THE SYMBOLIC PRESENTATION OF SOME TRANSCENDENTAL
AND THE ELEMENTS OF MYSTICAL REALISM IN WALT WHITMAN
AND EMILY DICKINSON

Abstract. Although W. Whitman and E. Dickinson couldn’t collaborate on their works, they were contemporaries, indeed, so we could search for and find the similarities and a lot of contrasts in their poetical works. They were significant in both cases, individually and together. The topicalities of their works are studied together, because both of them are known as the most famous pioneering voices of American poetry.

Keywords. God, nature, life, death, reincarnation, atom, transcendental meditation.

Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson were different types of eccentrics, although they lived and wrote in the same era. The eccentricity of both is reflected through their motifs which make the greatest difference between them. Their leitmotifs are life and death. If we start from this motivational contrast in the topicality of their poetry, we could recognize the other performed motifs, and the different ways of their poetical presentation in both creative works.

She was neither a professional poet nor an amateur. She was kind of a concealed poet. Her gift for some extraordinary visions and the cultural predicament of her time drove her to poetry. Neither her personal education nor the society in which she lived, ever gave her the least inkling that poetry is rational and objective art, as she knew it. She came at the right time for some new kind of poetry, the poetry of sophisticated and eccentric visions. She never undertook the ability of controlling the means of objective expression, what should be the explanation for defining her poetry as no representative but mere fragmentary indicative notation. Her dying society had no tradition; it was completely new motivation in literature. The pattern of life becomes more rigid, especially in her visions.
Many women have their sense of humor, their rituals, maybe even their way of dressing. She did not need to avert or to keep the grief or sadness, but she could express them as the product of her own conscious. She could face the problems by naming them. There is a famous passage where she wrote about herself:

“I am one of the lingering bad ones, and so do I slink away, and pause and ponder, and ponder and pause, and do work without knowing why, not surely for his brief world, and more surely it is not for heaven, and I ask what this message means that they ask for so eagerly: you know of this depth and fullness, will you try to tell me more about it?”

She had a very few friend around her, so that her real living world became very anxious. Emily Dickinson became a hermit by deliberate and conscious choice, about 1861, when she was in her thirties, she assumed in all her seriousness her vocation as a poet and her poet’s mask: the personality which was opposite to her natural character and identical with her desire. The most interesting thing in analyzing these two poets is the observation of their poetics and motifs according to a lot of contrasts and some parallels. A good deal of notice has been paid lately to Whitman by way of pointing out that he was an imposter, because the aggressive masculinity which he asserted so blatantly in the poems was only assumed. But that is Walt Whitman’s mask. Dickinson and Whitman were surely the greatest forces of American poetry in the 19th century. Both of them found the mask that suited them and their poetry just perfectly right. America’s “good grey poet” — Walt Whitman was born on Long Island, New York. Walt Whitman wanted “to define America, her athletic democracy”. In fact, most critics attacked his work, while the reading public simply did not read it. But today, Whitman’s work is considered an extremely important achievement of American Literature. Like Benjamin Franklin and Mark Twain, most of Whitman’s education came from early jobs in printing shops and newspapers rather than from schools. At a time when most young Americans were working hard to rise in the world, Whitman seemed a very lazy person. He took long walks in the country and by the seashore. He describes this way of life:

“I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe my ease observing a spear of summer grass,
...
I am enamour’d of growing out-doors,
Of men that live among cattle or taste of the ocean or woods...” (Song of Myself, 1, 14, 1855)

This development shocked most nineteenth-century Americans, including Emerson. Many were embarrassed and angered by the two groups of poems about sex — Children of Adam and Calamus — which he included in the third edition (1860) of Leaves of Grass. And even more important development was in the area of poetic form. Through

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Whitman, American poets finally freed themselves from the old English traditions. In his famous autobiographical essay “A Backward Glance over Travel’d Roads” (1889), he says: “The time had come to reflect all themes and things, old and new, in the light thrown of them by the advent of America and democracy.” He invented a completely new and completely American form of poetic expression. According to him, message was always more important than form, and he was the first to explore the possibilities of “free verse”. In his poetry the lines are not usually organized into stanzas; they look more like ordinary sentences. Although he rarely uses rhyme or meter, we can still hear or feel a clear rhythm. If we look at some of his poems, we will find that words or sounds are often repeated, which makes his poetry remarkable.

