire of being isolated from the social life and the wish not to be born. Accordingly, the poet sets the death scene by indicating to wombs, whereby she wants to return to the stage before birth, because she believes that there is no reason to continue her vain life. Freud (1961, p. 30) states "It seems, then, that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things". For Sexton, life is depicted as futile and pointless and by her death no one will be affected (Colburn, 1988).

better somehow
to drop myself quickly
into an old room.
Better (someone said)
not to be born
and far better
not to be born twice (Sexton, 1981, p.156).

In his book *The Search for the Beloved* (1949), the psychoanalyst Fodor clarifies "The outstanding motive behind the desire to return into the womb is the attainment of happiness in the only perfect form we have known it" (p. 219). He continues to explain the reason behind this desire to return to the unborn stage "all our escape fantasies from the trials and tribulations of life reveal the spell which pre-natal security and happiness cast over our unconscious imagination" (ibid). Fodor believes "We begin life in pain and regret. Birth is a shock both physically and mentally; and it is also the beginning of dissociation" (ibid).

In this regard, suicide is only an escape from the domestic duties and the social life. The beginning of the poem is presented as a conclusion to reveal the intentions of the note. The poet states that it is better to die despite these things that show the up and downs of life. Sexton portrays her idea about death; she wants to disappear and escape 'into an old room' which means death. Sexton prefers not to be born or give birth because

life for her is an unhappy place, where human beings suffer until they die (Colburn, 1988).

After revealing her thoughts about life, Sexton introduces a 'dear friend', to whom she describes her disfigured vision of life. She views life as sloping backward and forward. The poet is impregnable, and nothing can change her distorted view of life. She says, "Even the wasps cannot find my eyes" (Sexton, 1981, p.157). Her thoughts have changed to vision by means of reduction and distortion: Once her eyes were 'truly awake,' but now they have been 'pierced'.

Sexton views life as pointless. For her, all life stages that human beings pass through such as childhood, adolescence, and adulthood are of no essence or value and the best thing is to die quickly than living in absurdity. It is better not to be born so she will not have to transact with the misfortunes that appear by ageing. As some critics state, death is a fundamental part of human's life throughout adulthood.

Based on the analysis in *Encyclopedia of Death and Human Experience*, the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung suggested that the adult development is presented by a process in which one moves from 'omnipotence' and 'immortality' of young adulthood to the encounter of physical aging and loss of loved ones (Bryant & Peck, 2009). Sexton reveals her desire of committing suicide by using different images that represent death. She had 'cultural gerontophobia' that is defined as "fear of growing old or fear of the elderly, the latter demonstrated by the multibillion-dollar cosmetic surgery industry to obscure the aging process" (Bryant & Peck, 2009, p.288). Sexton as an attractive and a beautiful middle-aged woman was terrified by the idea of being useless and getting old. What increased Sexton's anxiety was the idea of aging and becoming exhausted physically, which is a universal issue that is related to the way old people are dealt with in many communities, particularly when sending them to special nursing homes to be taken care of. This is a nightmare and frightening idea to Sexton (Madi & Neimneh, 2015). As mentioned in chapter one, this kind of anxiety which Sexton suffers from is irrational fear that takes control of the id's impulses, thereby pushing the individuals to fulfill their desire. A desire to the destruction of the body before it gets old and useless exists as the ego cannot balance between the demands of reality and id's destructive

wish. The result will be a death wish or a suicide tendency that may lead to a real suicide attempt as Sexton did many times.

Sexton shapes her poem with obvious fragmented parts which somehow make it difficult to be understood. She recalls her hunger for Jesus and describes his death by referring to biblical allusions. She thinks of Jesus as a fellow suicide, revealing her endeavor to die in the same way he had while he was young when “he rode calmly into Jerusalem/in search of death” (Sexton, 1981, p.157) to relieve himself. Sexton finds the rupture that death brings which is frequently associated with the “theme of resurrection, analogous to the cycle of nature, leading to a renewal of life” (Kramarae & Spender, 2000). Sexton continues her poem by revealing a new desire which stands as a disclaimer “This time/I certainly/do not ask for understanding” (Sexton, 1981, p.158). Her desire is not to make everyone feel sorry for her death. She does not imagine the natural world like the fish, the moon, and the tress neither a man-made world like the buildings to take note of the moment of her death. According to Sexton, everyone who has not escaped quickly into ‘an old room’ as a result for not standing the pain and the beauty of life, will respond to that beauty and pain. The kind of understanding that Sexton wants to solicit is that she cannot tolerate with the ‘bass note’ of moonlight that ‘hurts some building in Boston’, she cannot bear an unrehearsed fish bursting the surface of still water. She cannot see the ‘truly beautiful’ that lies together.

The poet reminded herself of the beauty of life that is blended with pain, and her memories might confuse, when she is sitting near ‘that old fire’ asking for death. Sexton describes herself as a coward because she wants to escape from life, but she feels herself forced to death like moths that “forced by circumstance/to suck on the electric bulb” (ibid). Freud helps his readers think about the conditions in which the demands of the ego become hard to fulfill and are unbearable, thus leading to a kind of death wish or a desire to return to a life where there is no experience which means that there is no society’s pressure. The ego tries to make the id adapt with the reality. More exactly, the ego tries to control the moments which cannot conform within its own unity. The id opposes the demands of the ego; it seeks its pleasure and does not want the ego to preserve its realistic refusal of pleasure. A refusal of the organism’s is preferred at an earlier state of life. Freud asserts that the ego is portrayed as a master; it may desire to control the id, but in some cases, it acts out the id’s desire, because the origin of the id

will be the organism. In this case, a kind of unbalance will happen between the impulses which may lead to unaccepting the ego's demands (O'Connor, 2016).

Sexton found in death an escape from the bitter reality of life and she did not have the courage to deal with life's incidents. She emphasizes on the idea of dying while she is young and she tries to persuade the addressee that because everyone is assumed to die someday, then she can do it now, thereby relieving herself from the pain and struggle of life. Death is presented as a better choice than life:

But surely you know that everyone has a death,
his own death,
waiting for him.
So I will go now
without old age or disease,
wildly but accurately,
knowing my best route (Sexton, 1981, p.158).

This stanza refers to Sexton's different suicide attempts, depicting death as an entity that can be owned. It is innate and arises from within the individual. For Sexton, death can be seen everywhere and can be portrayed as inevitable, but at the same time it is a choice "So I will go now/without old age or disease" (Sexton, 1981, p.158). The best "route" for Sexton is death that she desires the most. This obsession with death is presented by different kinds of similes and metaphors, while death's inescapability and the desire to die by committing suicide dominate the poem.

This poem is written in a specific 'suicidal idiom' whose major function is the relaxation of the mind (George, 1984). This suicidal expression indicates to the language the poet uses that concentrate on the metaphorical suicide she experienced. That suicidal language is modified into a universal language which clarifies the intensity of the speaker's emotion. Finally, this poem is self-destruct, and it becomes a kind of "suicide attempt" (ibid, p.25). Hence, Sexton is using her specific poetic devices and certain language that reflect her fierce obsession with death and suicide.

The analysis of this poem based on the Freudian psychoanalysis of the concept of conscious, unconscious, subconscious, and the concept of Id, Ego, and Superego is significant. These two theories the basis of the concept of death drive. Sexton brings new images to illustrate her state of mind. According to Freud, the desire, which is unfulfilled by an individual, gets restored in the unconscious mind. It seems that this

unfulfilled desire gets reflected through the poetic images. In this poem, Sexton's death wish is articulated in the form of a mystical union with Jesus (Christ) who is well-known for his sacrifice and death wish. Sexton expressed her desire to die by referring to an alternative instinct, which is her hunger for death. The used image in this poem seems strong and justified. She thinks of Jesus as a fellow suicide, revealing her endeavour to die in the same way he had while he was young.

If one looks into this issue based on Id, Ego, and Superego perspective, one can say that this unfilled desire leads the individual towards the superego. As mentioned in the introduction part, Eros stands for the life instinct and Thanatos for the death instinct, whereby Sexton presents two contradictory images 'worms' and 'girls' blood' which stand for fertility and sterility or decay. The first seems essentially death-directed, whereas the other is primarily life-directed. This sense of super ego leads to the death wish and further to the death instinct if they are not controlled properly.

