

A Comparative Study of the Portrayal of Mortality in Romantic and Modern Poetry: Keats' "Ode to Nightingale" And Dylan Thomas' "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night"

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a comparative analysis of the theme of "mortality" in the poems "Ode to Nightingale" by Keats and "Do not go gentle into that good night" by Dylan Thomas. In this research paper, we argue about the inevitability of death and mortality and its perspectives shaped by different literary periods, for example, modernism and romanticism, resulting from emotional and philosophical responses. We examine this through thematic, stylistic devices like imagery, metaphors and the broader context of their perspective eras. This study illuminates the evolution of poetics' engagement with one of humanity's most profound and enduring concerns, like mortality. Keats' "Ode" portrays a speaker who, in a state of transcendent reverie, contemplates death as a release from worldly suffering, a perspective deeply rooted in Romantic idealism and the desire for union with the eternal. In stark contrast, Thomas's villanelle is a passionate and defiant cry against the encroaching darkness, reflecting a Modernist sensibility, in a world often perceived as fragmented and devoid of traditional consolations, championing the fierce assertion of life until the very end. By juxtaposing these two works, this paper reveals not only the individual genius of Keats and Thomas but also the profound shift in the Western consciousness regarding life, death, and the power of the human spirit.

Key Words: Portrayal of Mortality, Romantic and Modern Poetry, Keats' "Ode to Nightingale" Dylan Thomas' "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night"

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

Death, as an inescapable aspect of human existence, has remained one of the most profound and persistent themes in literature, particularly in poetry. Across time and

cultures, poetry has served as a powerful medium for expressing humanity's complex attitudes toward mortality ranging from fear and acceptance to transcendence and philosophical reflection. Through poetic engagement with death, writers not only articulate personal and emotional responses but also mirror the cultural, social, and intellectual conditions of their eras.

In earlier periods, death was often viewed through a religious and moral lens, as seen in pre-nineteenth-century and Victorian poetry. The Romantic era, however, reimagined mortality as a source of beauty, melancholy, and spiritual transcendence. In contrast, modern poetry reflects alienation and existential anxiety, portraying death as an inevitable yet defiant confrontation with meaninglessness. Thus, each literary age defines mortality according to its historical and cultural context—from limited medical knowledge and religious faith to war, industrialization, and technological progress.

Among the poets who explore this theme deeply are John Keats and Dylan Thomas, whose works illustrate the Romantic and Modernist responses to death respectively. Keats (1795–1821), a second-generation Romantic poet, wrote "*Ode to a Nightingale*" (1817), later published in 1820. Marked by personal tragedy and illness, his confrontation with death shaped the poem's meditation on the transience of life and the pursuit of beauty amid decay (Bari, 2017; Wellesley College Honors Thesis, 2017). The poem captures a complex emotional state, balancing the pain of human existence with the ideal of artistic immortality.

In contrast, Dylan Thomas (1914–1953), a major Modernist poet, wrote "*Do not go gentle into that good night*" (1947), published in 1951, in response to his father's impending death. Written in the villanelle form, the poem rejects passive acceptance of mortality and instead urges defiance and resistance against death's inevitability (Kayaalti, Erciyes University). This struggle embodies the modernist spirit of individual will and existential confrontation.

Romantic and Modern poetry thus represent two distinct yet interconnected perspectives on death. While Romantic poetry emphasizes emotion, nature, and transcendence, Modern poetry turns toward fragmentation, alienation, and the crisis of meaning. Together, these literary responses illustrate how changing cultural and intellectual climates reshape humanity's understanding of mortality, immortality, and the poetic imagination.

Rationale of the Study

A comparative study on mortality in romantic and modern poetry, especially focusing on Keats' "*Ode to the Nightingale*" and Dylan Thomas' "*Do not go gentle into that good night*", which portray not only their artistic expression but also broad world views of their respective era. Keats' poetry embodied the romantic ideal of beauty, imagination, and transcendence in contemplation of death, while Thomas's work exemplifies the modern existential struggle against the inevitability of death, marked by emotional intensity and defiant tone. This study examines the poems through the portrayal of mortality in terms of thematically and syntax structure and emotional responses toward mortality shaped by each period. Why Dylan Thomas, Dylan Thomas was a neo-romantic poet. His poetry is not considered modern poetry instead it is a Neo-Romantic but Dylan Thomas in "*Do not go gentle into that good night*"

uses a modernist poetic perspective about mortality, which is existentialism, alienation, and resistance toward death. This is why I took the poem for comparative study with the poem “Ode to nightingale.”