Whitman developed his style to suite his message. He used both usual and unusual poetic ornaments, very plainly, so that ordinary people could read and understand. He strongly believed that Americans had a special role to play in the future of mankind. Although he often disapproved of American society, he was certain that the success of American democracy was the key for the future happiness of the individuals.

As a young man, he secured a job in a local printing company and fell in love with the walk of life, continuing his education at the press. The printer’s trade led him to journalism, and Whitman took several editing positions in the early 1840’s. He founded the Long Islander before accepting posts with several other newspapers. At the same time, Whitman was beginning to develop his poetry and the various conventions of what came to be called “free verse”. Often his poems contain lists of sights and objects which nineteenth-century American could recognize. His two favorite words are “sing” and “absorb”. First, he “absorbs” the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of the world around him, and then he “sings” them out in poetry.

He finished his first volume, “Leaves of Grass”, and when no publisher would accept it on moral grounds, so he printed the first 1,000 copies privately. Responding to Emerson’s call in “The Poet” for such a bard to rise up out of the American experience to clarify the nation’s spirituality, Whitman sent a copy of the first edition of his twelve-poem volume of “Leaves of Grass” to his “spiritual mentor” in Concord. Emerson was delighted with the literary “sunbeam”, and he sent his now famous note back to New York, greeting his younger favorite “at the beginning of a great career”. In time, Emerson, Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, Oscar Wilde, and other writers on both sides of the Atlantic would make their pilgrimage to honor “America’s national poet”. Whitman survived through “literary hackwork and journalism” in Brooklyn. When his supervisor discovered that Whitman was, in fact, the author of the “notorious” “Leaves of Grass”, his supervisor dismissed him on moral grounds. In 1892, even on his deathbed, Whitman signed the final edition of “Leaves of Grass”, and he was laid to rest in Camden’s Harleigh Cemetery in a tomb of his own design.

“Leaves of Grass” was Whitman’s life work. The book grew and changed as he and his country did. He called it “a passageway to something rather then a thing in itself included”. He saw reality as a continuous flow, without beginning or ending. He disliked the stiffness and “completeness” of nineteenth-century poetic forms. Therefore, from 1885
until his last revision in 1892, “Leaves of Grass” remained and incomplete “work in progress”. One of the earliest inclusions was his important “Song of Myself”. This extremely long poem announces all of the major themes of Whitman’s work. In the first lines, he begins with himself: “I celebrate myself and sing myself.”

Whitman’s “self” soon becomes the global expressing of friendship, the entire nation and even the humanity. He introduces himself as “Walt Whitman, a Cosmos”. According to him, the symbol of real “self” includes everything in the Universe. “Nothing, not God, is greater than the self is.” This is a transcendentalist idea of “self”. The word “expansion” is stressed and very important. Whitman moves beyond man’s world in many areas. “I launch all men and women forward with me into the Unknown”, he says. One great “Unknown” is death. The death is delightful and desirable.

Has anyone supposed it lucky to be born?
I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die,
And I know it. (Song of Myself, 7)

Walt Whitman had a great influence on contemporary North American poetry, so that American poetry divides into two directions, which naturally flow from Whitman and another which consciously strives to accept it. Modern poets like T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, recognized Whitman’s value and the implications of his influence. Whitman’s great influence presented a complex paradox for modern poets as William Carlos Williams, Hart Crane. Later, Allen Ginsberg and the beat poets would become the most vociferous followers of Whitman’s expensive, abundant and humanistic America. Ginsberg begins his famous poem “Supermarket in California” with a reference to Whitman.