In *For Mr. Death Who Stands with his Door Open* from the collection of *The Death Notebooks* (1974), Sexton confronts with death and the higher power 'God'. In this poem, Sexton presents the idea of death, revealing her suicidal thought and her desire to die. She addresses death as a male figure, and empowers him with tyranny, brutality, and force. Death is presented in different forms; all are male figures. The title of the poem suggests a clue to the identity of death's character. She addresses death as 'Mr. death', that is the eternal seducer whose door is always open and inviting. On the contrary, Sexton presents time as a female, who was once young, filled with joy playing games like 'hoola-hoop'. Besides, in this poem, Sexton personifies death as an actor who has many masks. He is "a kind of Valentino" (Sexton, 1981, p.351). This actor takes on the role of a male figure in her suicidal performances "telling that suicide baby to celebrate/her own going in her own puppet play" (ibid). Here, the speaker personifies dying as an entertainment like a puppet play that she plays out through characters rather than by herself. This kind of metaphor works to view the fact that the confessional inspiration no matter how emotional or how effectively conveying the poet's feelings and true state of mind is always a ritualistic performance (Richardson, 2015). As a kind of contrast to the female time, the speaker presents a masculine 'Mr. Death' which stands as a kind of a particular beau who releases her from her depression and anguish. He is a sleek suitor "a kind of valentine/ with my father's bathtub gin in your flask" (Sexton,

1981, p.352). The speaker portrays herself as placed “with my cinched-in waist and my dumb vertigo” (ibid) in ‘the crook’ of death’s ‘long white arm’. Sexton states that in spite of her close relationship to this suitor, yet he ‘never bent’ her ‘back, never, never’ she had never surrendered to his charms. For Sexton, death is no longer the sleek suitor who was once, because years and time incredibly affected him just as they affected her.

Sexton further personifies death as an abstract figure by referring to his penchant for drink, which has given him a ‘beer belly’ or a paunch. Sexton may want to refer to herself that changed by time and society, but her lust for death cannot be vanished because years passed, and her rusted memories disturb her. She imagines the inappropriate pair that she will make with her ‘comical beau’ who is “middle-aged and lower-class” (Sexton, 1981, p.35). Sexton knows that she has no choice; therefore, she forwards herself self-destruction.

But when it comes to my death let it be slow,
let it be pantomime, this last peep show,
so that I may squat at the edge trying on
my black necessary trousseau (Sexton, 1981, p.352).

Sexton knows that she will face her destiny, but she wants her death to be slow. She longs for a kind of death which is a pantomime, a theatrical pleasure that is outrageous, absurd, and even comic in its different excesses. However, Sexton’s final act of revelation is compensated by a ritualized act of disguising. Further, death is portrayed clearly as temporary ‘trying on’ of macabre ceremonial garment, the black trousseau that is ‘necessary’ for her deathly performance (Richardson, 2015).

Sexton requests a slow departure from her suitor, as she prepares for a morbid wedding, that is a kind of wedding that she waits for so long, trying on her black trousseau. The wedding garments are usually white as it presents joy and happiness, while the speaker’s wedding garment is black because her bridegroom is Mr. Death whom she waits for years. Sexton’s personification of gender for death is stated in a letter to a friend in a particular session of therapy with her therapist highlighting “the discussion of the sex of death” (Sexton, 2004, p.231). Sexton states “When (to me) death takes you and puts you thru the wringer, it’s a man. But when you kill yourself, it’s a woman” (ibid).

Sexton expresses her deep desire to die. This death wish may come from the patriarchal society she lives in, as she describes death as a male figure when it is imposed on her from the outside by unknown presence. This female manifestation of death may refer to one explanation that the speaker's death wish, or suicidal tendency is a powerless reaction to her agony and depression. Sexton describes her suicide as a triumph against the male dominated world. According to Freud, when passing through a psychosexual phase without fulfilling the demands of that stage, the result will be unhealthy personality. As in Sexton's case, there are always some ideas concerning male as a reason for her death wish.

An analysis of this poem on the Freudian psychoanalysis of the concept of conscious, unconscious, subconscious and the concept of Id, Ego, and Superego is significant. These two theories are actually the basis of the concept of the death drive. Hence, this poem stands as a significant exercise in personification. Her desire is unfulfilled because of the patriarchal attitude of the society. So, she addresses death as a male figure, and she empowered him with tyranny, brutality, and force. This leads to her wish for morbid wedding with death rather than a male figure. In *Anne Sexton: A Biography*, Middlebrook (1992, p. 58) quotes Sexton's friend, a psychiatric social worker, Lois Ames, who states "I could never believe anything, but that Anne was a victim of child sexual abuse by both Nana [Sexton's great-aunt] and her father". As a reason of emerging in different versions, many people have doubted Sexton's memories. One of them was Middlebrook, who condemns the psychiatrists because they did not believe Sexton's daughter, Linda, who asserted that she was sexually abused by her mother. Such a repetition is an obvious indication of being abused (Middlebrook 1992).

Leaves that Talk is one of Sexton's posthumously published poems. She reveals her death wish as she mentions dates denoting to the fact that she is late, and her living-death condition is not acceptable or bearable. There is an explicit temptation from literal death that appears throughout her poem.

The poem begins with the speaker's fantasy that she answers 'yes' to the call of 'green girls'. It is 20th of May and the green leaves on the tree, outside of her window are calling her "Calling out their death wish:/ Anne, Anne, come to us) (Sexton, 1981, p. 540). The speaker imagines the green leaves talking and calling her to join them, and

she wishes to join them because she knows that they will turn yellow and die soon. Sexton could not bear the frozen death wish that she holds for years, which made her imagine that things around her are tempting her to death. The only portrait that she could see, hear and feel is death. Although she is seriously tempted by the leave's calls, she falls asleep and wakes at the end of the poem, realizing that the 'green girls' have gone and left the tree. The speaker missed her chance to join them, which may indicate to her failure in the previous attempts to commit suicide. However, the seasonal theme and the green leaves of summer the turn yellow and die, and falling in Autumn assure to the reader that the opportunity undoubtedly will come again and she will fulfill her death wish one day.

This poem portrays a speaker named Anne, without mentioning her last name because the family name is conventionally related to the father or it is patronymic in the Western culture. The presence of the family name in the speaker's poem would signify a subject with a masculine authority. Sexton uses her work to explore and struggle the pain of aging in a female body in a patriarchal society. Such struggling is poignantly experienced by her female character, as she tries to describe her relationship with her father. In her book *Oedipus Anne: The Poetry of Anne Sexton*, George (1987) states that outside the psychoanalytic world, Sexton was the first contemporary voice to describe the established relationship between the father and the daughter from the girl's perspective. Sexton tries to disrupt the connection between herself and her past, as Gilmore (2000) illustrates that the name becomes a symbol of the person's past and in some families mentioning the name may be threatening rather than comforting, and not everyone who writes embraces his/her family names, instead "some write in order to destroy the claims upon them made by families, communities, and past experiences" (p.129). Sexton's decision of not mentioning her last name illustrates that this poem is not a straightforward reading of her past. It may represent Sexton's feelings and attempts to release her from a power or a suffering past.

Sexton presents the image of doves which symbolizes freedom. The kind of freedom that Sexton wishes is death, that is her only refuge. Her deep thoughts enabled her to fulfill her desire through imagination; therefore, she imagines her soul flying like a dove. The presence of the doves' image in this poem enhances their vision as celestial messengers, or it may refer to the symbolic connection between earth and air. The dove

also symbolizes the soul's relief from its earth-bound duty. Only through death the speaker can escape from her duties and distress (Doise, 2010).

Sexton further explains her thoughts. The image of death cannot disappear from her mind as she imagines voices, calling and approaching her to her death wish. She clarifies that this protection also appears as imprisonment "They call even if I'm pinned behind bars" (Sexton, 1981, p.541). Her isolation of the suburbs may distance her from the hazard of a city, but it also traps her, thereby providing no escape from the perils of the outlying area. In fact, the isolation itself appears to be a reason for the Sexton's agony, as she loves the song in spite of its bad affection; "It is bad for me, dear confessor, /and yet I am in love with it. It has a body" (ibid). Sexton realizes her dilemma and she is aware of her situation, yet she admires her desire.

Leaves that Talk is the last poem of Sexton analyzed in this study. The analysis of this poem based on Freud's concept of conscious, unconscious, subconscious, Id, Ego, Superego, and death drive again shows a powerful image as Sexton reveals her unfulfilled desire set in the unconscious mind. Sexton imagines the green leaves talking and calling her to join them, and she wishes to join them because she knows that they will turn yellow and die soon. The speaker missed her chance to join them, which may indicate to her failure in the previous attempts to commit suicide. However, the seasonal theme and the green leaves of summer that turn yellow and die, as well as falling in Autumn assure to the reader that the opportunity undoubtedly will come again, and she will fulfill her death wish one day. Her deep thoughts enable her to fulfill her desire through imaginations. In this regard, the death instinct is Sexton's feelings and attempts to release her from a power or a suffering past.

This chapter analyzed Sexton's poems investigating the subject of death wish in the light of the death drive Psychoanalysis Theory. Freud's theory and ideas about the desire to die and return to an earlier state of life were adopted in analyzing the selected poetry of Anne Sexton to explore the reason behind her death wish. The next chapter will illustrate the subject of death wish in the selected poetry of Stevie Smith with reference to Freud's Psychoanalysis Theory.

CHAPTER THREE

MODERN ENGLISH POETRY AND STEVIE SMTH

3.1. Modern English Poetry

The word Modern and even the trend called modernism are indefinite terms whose accurate meanings are difficult to comprehend. This movement is associated with many features found in the literary work of the early twentieth century, especially after the First World War. The publication of T.S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* in 1922 is regarded a justification for this movement.

This trend has witnessed the experimentation and the invention of new techniques of expression. The writers of Modern English Poetry used various ways of expression to convey their ideas and experience. Their broad imagination and the presenting of concrete images enable the reader to understand what they feel and live through. They explained their feelings symbolically, presenting the ideas in terms of intensely significant symbols, thus paving different directions for their readers to illustrate them intellectually. They reflected the reality of the world through a realistic way. They showed a fantastic, neurotic, psychological, private, and impressionistic way of displaying a clear first impression of everything by the reader or the observer. They used an expressionistic way of searching deep into one's own psyche, attempting to express and reveal the deepest and hidden feelings. They tried to arouse the illogical 'language' of one's unconscious, as in the confessional poetry and the surrealist way of presenting the mood of madness in their work. WhitWorth (2010) states that Modernism includes all those experimentations and directions in the techniques of expression.

Chancellor and Lyubomirsky (2011) clarified that despite being written about a wide range of subject, modernist poems are multiple in their themes, which means that some single poems are tackling different themes at the same time. The poet never fully admits the precise meaning of his poem. Rather, he provides his readers with many 'possible' themes and ideas within the same poem.

The reader of the Modernist poetry tries to find logical facts or supports for the themes that he finds in the poem as a kind of explanation. As a result, in the modernist

poetry, the idea or the theme has different interpretations by readers. In an article entitled *The Use of Ancient Myths in Modern Poetry: The Myth of Sisyphus as a Case Study* in 2015, Masarwah reveals that there is no single and specific meaning of any poem. The new trend of modern poetry and the way that poets have invented those trends in their modern poems reveal the theme of death as a kind of reinvented concepts of awareness. For readers, they are interested in the prophetic message in the shape and form of poetry to bring order in this world.

Pedersen (2015) claims that poets of the Modernist poetry introduced themes of solitude and sense of death. Through using symbolism, they presented everything that is hard to illustrate and give accurate meanings about real interpretations and intentions of the poem. A rejection of the society, loss, alienation, fear, and the desire to die are the main issues written by modernist writers. In general, Modernism tends to create something new, with new metaphors and a new language, and supposedly a new state of complete destruction.

3.2. Stevie Smith

Stevie Smith is a substantial figure in the Twentieth-Century's British poetry. She is arguably postmodern and modern writer. In this study, she is analyzed as a modern writer. Her publications stretched during the three historical phases of the twentieth century's history. As a British poet, she is well-known for her twelve short lines poem *Not waving but Drowning*, whereby critics often suppose that she condensed her own experience into the poem.

Smith is a poet who conflates autobiography and fantasy together through a dramatic monologue. Her monologues are noticeably twentieth-century in her fulfillment of unvoiced imperatives which conform with Freud's concept of the concealed unconsciousness and repression (Dowson & Entwistle, 2005).

In an interview in *Ivy and Stevie* with Kay Dick (1970), Smith admits "I love Death, I think it's the most exciting thing", she loves and adores life as well, then she adds "but only because I keep myself well on the edge". She uses the word 'edge' to refer to suicide which is the edge between life and death. What keeps Smith on the edge is her ego which tries to keep her balance. According to Freud, the collision between the three forces of

human personality will affect the individual's psychological and mental health in one way or another and that leads Smith to wish for her own death.

Smith imagines suicide as an ambiguous position that one could empower with. The quest of losing consciousness dominates Smith's work, and her desire to escape from her life began at the early age of eight until the 1st of July 1953, when a phase of intense depression ended in an unsuccessful suicide attempt. While she was in her job at Newnes Publishers, she slit her wrists. As an unmarried writer who grew in a female household, her refuge was in death. This kind of living near to 'the edge' expanded her imagination and paved her a way through writing poetry to relieve her from the dilemma of her life (Huk, 2005, p.31). Smith's desire to escape and to be elsewhere is everywhere in the people, whom she figured highly symbolically. These sensations of loss are explained by Freud as longing for "the pre-Oedipal mother/child union" (Dowson & Entwistle, 2005, p.121). Smith expresses her gloomy experience in life through her poems and writings as her social territory were narrow. She emphasizes the personal origin of her writings when critics called her poems as story poems, and she clarifies that she includes "Everything I have lived through, and done, and seen, and read and imagined and thought and argued" in her poems. Smith reveals her perspectives towards death as a relief from the distresses of life (ibid, p.115). Smith's thoughts may seem strange and almost childlike at first, but then appears the main issue of her life which is death, loneliness, and God. She was influenced by the poet T.S. Eliot as Spalding (1988) suggests in her book *Stevie Smith: A Biography* "there are poems in which the influence of Eliot can be detected", then she adds "Her aim was to write poetry that comes to the lips as naturally as speech". Her tendency for simplicity and her undecorated obvious themes are only one characteristic of her poetics (p.16).

What distinguishes Smith's uniqueness as a British poet is her poetic representations of the subject of death, as she explores it in its many forms. The representation of death in her work is innumerable because she is obsessed with it. Mokhtari (2010) states that Smith's poems revolve around the subject of death, and her poetry is depicted by suffering which can only come to an end by being distanced from the human existence. She had her first experience with depression at early age; therefore, she presents the subject of death in a perfect manner. Her death wish and isolation casted her to margins, writing observatory poems to explore different obscured dichotomies

related to human existence, religion, and society. She presents death as the substantial feature of human existence that marginalized her and consolidated her with the world. The above illustrated idea can be justified as Dick (1971) states that Smith's poems are "a bit deathwards in their wish" (p.48).

What decorates Smith's poems are her use of an imaginary fairytale and the child voice, thereby engaging her readers to discover more about her strange poems. Those characteristics are key contributors to her poems, which are mostly about death. Death has prevailed her poems while presenting human suffering, culture, gender, and politics, and she offers death as a kind of solution to the fear of human existence. She explores the drive towards death through art and represents death in its direct form, or sometimes in a metaphoric way such as in "black march". For Smith, death is a desired solution to her misery and injustice of life (Al Ahmad, 2016). The death drive is quite overt in her work; it is a kind of a complex desire revealed through the internal dialogue. Such an instinct might be seen to become a "rebellion... against the imaginary unity of the ego" (Boothby, 1991). Death becomes the exiled or alienated desire for her. Smith often depicts in her work that part of herself tries to resist or stay under the society's constraints or coercions.

Being entrapped in her past and memories, Smith was reciting her poetry while wearing clothing that is expressive of a schoolgirl's uniform with white stockings. In her poems, she used a baby talk form in both her linguistic imitation and appearance of youth, thus indicating to a stream of obsession remembering a desire for an imagined youth which is incompatible and fascinating at the same time. She displays a disturbing nostalgia in her poetry, where her childhood was a saga of abandonment, confinement, illness and death. The reality of her repeated agony led her to imagine constantly the things that she did not have in her life. Things which she could not get in her childhood is in her unconscious mind; therefore, she reveals them through her poems.

Depending on Freud's theory, a number of mental illnesses can be depicted in Smith's poetry like obsessive neurosis and acute bouts of depression. Accordingly, Smith constantly writes through her childhood revealing her hidden emotions and personal experience. She conforms and sometimes abandons traditional norms in order to find a new territory. Pervaded with the sadness of loss, she employs the desultory

cruelty of fairy tales to present the difficulties of her unwelcomed childhood. In her poetry, Smith reflects her desire to die through using varied and elusive poetic voices as means to mourn her uncomforted life (Walsh, 2004).

3.3. An Analysis of Smith's Poetry

Smith is famous for her morbid lines and gloomy ideas. In her poem *Not Waving but Drowning* which was written in 1953, she reveals the dark side of her life. She wrote the poem during tough times, where England suffered from deep depression. Although Smith gained fame in the 1930s, she was faced by difficulties in publishing her new work. In addition, she felt imprisoned by the routine of her job which she held for many years. As a reason for her gloomy ideas, she slashed her wrist while she was in her office after writing this poem by a few months. Accordingly, this poem seems like a shriek for help (Mokhtari, 2010).

Not Waving but Drowning is Smith's most celebrated poem which had been published for two times: first, in *The Observer* in 1954, and then in 1956 in an essay which is presented by the Medical World. This essay was entitled *Too Tired for Words* and it contains the same text of the poem when presented in the 1957 collection (Smith, 1981). The poem was written in April 1953, and one week later, Smith admits to Kay Dick in a letter "I felt too low for words last weekend but work it off for all that in a poem . . . called *Not Waving but Drowning*" (Smith, 1983, p. 294). Smith wrote her poem ten weeks before her attempt to commit suicide during a tough period as Spalding (1988) illustrates that Smith had "all the symptoms of the clinically depressed" (p. 213).