Emily Dickinson was stunned by the deaths of her close friends. Their passing only seemed to intensify her own acute sense of life’s mystery, and sometimes, her genius seemed to lift her well beyond its boundaries. We couldn’t find even mention of national consciousness in her poetry, although she wrote during the Civil war era. She lived the quiet, very private life in a big old house, so there was a possible reason why did she have the least influence on her time. She was able to create a very personal and pure kind of poetry, probably because she was cut off from the outside world. Since her death, her reputation has grown enormously.

“I heard a Fly buzz — when I died” dramatizes the speaker’s act of dying, it is a specific symbol of death, as well as Dickinson’s mystical vision, which corresponds to philosophy:

I heard a fly buzz when I died

... 

With blue, uncertain, stumbling buzz
Between the light and me
And then the window failed, and then
I could not see... 6

In this poem, we recognize very surprising but excellent description of dying process with the fantastic painting of gradually dying sensuality which leads us to the realistic vision of life and death. We could notice and define her personal expression as a strange person who seems to be looking at the world “for the first and the last time”. Through the topicality of her poetry, very often we recognize her searching for faith, one of the great themes of her work. Apart from the Bible, her most important guide in searching process was the philosophy of R.W. Emerson. She saw “the possible” as more important than “the actual”. Because of that many of critics try to classify her as one of the transcendentalists. She felt the mystery of life with or without limitations. According to E.Dickinson, if we want to grow as human beings, we must be brave because we just can “cling to nothing”. We could conclude that this idea came from Emerson’s Self-Reliance, because Dickinson has never expressed any conclusion about “the nature of faith”. In one of her famous poems she just seemed to think of it as a temporary “prop” for the soul. Later in the poem, the soul (seen here as a house) doesn’t need this prop of faith at all. This new theme in Dickinson’s poetry was her way, probably her only way of expressing the terrible suffering of the Civil War. The new themes expressed in her poetry were often the pain and limitation. It was the pain of modern existentialist. The world has become “a place where God and nature are silent” and the universe has become “a design of darkness”.

Although she priced at the conservative Christianity of her Amherst neighbors, Emily Dickinson settled comfortably and confidently into her own recognition of the immortality of every given moment. It was not without its own various shades of irony, when she protests on her tombstone: “Called Back”. There can not be two poets so different from one another in every possible artistic way as Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson. He was a man that came from the masses, from the people. She lived a life of an isolated princess, so remote from people. He wrote his poems in a free style, she did the opposite. He wrote about himself and about the world that he was living in; she wrote about the moments when the person is in the moments of moral choices, when the time of inner changes is closing in and when the mood of a poet is constantly changing. Whitman wrote long poems, Emily wrote short ones. He published his poems during his lifetime; Dickinson’s poems were published long after her death. But, as all the great poets, these two also are certainly great in many ways, they have something in common — words and symbols. Some words were very important to Dickinson. In a letter she warns: “We must be careful what we say. No bird resumes its egg”. Here is one poem specifically about the choice of symbols by Emily Dickinson:

“‘Shall I take thee?’ the poet said to the propounded word, ‘Be stationed with the candidates till I have further tried’. The poet probed philology and when about to ring for the suspended candidate, there came unsummoned in that portion of the vision the word applied to fill not unto nomination the cherubim reveal”

Whitman is the only American poet whose artistic ‘message’ has reached every man, no matter to which class the man belongs. He speaks to the man and his soul, regardless whether the one is intellectual or simple farmer or worker. Everything is equally important, precious and irreplaceable. Whitman unmistakably recognizes uniqueness and universality of every thing and every appearance:

“\textit{Welcome is every organ and every attribute of me, and of every man hearty and clean.} 
\textit{Not an inch, not a particle of an inch, is vile, and none shall be less familiar than the rest.} 
\textit{To be in any form — what is that?}”

That is why Whitman had never ceased to put an emphasis on the individual, because only the mass in which every individual is conscious and aware of his position can make a progress and be democratic. The symbolism lies in famous title “\textit{Leaves of Grass}”. The grass represents the people, the mass, but as it is a characteristic of the grass not only to grow in turfs (nations) but also in individual leaves (one person), Whitman points out that uniqueness as a whole has its place in this great world and Universe. He was the great individualist and he felt the need to be unique and original. It could be the main reason why he starts his most famous song with: “I celebrate myself”.