In his paper *Mourning and melancholia* (1917), Freud illustrated dynamics of melancholic depression and the reason behind suicide attempts. He asserts "we find the key to the clinical picture: we perceive that the self-reproaches are reproaches against a loved object which have been shifted away from it on to the patient's own ego" (Freud, 1917, p.248). The loss of a loved object may not refer to a real object; rather, it is an indication for the loss of a loved person, so a death desire will control the mind of the depressed person. Accordingly, that person will be able to stand aside from himself, he will objectify himself, feel and act upon himself as if he was someone else. Freud states that ego's self-love is great, but as a reason for being depressed, the ego accepts its own self-destruction which is incredible (Freud, 1917). The person tends to feel love and hate

simultaneously towards his/her objects, being entrapped between these feelings without any resolution. The result of that loss will increase ambivalence, which means having mixed feelings and contradictory ideas about someone or something. Leading the sad soul of the depressed person to grieve and think about new object can be addressed as a death wish in Smith's case in order to avoid old memories and her real life's trauma. Freud noted "the shadow of the object falls upon the ego" (Freud 1917, p. 249) which implies that the lost object becomes part of the ego and later turns against the self, and at the end is revealed as a lust for death. What happens is that the superego uses all the obtainable sadistic energy to provide self-denigration. As a result of the superego's Sadistic attacks, the ego will be driven to suicide.

The most famous four words of Smith *Not Waving but Drowning* are undoubtedly about Smith's desire to die and about miscommunication. Smith finds herself misunderstood by people, thus she illustrates her gloomy view of life which led her to think about death as a kind of rescue from this fatal misunderstanding as referred by Will May (2010) that some people misinterpret the signs conveyed by another person. Smith lost her hope in life; no more waving or struggling to find a solution for this misunderstanding exists. Rather she is drowning in her death wish, trying to find her peace in death and returning to her earlier state.

In a book entitled *Stevie: A Biography of Stevie Smith* Barbera, J. and McBrien, W. (1985) mentioned that Smith wrote this poem when she saw an article on a newspaper describing a drowning incident (p.186). She reveals that the poem describes a man whose friends misunderstand the signs that he is trying to send them and imagining that he is only larking. No one told the poor man who was drowning to 'pull himself together' (Spalding, 1988). On the contrary, the drowning man's signs are misread as waving or just happily larking. No one tries to help him or tell him to pull himself together as no one is aware of his situation.

In 1965, Smith read for the BBC while introducing her poem making an important change to her speech. Instead of calling or asking for help, she declares that the man was not asking for help; he was really drowning. This refers to Smith's idea about death; the change of wording reveals the real intention of her poem, and she indicates to death because she really desires to die. She may envy the drowning man

who was waving for a short while. Smith reveals her serious suicidal thoughts which may be just larking for others. Despite being simple, her poem carries a kind of ambiguity as she hides her serious desire to die between the lines and presents it as a kind of accident, letting her readers to find out the morbid feelings behind the revealed words (Bennett, 2017).

Oh, no no no, it was too cold always
(Still the dead one lay moaning)
I was much too far out all my life
And not waving but drowning (Smith, 1978, p.167)

When someone is dead, people try to find a reason for the death, and they may provide a medical reason that the water could have been cold or the man's heart was too weak. They think about the moment when the man died and not what led to that situation. Like people who commit suicide, they mention the method that the person killed himself or herself rather than engaging in the real reason behind that death. They miss the main point which is the dead man's attempt to deliver a message that he was isolated and alone. Accordingly, the reason behind the man's death as well as Smith's death wish is emotional more than being physical.

Although Smith usually advocated death in her poems as a personal relief from life's dilemma, in this poem, it appears as an act of communication, that is a path for the sufferer to show her or his unfortunate situation to the world. Critics interpret that Smith would be like the man who is drowning, or she would be the one who is trying to communicate, and as she drowns, she is only waving in a sea of words without being understood or heard. Like the dead man who tries to say something, despite being dead, still he is misunderstood. Finally, the poem deals with the way in which human beings become unable to cope with others, expressing their sorrow for being alienated and instead of being understood by others, Smith tends to think, write and talk in her poem declaring her death wish (Bennett, 2017)

Not Waving but Drowning is a suggestion that Smith is crying for help which presents a more socially approved view of the taboo. Consequently, this poem glorified the idea of the death wish. Smith's experimental utilizing of Freud's ideas are explicit everywhere in her poems. Death instinct is dominant, as Freud clarifies the death instinct is responsible for this kind of desire and it sometimes leads the person towards

destruction which can result in suicide, self-harm and death wish. Accordingly, people who experience depression and have a strong desire to die often reenact a traumatic event they faced in their life. This kind of unconscious desire to die reveals itself at any problematic or depressed situation that faces the individual. In Smith's case, it could be concluded that her life instincts could largely temper this death wish unlike Sexton who had intense desire to die and finally she committed suicide as a kind of rescue for her depressed life. The death instinct in this poem is a crying for help or attention rather than being a destructive force.

Freud's theory of the death drive is obviously interpreted in Smith's poems, as she has a deep desire to die and leave her unhappy life. *To Carry the Child* is written in 1966 as a part of a poem collection in her book which is entitled *The Frog Prince: And Other Poems*. In this poem, Smith refers to the inside child whom everyone carries within, thus revealing two contradictory ideas which are the image of the inside child and the adult. The inside child is surprised by the frozen way that the adult thinks and acts as they do not have the desire to enjoy things around them. They are no longer interested in things that were a wonder for them. Accordingly, they lose the capacity to describe and express things to others as does the child. They lose the magic way of meditating life (Nguyen, 2014). However, Smith did not like the idea of raising a child in life. She is unwilling to be under the pressures of child-rearing because she is aware that this child will pass through a dismal experience ending with a wish to die to escape the depressing cycle of life as she does. For her, adults lack the real feeling, and the inner child is only trapped inside the person. Therefore, Smith prefers to abandon the married life as she is longing for death. According to her, marriage and raising a child only increase her dilemma as she carries within herself a trapped child.

This kind of conflict between childhood and adulthood is like the conflict between life instinct and death instinct since one tries to fulfill its demands. Death instincts portray life as useless and meaningless, while life instinct does the opposite.

The ego on the other hand tries to balance between id and superego, but the traumatic events of the person's life, depression, anxiety and the unfulfilled psychosexual stages contribute to prepare an unhealthy personality and finally a desire to die

The entire discussion of the poem is about the debilitating force of not resolved childhood's conflict which is presented to undefined audience (Dowson & Entwistle, 2005). This poem presents the conflict and struggle in the mind of the human being. The two forces are the inner child which stands for innocence and fragility and the opposite which represents the maturity of adults. This struggle between the consciousness of adults and the illogical thoughts of a child is something that exists inside the human personality. Smith's use of the words child and man are to illustrate the difference between the ideals and the image they depict (ibid).

In the first stanza, Smith displays her opinion quickly "To carry the child into adult life is good? I say not, To carry the child into adult life Is to be handicapped" (Smith, 2015, p.436). She deals with a topic which is a reality of life by asserting that everyone has that fight with himself/herself: a war that happens in the mind of men. That child inside the individual is trapped and looks for answers in all the gloomy situations of life. The second stanza begins with the idea that the child is defenseless, because he does not have the ability to face the unpleasant reality of the world. The inside child is more like the id; it seeks to fulfill its demands regardless of the reality of life. Smith presents the image of the fragile child in contrast to the logic and the coldness of the adult "The child in adult life is defenseless and if he is grown-up, knows it, and the grown-up looks at the childish part and despises it" (Smith, 2015, p. 436). She shows her reader how defenseless is emotional, vulnerable, and sensible as a child to strive in the insensitive, aggressive and unconscious adult's society. Smith carries within herself the fear of being different, sensible, and weak, and has the uncomfortable feeling of inferiority and being criticized. As an adult, she desires death, and she shows her pity towards that child who will grow up to face the cruelty of life. Children are free from the responsibility and they follow no rules to restrict them; therefore, Smith wants the same thing; to be free as a child. She wants to go back to her earlier state and never grows up or dies before growing up.

Smith depicts adults as not having that initiative to enjoy many things; they lose the capacity to show their feelings to others like the child does and they lack the ability to see life colorful. The poem describes how powerful the inside child can be as children have a special trait, that is the ability of convincing because their act is controlled by emotions which make them powerful. The third and the fourth stanzas do the same

comparison about the diversity of both personalities. When Smith says “The man-of-the-world, the frozen” (Smith, 2015, p.436), she describes the personality of adults as emotionless, then in the next stanza, she depicts the child as “easy in feeling” (ibid) which shows how naive and sensible the inner child is. Smith is cautious in using words and for that reason they serve their purpose perfectly. The contrasting sound in the poem helps create a conflict between the two personalities which are disputing inside the man’s head.

In the last stanzas, Smith presents death, and the poem takes a rather gloomy and bloody note. The inner child is depicted as a weak and destructive force because of its high sensibility and emotions. Smith’s death wish takes a direct form in “Let children lie down before full growth and die in their infancy and be guilty of no man’s blood” (Smith, 2015, p.437). In this line, her desire to die or to be dead when she was a child is obvious. According to the Psychoanalysis Theory, Smith could not achieve the demands of the psychosexual stages established by Freud as she spent her childhood ill and not healthy. She expresses feelings of sorrow and guilt towards the child who is entrapped inside the emotionless and the logic mind of the adult.

But oh the poor child,
the poor child, what can he do,
Trapped in a grown-up carapace,
But peer outside of his prison room
With the eye of an anarchist? (Smith, 2015, p. 437)

The analysis of the poem is conducted based on Freudian psychoanalysis of the concept of conscious, unconscious, subconscious, the concept of Id, Ego, Superego, and the concept of death drive. In this poem, Smith always desires to get pure as a child and return to an earlier state as Freud describes the nature of human beings, they desire to go back to their mother’s womb when there was a problem in order not to get hurt in life. This idea is similar to Smith’s as she wants to die, whereby the tomb and the mother’s womb are both comfortable milieu for the individual to escape the unfortunate reality of life. The conflicts and the gloomy ideas in life lead the death drive to control the person’s mind and guide him or her towards destruction.

Besides, a contrast between the unconscious persona and the conscious persona is reflected in this poem. The poem forcefully presents a conflict between the two personalities which are disputing inside the man’s head. She presents the image of the fragile child in contrast to the logic and the coldness of the adult. The inner child is

erratic. For instance, if the adult could not get or find what they wish, they become mad like a child. Smith illustrates the adults' behavior; they have to accept the unpleasant circumstances although they do not find it easy to bear. Hence, the combination of sensibility and maturity makes a balance.

Smith always depicted death as a desired solution to life's misery and injustice, and in her poetry, she welcomed this solution as a relief from her depression. As Dick Kay (1983) states, Smith was so obsessed with death that she calls it her dear friend. She desires freedom from her sufferings as a kind of will to relieve her from the traumas of life. Smith led the reader experience her death wish as she describes everything around her as morbid and sad. She confessed the fact of having a strange obsession with the subject of death. Even when she was at the age of five, she tried to commit suicide, which proves her unhealthy personality. She could not fulfil the demands of the psychosexual stages of development, thus she got unstable psyche when she grew up and her death wish increased.

The obsession of death is clear in her poem *Black March* as she called it a "friend at the end of the world" (Smith, 2015, p.61). She used a kind of ethereal personification to show the strong relationship with the subject of death. The first stanza is devoted to the speaker introducing her friend to the reader, and the following three stanzas describe this friend's ambiguous physicality. The poem is one of Smith's more personal engagements with the subject of death. She expresses her death wish through addressing death as a friend, whom she wants to be with one day as she believes that death is her company. Smith presents the absurdity of existence to affect the reader's mind and her using of nursery-rhyme modality allows her to illustrate the mysterious and dark personification of death (Mokhtari, 2010).

Smith expresses her surrender to that dear friend 'death' which is powerful and godlike. This poem response effectively on readers' emotions, bringing the idea of friendship which shows the directness of Smith's approach in order to achieve her goal. The title of the poem stands for both spiritual and physical metaphors for death, thereby indicating the absence of light that can be brought by death that is the romantic savior.

This poem can be understood well through the Freudian Theory of drives. Eros and Thanatos are Freud's two fundamental drives. Smith overwhelmingly seeks a relief

from life through death. However, this poem is not preaching; it is deeply personal and reflects her real and deep tendency to the idea of death. This shows the importance of the personification technique as an effective and valid means for dealing with one's death wish. According to Freud, death wish gives rise to preoccupations of the essence of death and dying.

“I do really think death will be absolutely marvellous” Smith admits in a 1969 interview. She claims that death is not a ‘calamity’, but it is ‘the greatest blessing’ (Gale, 1969). Accordingly, in her poem *Never Again*, Smith expresses her suicidal ideas as she states that she will commit suicide when she has had a lot of pain from the world. She states resolutely that she will not weep any more for her miserable life, nor will she beat her head against the wall. Instead of doing that, she has a comforting way for getting rid of her morbid life through death.

In these lines “When I have had enough/I will arise/And go unto my Father/ And I will say to Him: /Father, I have had enough” (Smith, 1976, p.60), Smith reveals her death wish directly because she is unable to endure her gloomy life longer. She calls death as a savior to relieve her from the everlasting agony. Smith uses a biblical language when she mentions ‘Father’ referring to God, and simply giving no excuses about her death since she has had enough from life as if she is moaning to God (Thurman, 1978).

This poem can be interpreted logically through the concept of death drive. Smith is tired of her morbid and difficult life. She talks about suicidal ideas because she had a lot of pain caused by her difficult world. According to Freud (1923), the fusion between life and death instincts will result in a stable mental and physical health of the individual. When the death instinct controls the mind of the person, then it will manifest itself as an unhealthy personality which may lead later to real suicide. Despite her immense desire to escape from her life, Smith still mentions God as she knows deep inside her heart that it is a forbidden act. Obviously, the role of superego appears as it tries to avoid id's destructive force. Reminding Smith that things that she learned about God when she was in the church, this struggle between id and superego displays the death wish as an act of waiting to die in Smith's case.

Smith's death wish is presented clearly and without vagueness, but sometimes it takes a metaphoric manner like ‘the dark wood’ in her poem *I Rode with my darling*. In

the poem, she describes a woman riding, which may refer to her desire to escape and go far away. While riding in the dark wood at night, the woman encounters an angel who was 'burning bright' asking Smith to follow her. The angel wants to lead her away from the human being, the world and her misery towards an unknown place called death. This angel is from her own imagination and it could stand for her death wish and her desire to commit suicide. She is dragged by the devilish thoughts to end her life (Huk, 2005, p.285). Freud depicted this kind of imagination as an act to escape the reality of life, and Smith tries to achieve her desire through imagination as Sexton did through dreams. Through imagination, Smith could arrange everything as she wants, because in her real life, she could not get what she wishes.

The woman in this poem is painted by Smith as an evil because she is seduced by the angel, as it is her only solution to end her sufferings. Smith is literally attracted by death, and she wants to leave the human world and get lost in the dark wood, seeking nothingness and belonging to nowhere, for her all worldly temptations and attachments target are to be forgotten. This imagination of nothingness source is her love for death. The protagonist describes her inner feelings as she is attracted to death more than a male lover, and wonders a kind of ethereal escapism. She rejects the masculine rational advice to turn back, and instead, she prefers to stay in the dark wood

Smith reveals no sense of grief for being alone and having left her lovers, family and life. She shows her feelings of peace which is established by death. Her loss was not limited to the loss of her lovers, but also her role in life as a daughter, a niece, and a sister. She lost all her feminine relationship; she is left only with distant memories and her vague old corporeal relationships. As a poet, Smith never tries to justify the reasons behind these special attractions towards death. She only offers the sensitivity and complexity of herself to wear this attraction of death wish, and this death wish itself is to embrace her. The repetition of 'All' in the poem refers to Smith's previous years when she was surrounded with the echo of her lovers and family, but now nothing is left, and everything is silent since the echo of her death wish dominates (Mokhtari, 2010).

In this poem, the autobiographical details prove the reality of the unnamed protagonist, namely Smith herself. She imagines herself escaping from the brutal reality of her life and the painful restrictions of family love which lead her to have death wish.

When her mother died because of the suffering from heart disease, she had a trauma and anguish since she was unable to help her. Accordingly, it could be argued that Smith desires death to free herself from the sufferings of life, since she seeks for peaceful existence (Woolf, 2019).

The analysis of this poem can be interpreted in the light of the Freudian Psychoanalytical Theory of 'beyond the pleasure principle' or 'psychosexual development'. According to Freud, there are four phases of psychosexuality: oral, anal, phallic, and genital. If the person moves from the psychosexual stage to another without any difficulty or problems, the person is healthy. If any challenges or difficulties exist, s/he may face a kind of a mental disturbance. Thus, this poem offers an example of sexual death of a woman through powerful imagination of death as a lover. It is evident that she not only lost her lover but all her feminine relationship. Thus, the death instinct dominates the poet because of the loss of sexuality.

In the poem *Why Do I* (1966), Smith describes death as a god who can save her. She is longing for death, as it is preferable to life, pleading the god death to release her without a delay from her life depicted as a prison. Man's ability to control death is obvious in this poem, as she rebels against the Christian God for not taking her away from her dilemma. She describes the god death as a servant who cannot refuse man's request because he is ready to offer solutions like suicide. The above illustrated idea can be vindicated as George (1986) states "suicide is the only possible way to express the true self, at the expense of life itself" (p. 112). This god who is both a friend and a lover to the poet is seen to be a gift from the Christian god himself (Thurman, 1978). Smith often rages God because she finds her peace in death rather than in life but she cannot just die and fulfill her wish. In her essay *Too Tired for Words*, she describes her idea about Christianity stating, "Christianity absolutely will not allow us this delicious idea of command over Death" (Smith, 1981, p. 113)

As the title suggests, Smith is questioning herself about the reason of her death wish, then she illustrates her own simple reason. Her death is a kind of friend who is like a refugee, where she longs for whenever she faces the difficulties of life. In this nine-line poem, she praises death for being able to release her from her misery. Death is described as 'Sweet' because it scatters the coherent self, and it is more like a source of

redemption and love. For Smith, to be scattered in the fresh air like ashes means to be saved (Bennett, 2017).