On the other hand, Emily Dickinson is one of those poets who make almost constant use of the first person singular. If the poems are not autobiographical in the usual sense of following actual experience, then they are autobiographical in a special sense of being true to an imagined experience, and that will be according to the dominant or total image of the artist. When Emily Dickinson went from poem to poem, she was systematically adopting her own experience which was a humdrum affair of little distinction. The theme of nature is given through metaphysical implications as in poems:

“\textit{I started early — took my dog…}”; “\textit{I taste a liquor never brewed…}”; “\textit{I took my power in my hand…}”; “\textit{I know a place where summer strives}”; “\textit{A bird came down the Walk}”

Now, we can conclude that although a poet can assume a role of the wind, bird, death, God… and can speak to us through the mouth of those, Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman, in their poetry, speak to us through their experiences. Whitman, certainly, had a great deal of experiences during his lifetime, while Emily Dickinson was pretty much confined to her house and to her inner world, which, nevertheless, does not mean that her poetry was with the lack of attractiveness and the variety of interesting subjects.

\textit{“Sometimes with one I love, I fill myself with rage, for fear I effuse unreturn’d love; 
But now I think there is no unreturn’d love — the pay is certain, one way or another; 
(I loved a certain person ardently, and my love was not returnn’d; 
Yet out of that I have written these songs.”}

O you whom I often and silently come where you are, that I may be with you;
As I walk by your side, or sit near, or remain in the same room as you,
Little you know the subtle electric fire that for your sake is playing within me."

From these lines, we could see that love was an important source of inspiration for Whitman. Maybe some of his loves were not mutual and they were not returned, but gaining the physical aspect of love was not so important to him.

In his “Song of Myself”, Whitman tells us: “I am large- I contain multitudes”, and this multitude we shall not forget or put aside when we talk about love and sexuality in his poetry. Some critics say that we can classify Whitman’s poetry into three groups — “Song of Myself”, “Adam’s Children” and “Calamus”. The “Song of Myself” stands for Whitman’s illustration of autoerotic tendencies, “Adam’s Children” represents his heteroerotic impulses and “Calamus” shows his love for the homosexuality. In the circle of songs under the title “Adam’s Children” Whitman gathered his views on the theme of female sexuality, birth and celebration of women as the everlasting symbol of evolution. Although both parts caused a great deal of a stir between the critics and the public (“Calamus” which celebrates the love between men, surprisingly), Whitman kept these two parts together in all his editions. The poet himself made a big confusion among the readers and critics by his ambiguous comments on his poems and what they actually presented and celebrated. A few of comments show that there is an increasing split between private and public in Whitman’s post-war years because of the changes. A close study of the changes that Whitman made in future editions of ‘Leaves of Grass’ reveals no clear pattern of suppressing or even toning down his love poems to men. The poet’s representation of homosexual love as the base of a new social order (first elaborated in “Calamus”) underlies the visionary democracy of “Democratic Vistas” (1871), his most important work in prose. In this important and wide-ranging attempt to come to terms with the problems of democracy in America, Whitman concludes that “intense and loving comradeship, the personal and passionate attachment of man to man” represents “the most substantial hope and safety of the future of these States. It is to the development, identification, and general prevalence of that fervid comradeship, the adhesive love, at least rivaling amative love hitherto possessing imaginative literature, if not going beyond it”, Whitman explains in a footnote, that “I look for the counterbalance and offset of our materialistic and vulgar American democracy, and for the spiritualization thereof.” Among what he called the aggressive selfishness, vulgar materialism, and widespread corruption of the Gilded Age, Whitman looked not to marriage or to the traditional family but to “the personal and passionate attachment of man to man” as the social base and future hope of the American republic. “I say democracy infers such loving comradeship as its most inevitable twin or counterpart, without which it will be incomplete, in vain, and incapable of perpetuating itself.” At the end,

we can summon up Whitman’s ambiguity when it comes to his sexuality by quoting the words of his biographer Kaplan who tells us that “sexuality… is the force in his work which celebrates democratization of the whole being, releasing its impulses and instincts from the undesirable slavery.”

When we talk about Emily Dickinson and her poetry, some consider that the love poems are decisive for her literary personality. She had quick and warm affection for people, and she loved nature spontaneously with a great deal of passion. But it is a fact that her attachment was directed to a person of a blameless clergyman who was already married. She could never be with him. We know nothing about their relation, for his letters to her have all been destroyed, except one, pastoral but friendly in its tone. There is one man whose name we certainly know — Mr. Wadsworth, and he did matter to Emily. His move from one town to another coincides with significant alterations in her life and poetry. Yet this was a fantasy of love, constructed about a man whom she scarcely knew and who was not aware of her idealization. Her sense of what is real always won out over whatever presented attractive fantasy. But, we may say that there were many loves in her life, loves of the various kinds and durations. Nevertheless, her feeling for her father was dominant, although it is believed that all her ‘loves’ were ‘Fathers’. So, it seems true of Emily to say that God was her lover as “he who loves God must not expect to be loved in return.”

Maybe that is the key why many of her poems which talk about love, also talk about death (or to go further, some of the songs that start with the word love, have in the same line the word death). We may assume that it is because her love feelings were not returned and she suffered greatly for a very long time. She had not the courage to end it all by simply finding a new love object, whether it would be a person, but more often a personification of imaginary thing, or rather something from the nature.

“Love can do ad but raise the dead;
I doubt if even that
From such a giant were withheld Were flesh equivalent.”

“Love is that later thing than death, More previous than life
Confirms it at its entrance
And usurps it of itself.”

“Nature is what we know but have no art to say.” Emily Dickinson describes nature and we can see the nature through her eyes as the most beautiful evidence of God’s will. Her nature poems are not the most revelatory or dramatically compulsive of her poems, nor the best. They are, very often, the poems of great delicacy but often superficial, too: “But Nature is a stranger yet.” — said Emily Dickinson. Her vision of nature was the
symbol of all the elements that corrupt, dissolve, and destroy human character and mind; to make an approach to nature means to depart from the fullness of human life, and to join with nature means to leave human life. The nature could be the symbol of death. On the other hand, the nature for Whitman represented only joy in life. He was curious about both the nature and people. His love of nature is also shown in his vocabulary. He used terms related to the sea and to the flora and fauna of America. (Furthermore, Whitman used a blade of grass to symbolize his poems because he thought that each of his poems is separate leaf or blade of grass. It is because they were divine, though common, they were symbolic presentation of life and cycles of birth and death. Although Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman couldn’t collaborate on their works, they were cotemporaries. They were significant in both cases individually and together. The topicalities of their works are studied together, because both of them are known as the most famous pioneering voices of American poetry. With Emily Dickinson’s reserved nature and Whitman’s bold, exuberant work, it’s hard to believe that any critics of their time would have grouped them together. But, these two poets are not without similarities however. “I saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak growing” by Whitman and “A bird came down the Walk” by Dickinson demonstrate a major similarity, the inspiration from nature and love toward nature, but also preserving the wonderful differences, at the same time.

A bird came down the walk  
He did not know I saw  
He bit an angle worm in halves  
And ate the fellow, raw

And then he drank a dew  
From a convenient grass  
And then hopped sidewise to the wall  
To let the beetle pass

He glanced with rapid eyes  
That hurried all abroad  
They looked like frightened beads, I thought  
He stirred his velvet head

Like one in danger; cautious  
I offered him a crumb  
And he unrolled his feathers And rowed him softer home

Than oars divide the ocean  
Too silver for a seam  
Or butterflies, off banks of noon Leap, splashless, as they sway

I saw in Louisiana a live-oak growing,  
All alone stood it, and the moss hung down from the branches;  
Without any companion it grew there, uttering joyous leaves of dark green.