The Freudian Psychoanalytical Theory gives significant insights to understand this poem. The Freudian death drive is a reason for embracing suicidal ideas. The factor here is the socio-religious approach of the society. The poet is a great religious lady, but the corrupt religion breaks her faith. She knows that real Christianity absolutely will not allow this delicious idea of command over death. The current corrupt religious practices do not relieve her. Consequently, she starts thinking of death as the actual religion. Christianity does not provide her with happiness anymore and she starts considering death as her lover and God. According to Freud, religion is an illusion because the way it tries to resolve the conflict between death instinct and life instinct contradicts the reality which is built since man's childhood. Freud regards the religious person as a believer who considers the comforting projections as real, and the world of complete illusion and fantasy has some actual essence. The motive of seeking peace and protection is the substantial aim of Smith. For Freud, religion is an illusion because it cannot provide consolation; as a result, a God who does not reward his faithful believers is no longer a God (Bowker, 1993). Freud's idea could be understandable, but that does not mean that he succeeded in his assumption. Smith got lost in the idea of religion, as she got lots of information regarding Christianity, still she thinks of it as an illusion because she cannot fulfill her death wish. Only death drive seeks peace and tries to stop the conflict held in the mind. Smith requests death from god death as the real God does not achieve her desire, thus she is lost in her thoughts, and is full of doubts about religion.

In *My Heart Goes Out* which was written in 1957, Smith emphasizes on the idea that individuals should praise and appreciate the creator's gift as she describes death as a gift for human beings. Smith is seeking death everywhere and is grateful for such a reward because it eases the pain and relieves the soul from being bound to life. (Thurman, 1978). In this poem, she refers to the hesitation or paradox of agency in the declaration of our unconscious longing for death as it is the desire of "All living creatures" (Smith, 2015, p.422). This poem can be interpreted using Freud's theory of death drive and theory of conscious, unconscious, and subconscious. The personal and societal pressure defeats her and she seeks death everywhere. Also, the contrast between the unconscious mind and the conscious one made her miserable. She personifies death

as the gift of God and praises him. Her unconscious mind keeps on reminding death as a glorified thing from God.

Smith used to request death with biblical formality or forced poetic in her poem *Come Death I* which was written in 1938, ‘Come, Death, and carry now my soul away’ (Smith, 2015, p.115). She is pleading death to come without delay and take her away from the agony of life. Smith is wondering the reasons for delaying death, despite her immediate need for it, yet there is something that keeps her waiting. According to the psychoanalysis, this kind of waiting can be under the control of the ego which tries to keep the individual’s psyche balanced. As death instinct rebels against life impulses, the role of ego is obvious as a main reason for this kind of delay.

In this poem, death is represented by Smith as an ultimate escape from the reality of life. It provides a relief from all the tethers bounding an individual to reality. This kind of freedom is like an absolution from all life’s anguish. She desires freedom which departs her away from life, rather than a will to solve the suffering of life. She seeks for a way that leads her away from life’s torment (Mokhtari, 2010). She also presents a cynical attitude towards her life and finds living to be an unbearable condition: “How vain the work of Christianity/To teach humanity” (Smith, 2015, p.115). Smith finds the rules of Christianity as vain because she cannot simply commit suicide without hesitation. She describes life as “Foolish illusion, what has Life to give?” (ibid). According to her, life is unable to give joy and she is not surprised as she is suffering for so long without being relieved from her pain. Life is depicted as more fearful than death, because it will only increase the pain and suffering. Regardless of an individual’s religious beliefs, Smith asserts that life is complicated and hard to endure more than death.

In *Come Death II* which is eight lines poem, Smith chooses to ask for help not from the Christian God but from the only god whom she expects to come as a servant. Plainly she calls for death “Listen then to this sound I make, it is sharp, /Come Death. Do not be slow” (Smith, 2015, p. 658). Despite the fact that she had aphasia as a symptom of her terminal health, with the sharpness of a cry she calls for help.

Despite being firm in considering the subject of death, she was not consistent in her views of suicide. In this poem, she is not turning to God, but requests the god of

death for a relief “But I turn to the one I know, and say;/ Come, Death, and carry me away” (Smith, 2015, p. 658). Death is her dear friend, and the one she knows better than God, and finally, death is the god that she calls and desires (Thurman, 1978)

The Freudian psychoanalysis of the poem *Come Death I* and *Come Death II*, helps understand Smith’s religious views and the expectations from her life and religious institution. This poem confirms that unethical social dogmas and practices, and rigid and snobbery religious norms are the major factors which are responsible for shifting her psyche from normal to abnormal. As mentioned previously, superego operates under the theory of morality which makes it accountable for ensuring that the moral principles are fully complied with and the social norms that are upheld. The superego evolves because of the social constraints imposed by our family, friends, and society upon us, such as our sense of what is right and what is wrong. Thus, Smith tries to follow the moral principles controlled by her superego in spite of many questions raised in her mind about religions. This unstable state leads to imbalanced ideas and thoughts between imagining death as a good friend to be waited for and trying to achieve that death wish at the same time.

According to Freud, death wish happens when the demands of the ego become unfulfilled and unbearable, thereby leading to a kind of wish to return to a life without experience to avoid the pressures of the society. Besides, he asserts “It seems, then, that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things” (Freud, 1961, p. 30). Finally, the overall analysis of Smith’s selected poetry in the light of Freud’s Psychoanalysis Theory helped to analyze and understand the myths behind her death wish in the real life.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the selected poems of two great poets Anne Sexton and Stevie Smith were analyzed, following the Freudian Psychoanalysis Theory and the death drive which enabled the reader to find out the reasons behind those poets' death wish. Through analyzing death poems of those two writers, the hidden motives that led them to take the road of death and suicide were displayed. The poems focus on the embracement of death, a desire to escape from life, and the tendency to commit suicide found in every corner of the poems. Even though it is not easy to find out the exact reason or the exact time when they started requesting death, through analyzing their death poems and by connecting them to their private lives, feelings of self-destruction can be identified.

This study is designed to find the reasons for showing a profound sense of death wish, self-destruction, and isolation by the two poets. In Sexton's case, it begins when she gives birth to her second child who was suffering from severe bipolar disorder. Despite taking medications, no progress was achieved but the conditions became worse along with suffering from anger and anxiety. As part of the treatment, her therapist Dr. Martin Orene encouraged her to write poetry. Accordingly, Sexton shared her experiences and personal life in her poems and confessed her intense desire to leave the world. In Smith's case, it begins when at the age of four her father left home and at the age of 16 her mother died. The two poets vary in the way they perceived death. They were desperate to put an end to their lives, but their motives were different to silence the ruin that surrounds life. Anne's destruction was an act of grace and sorrow. She saw that, considering her bright academic future, she was nothing but a burden on her beloved ones. Their death poetry must be read from the point of view of someone who has suicidal wishes to understand how those poets felt as if they were stuck in their lives.

The originality and novelty of this study lies in elaborating on the reasons and causes behind death wish and death instinct in the selected poetry of Anne Sexton and Stevie Smith through the lens of the Freudian Psychoanalysis Theory. The application of this theory helped to analyze the issue of death wish and unleash the psyche of the poets. Those writers seek death for the sake of peace, because Eros or life instinct is the disturber of that peace, while death instinct is the disintegration of the person's conflict in life.

The analysis of Anne Sexton's selected poetry in the light of the Freudian Psychoanalysis Theory revealed the fact that in her poems, life instincts and death instincts are responsible for her death wish. More specifically, in the human psyche, both life instincts (Eros) and death instincts (Thanatos) are present. The dominance of Thanatos results in a death wish in the form of anxiety and depression. However, if Thanatos is found excessively, it results in a death instinct in the form of a trauma and a bipolar disorder. In Sexton and Smith's poems, the concept of death wish is prevailed, and topics, such as suicide, depression, and death are addressed by those poets, which helped understand their psychology through poetry. Sexton and Smith thus use their writings to criticize the sensitive issues to masses. In spite of the vital life of these poets, they discuss a number of other things in their lives, including motherhood, marriage, addiction, unrequited love and the relationship of their parents. Death is presented to avoid the internal torment, and according to Smith, it is portrayed as the final phase of her hellish existence.

According to Freud, death wish happens in conditions when the demands of the ego become unfulfilled and unbearable, thereby leading to a kind of wish to return to a life without experience to avoid the pressures of the society. Hence, death is a recommendable prospect for both Sexton and Smith. Sexton presents death as a way of production rather than destruction by comparing suicide with carpenters in *Wanting to die*. Death is not only the endpoint of their lives but a liberation from troubles.

Based on Freud's Theory, the psychological problems that Sexton suffered from led to a desire to escape and end her own life. In the last 15 years of her life, she had problems with what she had been trying to do. Her mother, who died of a breast cancer, wanted her to be responsible for her death and not to allow her to be marginally killed by illness or age. Sexton was motivated by the death of her mother, which made her avoid this kind of death, and she became frightened, hideous, and weak, with a great fear of being old and sick. In this sense, the confessional poems of Sexton reflect her death wish and suicidal inclination, thereby making her poetry at the same time autobiographical and psychological. Actually, the fascination by the death wish and suicide in the poetry of Sexton reflect the universal desire for death as done in Freudian Thanatos, that is the destructive death instinct.