And its look, rude, unbending, lusty, made me think of myself;
But I wonder’d how it could utter joyous leaves, standing alone there, without its friend, its lover near—for I knew I could not;
And I broke off a twig with a certain number of leaves upon it, and twined around it a little moss,
And brought it away—and I have placed it in sight in my room;
It is not needed to remind me as of my own dear friends,
(For I believe lately I think of little else than of them;)
Yet it remains to me a curious token—it makes me think of manly love;
For all that, and though the live-oak glistens there in Louisiana, solitary, in a wide flat space, Uttering joyous leaves aft its life, without a friend, a lover, near,
I know very well I could not.\(^{20}\)

Both their poems deal with nature. According to Dickinson it is a bird, and for Whitman it is a tree. The strength and dignity of the tree is Whitman’s symblic presentation of masculinity and wisdom. The poet’s respect for the subjects is shown through their anthropomorphizing of each. Dickinson shows her own vagueness in her poem. The first few stanzas go into so much details and personification of bird. Whitman feels the tree and its condition in his verse: “its look rude, unbending, lusty”, as well as wondering how it can stand alone “without its friend near”. Something, he would never be capable to feel is Dickinson’s vision of bird’s flying away and her description of the bird: “unrolled his feathers and rowed him softer home”. The poet is neither jealous, nor happy with herself. Although both of these poets are observing nature, their visional and descriptive ways are different. Dickinson is a passive observer, only venturing to offer a crumb to the bird. 'The first stanzas are vivid descriptions of the bird, the description from simple observation. Dickinson’s metaphor starts when the bird flies, her truly inspiration is a bird’s freedom.

Whitman sees the tree and immediately breaks off a branch. His metaphor described the emotions which are inspired by the beauty of a tree. Dickinson’s voice is almost childlike in its innocence of watching the bird, but Whitman’s questions for the tree represent the simple searching for the answers. The main Whitman’s focus is how the tree applies to his own life. He brings the reader home with him, and continues the contemplation after the meeting with the tree is over. Dickinson, in a way, tries to reflect her own sensation, describing what is immediately happening, and giving the suggestion to the reader to feel the rest. It seems that she feels more comfortable with nature, at least, the nature she is exposed to. Whitman loves vivid nature but he is much more fascinated by its mysteriousness. He is not sure, if he really knows everything about the tree, but he wants to be. Despite these differences, the love and respect of the nature cannot be denied, in both poetical creativities. It is true that Whitman’s nature is different from Dickinson’s (she probably would not have taken the bird home, no matter how curious she was). Whitman seems like the owner of the nature, while Dickinson just looks at the nature, but al-

ways stays alone. When we consider about Whitman’s relation towards the nature and the other motifs in his poems, we could conclude he is on the top of the world; he is the main representative and the owner of the civilization or even the important connection between the civilization and Universe. While, Dickinson’s presentation of her own personality towards the nature seems like the pale picture of very weak and isolated person, who wants to feel and to touch, but she is frustrated and sad. Both of them make the unbreakable connection between the nature and God in desire to understand the world and to find the place for them.

When we mention the nature, we recognize the metaphysical implications as the threads extended towards God, in both poetic works. Dickinson used an Emersonian self-possession and she did not accept the puritan God. In one of her poems she refers to God as “a noted clergyman” and on another occasion she salutes him as ‘burglar, hanger, father’, what makes us to consider about disrespectfulness, which might have annoyed her contemporaries. As Kathleen Norris points out, her searching for herself is unable to contain her religious feeling within the bounds of orthodoxy, spent a good part of her life battling god so directly … It was her confrontation with religion that helped shape her life and poetry … and (like Walt Whitman) she developed what can rightly be called a “heterodox faith” that had little to do with churches or doctrines and a great deal to do with inner experience as well as nature itself. Dickinson seeks contact with God outside rather than within the church, by her own thoughts and as an individual soul rather than as one of the swooning flock of converts. In doing so, the poet’s work becomes dramatically subversive, undermining traditional authorities and traditional definitions of meaningful spirituality. One of Dickinson’s most powerful poems speaks about the experience of spiritual assurance, of being among “the elect” — the poet in this poem vehemently claims the state of grace and immortality for herself:

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\begin{align*}
\text{Mine} & \quad - \quad \text{by the Right of the White Election!} \\
\text{Mind} & \quad - \quad \text{by the Royal Seal!} \\
\text{Mine} & \quad - \quad \text{by the Sign in the Scarlet prison—} \\
\text{Bars} & \quad - \quad \text{cannot conceal!} \\
\text{Mine} & \quad - \quad \text{here — in Vision — and in Veto!} \\
\text{Mine} & \quad - \quad \text{by the Grave’s Repeal —} \\
\text{Titled} & \quad - \quad \text{Confirmed —} \\
\text{Delirious Charter!}\end{align*}
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It is most fascinating to recognize the ways in which Dickinson creates sacrament in her own poetical form. The poet goes beyond searching for the sacred out in the world — she is able to find it within the “self” and to express it with the words in her verses. Through the act of writing, the poet creates, partakes of, and shares sacrament with the reader. She searches for the sacred in the world, and she finds it within the “self”. This expression is immortal, because expressed as written poetry it outlives the physical human

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body of the poet and ensures life after death. In considering both Emily Dickinson’s re-
construction of the sacred symbols and her very personal recreation of “sacrament” through poetry, Richard Wilbur comes closest to “summing it all up”. He explains that Dickinson uses a great vocabulary which forces her to express an established theology and psychology.

The poems about death in poetry of Emily Dickinson are ranging according to tone and motifs. Some poems are written from the point of view of the observer; in others, she is witnessing her own death by anticipation (‘you’ll be sorry when I’m dead’ or ‘I want to die’); in others she is contemplating present destitution by loss (‘My life closed twice before its close’). The poem “Looking at death, is Dying” seems to be the maxim to be attended. Emily Dickinson is obsessed by the death and the life after death. She seems to have thought of it constantly — she died off her life, and wrote: ‘That bareheaded life under grass worries one like a wasp’. The theme of death was inexhaustible for her. In treating these themes (God, death and immortality), Dickinson discloses her deep anxiety.

There’s a certain slant of light,
On winter afternoons,
That oppresses, like the weight
Of cathedral tunes.

Heavenly hurt it gives us;
We can find no scar,
But internal difference
Where the meanings are.

In Walt Whitman’s poetry God is rarely mentioned, as almighty, except in his poem ’A passage to India’ — a poem of identification, with God, and the Soul. The poem arises from the technological advances that have unified ‘East and West. He unified the Hindu prophetic skills with our faith and our need to be closer to God. According to poet, who led us through India and into his soul, the world is a symbol of the unified souls. The poem ends in rhapsody as Whitman metaphorically sets forth to join with God. He makes very specific metaphorical connection between God and himself as the representative of the civilization and Universe: “I am the poet of the Body and the poet of the Soul” — writes Whitman. The image of death, very often, is linked with war. In his poem “The Wound Dresser”, he has found the dimension where he expressed the beauty and ugliness, the spirit and body, so as the life and death together and gave them the unreal sublime tone.

An old man bending, I come, among new faces,
Years looking backward, resuming, in answer to children,
Come tell us, old man, as from young men and maidens that love me;
Years hence of these scenes, of these furious passions, these chances,
Of unsurpass’d heroes, (was one side so brave? the other was equally brave?)
Now be witness again — paint the mightiest armies of earth;

Of those armies so rapid, so wondrous, what saw you to tell us?

I dress the perforated shoulder, the foot with the bullet wound,
Cleanse the one with a gnawing and putrid gangrene, so sickening, so offensive, While the attendant stands behind aside me, holding the tray and pail.
I am faithful, I do not give out;
The fractur’d thigh, the knee, the wound in the abdomen,
These and more I dress with impassive hand — (yet deep in my breast afire, a burning flame.)
Thus in silence, in dreams’ projections,
Returning, resuming, I thread my way through the hospitals;
The hurt, and wounded I pacify with soothing hand,
I sit by the restless all the dark night — some are so young;
Some suffer so much — I recall the experience sweet and sad;
(Many a soldier’s loving arms about this neck have cross ’d and rested,
Many a soldiers kiss dwells on these bearded lips.)”