Sexton's poetry reveals the innate instinct of death in the psyche of man. Even though death is a vital part of life, ironically, for some people, it is a justification for survival, so they live to put an end to this life by means of death. Neurotic writers with depressive symptoms will find hallucinations associated with death in their work. It is interesting that in the selected poems, the psychotic concept of writing a literary text and bringing a text to life is the reverse of the subject of death that is discussed in this study. As for Smith's poetry, her literary work reveals the key death representations, the personification of death, depicted as a hero, a knight, a lover, a friend, and a masculine construct linked to God. Then there are portraits of female characters seduced by the passion for death, incarnated even by the male incarnation of death. The poet and the narrator in Smith's poems are aware of the pain and reveal it by leaving the modern lover. Heroines of Smith are torn between men and evil, and she reinforces the whimsical thinking of women, which quickly seduces and lessens the involvement of men into women's affairs. The characters of the poems are forced to live in a world embellished in Smith's symbolic fairytale aesthetics, which is an alternative to the human misery and mediocrity. The characters witness the liberation brought about by dying in the choice of a fairy tale world. The depiction of death seems as childlike in the attitude and the language used demonstrates Smith's creative mastery of presentation of horrible situations in a comic way. This childlike voice is used to show the contrast between the consciousness and the unconsciousness, associate the notions of birth and death to illustrate the absurdity of life, and also soften the harsh vision of life and death. In Smith's poetry, the representations of death in the society are often satirical criticism of the European culture. Smith aligned her own marginality by offering death as a solution for the shortcomings of her society. While the poet lived in life beyond the margins, all are settled in death. According to Freud, the life instinct which includes positive emotions, such as passion, friendship, a pro-social behavior, and a social cooperation is not active in Smith's personality, thereby leading her to desire her own death. When the death instinct controls the life instinct, the individual's well-being will be threatened, and his/her harmonious life will be defeated. Smith finds death as her last resort, discovering its finality and mysterious otherness. Obviously, she presents death as a power to offer a direction out of life's misery and sufferings. Describing herself as dealing with the traumatic experience while separating from her family because of illness when she was a child invoked the idea of suicide in her mind. In this study, each

of the case study poems is analyzed to explain the aspect of the key depictions of death. Her interest in death is presented in various forms throughout her poems, revealing different stories for people who committed suicide, drowned, shot and drugged themselves. She examines the gory details of the death of her characters with morbid delight. She is speculating death in a different form to fulfill her desire. Thus, the subject of death predominates her work, and her death wish is an obvious matter, and she naturally relates her poems to her personal life and the traumatic experiences that she faced. Lately, Smith confesses that this desire for death inspired most of her poetry.

Both Sexton and Smith could not fulfill their wish, but they tried to visualize it by writing about their death wish in the form of poems to relax and satisfy their urge without satisfying it. According to the psychoanalysis, this kind of imagination is to avoid the hidden sad experiences buried in the unconscious mind. Those poets tried to alienate themselves from the society because they could not cope with it, and they could not deal with the social constraints imposed by the family, the friends, and the society upon them. This is exactly the role of superego; their vision of themselves cannot adapt to their consciousness; therefore, they are struggled within the society, preferring to write down their death wish in the hope that one day they can achieve it. Although Sexton eventually tried to control her id which represents her unconscious desires, this primitive part of personality remained infantile throughout her life. The dark side of her life pressured her to the point that she could not develop the ego and the superego to control her id's basic instincts which, thus resulting in an unrealistic act of committing suicide. Smith's case is like the following example, if a person is hungry, instead of stealing a piece of cake, the ego can regulate the overwhelming desire to steal the cake and force the one to wait for a piece to buy. Based on this example, the ego does not suppress the urge, rather it only tames and slows down the impulse to an acceptable time and place. Similarly, Smith did not suppress her desire, but she tames and slows down her impulse.

According to Freud's Theory, particular aspects of the human personality are more primitive like death wish which might drive the individual to act upon that urge, and satisfy that wish which happened in Sexton's case. Smith could somehow soothe her id by imagining death without satisfying the demands of her unconsciousness. She strives to adapt herself within the demands of the reality. Instincts of life often include

positive emotions, such as passion, friendship, pro-social behavior, and social cooperation, and all these almost do not exist in both poets because they are attracted by death instincts which satisfy their wish. On the other hand, human beings have Thanatos or death instincts as a bunch of negative and destructive forces which emphasize on the idea that the main aim of life is death. Therefore, both Sexton and Smith re-enact to that idea because of their experience of many traumatic incidents in their life.

Freud assumed that Eros and Thanatos should be harmonious; they coexist together so that the person's mind can work properly. However, the lack of harmony is obvious in both writers' cases, and they have an instinctive desire to die or "pull to death" which is in a direct opposition to their instinct for survival. They are tired of living because they cannot fulfill their desire in life which increases their pain. In Sexton's case, life instincts or Eros could not overwhelm and control Thanatos to provide a mentally stable mind so that she can live a normal and happy life. Accordingly, she ends up with committing suicide, as she experiences a mental pain. Both Sexton and Smith were mentally disturbed and could not control their desire to die, thus they tried to write down their wish on papers to relieve their tired souls.

To sum up, both Sexton and Smith reveal their desire to die and escape from the real world. The main reason for their death wish is their psychological disorder, which results from their depressive life. Both poets share the same desire to die, and Sexton fulfilled her desire by committing suicide as a result of her unbalanced personality while Smith could somehow control her id, although she had one failed suicide attempt, she waited desperately until she died of a brain tumor.

REFERENCES

- Abrams, M. H., & Harpham, G. (2014). *A glossary of literary terms*. Nelson Education.
- Abu Madi, N., & Neimneh, S. (2015). An Analysis of the Suicidal Tendency in Sexton's Confessional Poems: A Reading of "Sylvia's Death" and "Suicide Note". *International Journal*, 3(1), 137-142
- Adrian, F. (2017). Psychosexual Stages: Freud's Theory of Personality. <https://www.Psychologytoday.com/blog/sideways-view/201702/psychosexual-stages-freud-s-theory-personality>. Feb 14, 2017.
- Al Ahmad, H. J. W. (2016). *The Concept of Death and Resurrection in Modern Poetry* (Doctoral dissertation), Middle East University, Amman.
- Al-Shamiri, S. M. (2012). *From Confession to Death: A Study in the Poetry of Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton* (Doctoral dissertation, Yarmouk University).
- Barbera, J. & McBrien, W. (1985). *Stevie: A Biography of Stevie Smith*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Bennett, A. (2017). *Suicide century: literature and suicide from James Joyce to David Foster Wallace*. Cambridge University Press.
- Boothby, R. (1991). *Death and desire: psychoanalytic theory in lacan's return to Freud*, Routledge, New York and London.
- Bowker, J. (1993). *The meanings of death*. New York, Cambridge University Press.
- Bryant, D. C., & Peck, L. D. (2009). *Encyclopedia of Death and Human Experience*. California: SAGE Publications, Inc. 2009
- Capuzzi D, Stauffer M.D. (2016). *Counseling and Psychotherapy: Theories and Interventions*. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.
- Carroll, J. (2012a). The adaptive function of the arts: Alternative evolutionary hypotheses. In C. Gansel & D. Vanderbeke (Eds.), *Telling stories/Geschichten erzählen: Literature and evolution/ Literatur und Evolution* (pp. 50–63). Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Chancellor, J., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2011). Happiness and thrift: When (spending) less is (hedonically) more. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 21(2), 131-138.
- Cherry, K., & Mattiuzzi, P. G. (2010). *The Everything Psychology Book: Explore the human psyche and understand why we do the things we do*. Simon and Schuster.

- Clements, R., & Rooda, L. A. (2000). Factor structure, reliability, and validity of the death attitude profile-revised. *SAGE Journals*, 40(3), 453–463. <https://doi.org/10.2190/xff0-c6ua-58pc-phpb>
- Coder, K. D. (2011). Cultural aspects of trees: Traditions & myths. *Warnell: School of Forestry and Natural Resources*, University of Georgia
- Colburn, S. E. (1988). *Anne Sexton: Telling the Tale*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press
- Deiudicibus, J. (2003). Excerpt from *The Lives and Voices of Anne Sexton: A Biographical and Cultural Explication of the Poem “Wanting To Die”*. Retrieved from <https://www.academia.edu/>
- Dick, K. (1983). *Ivy and Stevie: Conversations with Ivy Compton-Burnett and Stevie Smith*, Alison and Busby, London
- Dick, K. ed. (1970). *Ivy and Stevie*. Gerald Duckworth, London.
- Doise, E. J. (2010). *Impersonating the witness: What testimonial fiction can teach us about testimony*. University of Florida
- Dowson, J., & Entwistle, A. (2005). *A history of twentieth-century British women's poetry*. Cambridge University Press
- Fodor, N. (1949). *The search for the beloved: A clinical investigation of the trauma of birth and pre-natal conditioning*. Hermitage Press. New York
- Freud, S. (1900). “The interpretation of dreams,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 4, 5, ed J. Strachey. London: Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (1915). Thoughts for The Times On War and Death. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works, 273-300
- Freud S (1917). Mourning and melancholia. In J Strachey (ed. and trans.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 10. Hogarth Press, London.
- Freud, S. (1920). *Beyond the pleasure principle*. *SE*, 18, 7-66.
- Freud S (1923). The ego and the id. In J Strachey (ed. and trans.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 19. Hogarth Press, London.

- Freud S (1930). Civilization and its discontents. SE 21:59–243.
- Freud, S. (1933). 'New Introductory Lectures On Psycho-Analysis'. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume 22, translated and edited by J. Strachey. London: Hogarth press and the institute of psychoanalysis, pp. 1-267.
- Freud, S. (1955). Beyond the Pleasure Principle. In J. Strachey (Ed. & Trans.). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 18, pp. 1–64). London: Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (1960). *The Ego and the Id*. Ed. By James Strachey. The Norton library, N142. The Ego and the Id. Translated by Joan Riviere. Revised and Newly Edited by James Strachey.
- Freud, S. (1961). *Beyond the pleasure principle*. (J. Strachey, Ed.). W W Norton & Co. New York.
- Gadit, A. A. (2007). Death wish or suicidal ideation: implications for management. *JPMA. The Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association*, 57(3), 156-157.
- Gale, J. (1969) 'Death Is a Poem to Stevie Smith', *The Observer*.
- George, D. H. (1984). Anne Sexton's Suicide Poems. *The Journal of Popular Culture* 18.2. 17–31. *Wiley Online Library*.
- Gill, J. (Ed.). (2006). *Modern Confessional Writing: New Critical Essays* (Vol. 2). Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, New York.
- Gilmore, Leigh. (2000) *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000.
- George, D. H. (1987). *Oedipus Anne: The Poetry of Anne Sexton*. Chicago: University of Illinois.
- Huk, R. (2005). *Stevie Smith: Between the lines*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Ivey, A. E., D'Andrea, M. J., & Ivey, M. B. (2011). *Theories of counseling and psychotherapy: A multicultural perspective: a multicultural perspective*. Sage.
- Joseph, S. (2012). What is trauma? Is it time to dump the diagnosis of PTSD. *Psychology Today online*.
- Khalaf A. (2015). *The Death Instinct in Sexton's Poetry*. [University of Anbar](#).

- Kramarae, C., & Spender, D. (2000). *Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women: Global Women's Issues and Knowledge*. New York: Routledge.
- Kumin, M. (1999). Foreword: *The complete Poems Anne Sexton*. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.
- Lane, J. D., Zhu, L., Evans, E. M., & Wellman, H. M. (2016). Developing concepts of the mind, body, and afterlife: Exploring the roles of narrative context and culture. *Journal of Cognition and Culture*, 16(1–2), 50–82.
- Lapsley, D. K., & Stey, P. C. (2011). Id, ego, and superego. *Encyclopedia of human behavior*, 1-9
- Levine, H. B. (2014). Psychoanalysis and trauma. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 34(3), 214-224
- Lowell, Robert(1959). *Life Studies*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Madi, N. A. & Neimneh, S. (2015). Suicidal Tendency in Sexton's Confessional Poems: A Reading of "Sylvia's Death" and "Suicide Note". *International Journal of Language and Literature*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 137-142. URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15640/ijll.v3n1a18>.
- May, W. (2010). *Stevie Smith and Authorship*. Oxford University Press. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Masarwah, N. (2015). The use of ancient myths in modern poetry: The myth of Sisyphus as a case study. *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, 3(2), 10-22.
- McLeod, S. A. (2019, September 25). *Id, ego and superego*. Simply Psychology. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/psyche.html>
- McLeod, S. A. (2015, January 14). *Psychological theories of depression*. Simply Psychology. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/depression.html>
- McLeod, S. A. (2015). *Unconscious Mind*. Retrieved from www.simplypsychology.org/unconscious-mind.html
- McSpadden, K. F. (1984). *THE SELF IN THE POETRY OF ANNE SEXTON* Dissertation
- Michael, Pekker. "Human Anxieties Theories by Sigmund Freud: Anxiety in Personality Model. September 9,2012.<http://interpersonalcompatibility.blogspot.com/2012/09/anxiety-theory-sigmund-freud.html>
- Middlebrook, D. W. (1991). *Anne Sexton: A Biography*. London: Virago Press.

- Mills, J. (2006). Reflection on the death drive. *ResearchGate. The American Psychological Association: Vol. 23, No. 2, 373–382.*
- Mokhtari, T (2010). *Representations of death in the poetry of Stevie Smith.* (Doctoral dissertation), School of media and communications, creative media portfolio, RMIT University
- Murphy, R., & Vinson, J. (Eds.). (1970). *Contemporary poets of the English language.* Saint James Press.
- Nelson, D. (1945). Confessional Poetry. *The Cambridge companion to American poetry since*, 31-46.
- Nguyễn, V. (2014). *Perzi. To Carry the Child.* Retrieved from <https://prezi.com/1iypjnak7rx8/to-carry-the-child/>
- O'Connor, B. (2016). Freud on the Death Drive as Existence Without Tension. *The Psychoanalytic Review* (George, 1984), 103(3), 423-443.
- Perloff, G. M. (1970). Realism and the Confessional Mode of Robert Lowell. *Contemporary Literature, JSTOR*, 11.4: 470-487.
- Pollard, C. (2006). Her kind: Anne Sexton, the Cold War and the idea of the housewife. *Critical Quarterly*, 48(3), 1-24.
- Razinsky, L. (2013). *Freud, psychoanalysis and death.* Cambridge University Press.
- Shelley, P. B. (1961). "Death," *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, 1905. London: Oxford University Press.
- Richardson, M. (2015). *The Cambridge Companion to American Poets.* Cambridge University Press.
- Rosenthal, M. L. "Poetry as Confession." *Critics on Robert Lowell.* Ed. Jonathan Price. London: Allen & Unwin, Ltd, 1974
- Rosezenga (2013). Wanting to Die – Anne Sexton (Analysis). *Literary Genres: Poetry.* Retrieved from <https://rosezenga.wordpress.com/2013/11/17/wanting-to-die-anne-sexton-analysis/>
- Salvio, P.M. (2007). *Anne Sexton: Teacher of Weird Abundance.* Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Seligman, M. E. (1973). Fall into helplessness. *Psychology today*, 7(1), 43-48.
- Sexton, A. (1981) *The Complete Poems*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Sexton, A. (1985). *No Evil Star: Selected Essays, Interviews, and Prose.* Ed. STEVEN E. COLBURN. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

- Sexton, A. (2004). *Anne Sexton: A self-portrait in letters*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Skorczewski, D. (2012). *An accident of hope: The therapy tapes of Anne Sexton*. Routledge.
- Smith, S. (1978). *Selected Poems*. MacGibbon, J. (ed). Penguin, Middlesex.
- Smith, S. (2015). *The Collected Poems and Drawings of Stevie Smith*. ed. Will May. Faber and Faber: London.
- Spalding, F. (1988). *Stevie Smith: A Critical Biography*. Faber & Faber, London.
- Stangor, C., & Walinga, J. (2015). *Introduction to Psychology - 1st Canadian Edition*. Retrieve (2019, March) from <https://opentextbc.ca/introductiontopsychology/chapter/2-2-psychodynamic-and-behavioural-psychology/>
- Sternlicht, S. (Ed.). (1991). *In Search of Stevie Smith*. Syracuse University Press.
- Stevenson, D. B. (1996). Freud's psychosexual stages of development. *Brown University*. Web: <http://www.victorianweb.org/science/freud/develop.html> *adresinden*, 10, 2011.
- Teixeira, M. A. (1992). Psychoanalytic theory and therapy in the treatment of manic-depressive disorders. *Psychoanalysis & Psychotherapy*, 10(2), 162–177.
- The Ego: Definition & Examples. (2015, November 19). Retrieved from <https://study.com/academy/lesson/the-ego-definition-examples-quiz.html>.
- Thurman, S. E. (1978). THE THEMES OF GOD AND DEATH IN THE POETRY OF STEVIE SMITH.
- Van Gogh, V. (1959). *The Complete Letters of Vincent van Gogh*. New York Graphic Society, New York
- Vincent van Gogh. Letter to Theo van Gogh. Written 28 September 1888 in Arles. Translated by Robert Harrison, edited by Robert Harrison, number 543. URL: <http://webexhibits.org/vangogh/letter/18/543.htm>.
- Walinga, J., & Stangor, C. (2014). *Introduction to psychology-1st canadian edition*. Flat World Knowledge, L.L.C
- Walsh, Jessica (2004), 'Stevie Smith: Girl, Interrupted', *Papers on Language and Literature*. 40(1), 57–87.
- Whitworth, M. H. (2010). *Reading modernist poetry*. John Wiley & Sons. Blackwell Publishing, USA.

- Wiszniowska-Majchrzyk, M. (2011). *Eros and Thanatos - Desires and Fears*. Institute of Philosophy Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Warsaw, Poland.
- Woolf, J. (2019). *Intertextuality, Christianity and Death: Major Themes in the Poetry of Stevie Smith*. Department of English and Related Literature, University of York