“The Wound Dresser” is a gruesome poem which makes the readers to be face to face with the cruel realities of war, to be very close to death and God, trying to understand love, nature and civilization. This poem allows the reader to see what the wound-dresser sees, and feel what he feels. One poor man, who is found by wound-dresser replies: “Come sweet death! (Be persuaded O beautiful death! / in mercy come quickly”. Another is found with “a gnawing and putrid gangrene, so sickening, so offensive” so he just waits the God’s mercy and death like the only salvation.

However these two pioneering voices of American poetry seem different and without the similarities, both Dickinson and Whitman believed that God is not above us, but in us. These equal messages make Dickinson’s and Whitman’s poetry much closer towards their symbolical presentations of life and death through God, love, nature and their personal vision and expression of the main source and product of everything existent, the spiritual (soul) and the material (body); it is the atom according to Whitman and life after death (re-incarnation), according to Dickinson. So we look at their visions like at the source and product, as they accept the human being like the God and nobody, at the same time.

Emily Dickinson shows us very specific philosophy of life in her verses:

I am Nobody! ’Who are you?
Are You Nobody too?
Then there ’s a pair of us!

Dickinson and Whitman were both contradictory in themselves. He was a representative of his country with all his ambiguities, his wit, through the democratic faith, optimism and his greatly belief in himself as a God. She was reserved for nature and even some smaller things help her as muses to express the light and personal inner through the life and death, the time and eternity.

Recognizable orientations and motifs in Whitman’s and Dickinson’s poetry:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whitman</th>
<th>Dickinson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life</td>
<td>Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty of life</td>
<td>Beauty of death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life → Universe</td>
<td>Life → the process of dying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back to the ground</td>
<td>Going to heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle</td>
<td>Cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth → atom → nature, love → God → Universe</td>
<td>Life → nature, love → God → reincarnation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universe → Back to the earth (atom)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative to religion and God</td>
<td>Positive to religion and God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eccentric transcendentalism</td>
<td>Eccentric mystical realism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(timeless, temporal, nature and love)</td>
<td>(timeless, temporal, nature and love)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LITERATURE**


МИРЈАНА ЛОНЧАР-ВУЈНОВИЋ

СИМБОЛИЧКА ПРЕЗЕНТАЦИЈА НЕКИХ ТРАНСЦЕДЕНТАЛНИХ И МИСТИЧНО-РЕАЛИСТИЧНИХ ЕЛЕМЕНТА У ПОЕЗИЈИ ВОЛТА ВИТМАНА И ЕМИЛИ ДИКИНСОН

Р е з и м е

Волт Витман и Емили Дикinson сматрају се претечама модерне америчке поезије, с једне стране, због експерименталне верификације и метрике, а с друге стране, првенствено због њихових специфичних и потпуно нових визија живота и смрти, односно мотивике. Обојица песника људско постојање види у циклусима.

Код Витмана све настаје од атома, из земље, пролази кроз природу, осећа љубав, иде ка Богу и космосу и враћа се земљи. А код Дикinsonове налазимо Бога, као творца свега постојећег, живот који се живи у природи, али окренут ка људској природности и љубави, уз непрестано ишчекивање смрти, као спасења и пута до реинкарнације.

Песници визију живота и смрти доживљавају и презентују на филозофски начин, увлачећи у песничке слике временску и ванвременску категорију да би дочарали враћање земљи (Витман) и одлажење на небо (Дикinson), уз већ поменуте лајтмотиве њихових поетика. Њихова екцентричност у комбинацији са оријентацијама и лајтмотивима, за сваког од њих понасособ, наводи нас да Волта Витмана сматрамо претечом екцентричног трансцедентализма, а Емили Дикinson зачетницом екцентричног мистичног реализма у америчкој поезији.

Кључне речи. Бог, природа, живот, смрт, реинкарнација, атом, трансцедентално, медитација.