Research Objectives

To analyze how mortality is portrayed thematically in “Ode to Nightingale” and “Do not go gentle in that good night”

To examine the stylistic techniques used by Thomas and Keats in presenting death.

Compare the similarities and differences between the two poems in response to mortality.

To situate it with literary movements, Romanticism and modernism

Research Questions

How “mortality” presented thematically in these poems?

What stylistic devices are used to convey their perspective on death?

In what way does this poem reflect their respective ideologies of the Romantic and modern periods?

Key comparison in both poems' approach to mortality

Significance of the Study

This research is important for several reasons:

It contributes to the broader field of comparative study, bringing together both traditions of romanticism and modernism with each other.

It highlights the evolution of the poetic treatment of death, which changes with the personal and historical context, shaping the literary expression.

It focuses on thematic and stylistic structure analysis, which can be helpful for students of English literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mortality in Literature

Mortality has been a pervasive theme in literary history. From the ancient “elegies” to the contemporary existential verses The poet uses death as a lens to explore meaning, suffering, and human conditions. Scholars believe that the death representation are often shaped by cultural anxiety, religious beliefs, and philosophical views of that particular eras.

According to Ernest Becker [1973], literature reflects the symbolic struggle against death, offering both comfort and confrontation. In 1973 work “*The Denial of Death*,” Becker argues that literature—and broader cultural systems—reflect a symbolic struggle against death by offering ways to deny or transcend our mortality.

As Socrate [ancient philosopher] viewed death not just as evil but as a liberation of the soul- a transition to eternal truths if one lives a virtuous life. His acceptance of death as naturally desirable, offers a philosophical contemplation of mortality with serenity then fear.

Thomas Hardy is a literary critic who explored mortality by emphasizing its social and existential dimensions, often portraying death as a pervasive and inexorable force

shaping human experiences (Nasir et al., 2023). It means that death is not a single event for an individual, but it affects the whole society by its inevitability. Thomas shows in his novels how death affects the relationships, traditions and social structures. Literature always remained a shaping material which shapes the subject matter in each era.

Similarly, Terry Eagleton [2008] essay on “Tragedy and its Perpetual Controversy”, With a Particular Reference to George Steiner's Death of Tragedy and Terry Eagleton's Tragedy] by Isra university “khalid Alnajjar” views “death in literature as a site of ideological tension, stating that mortality dramatizes the limit of power, knowledge and identity” he argues that no matter how the person strong, wealthy, death reduces everyone to the same final conclusion because we cannot control it or understand it.

Mortality in Romantic Poetry / Ode to a Nightingale

Romantic poetry emerged in the 18th century, characterized by heightened sensitivity to individual emotion and nature. According to Abrams [1971], romantic poets viewed death, not simply as an end but a spiritual or aesthetic transformation. Abram says that poets like Keats sought in art and imagination, a space for permanence to compensate for human transience [The mirror and the Lamp, P.54].

Romantics, Art, Imagination, And Transcendence

Abraham, a foundational scholar of romanticism as a critic, argues here that the romantic poets, including Keats, were deeply aware of the temporary, fleeting nature of human life in response to permanence as they turn art and imagination to create a sense of impermanence. Romantic poet uses art and imagination as tools of resistance or to ignore the reality of executed sufferers. In romantic poetry, Death is often romanticized or rendered beautiful, particularly through its association with nature and imagination.

Keats’ romantic vision of death

Keats's poetry explored mortality not as a terminal event but as a passage into another form of existence. The same idea is marked by Herold Bloom ("A Reading of English Romantic Poetry" (1969) in A visionary company in chapter “Ode to Psyche” in P [389] where a speaker attempts to create his/her myth.

He argues that ode is a primary example of "myth making" where a speaker attempts to create his “myth” to counter the harsh reality of life. Keats' "Nightingale" is a symbol of an idealized immortality which the speaker wants to gain. He suggests that the speaker's desire for death is not simple death but a wish, a longing state of being that transcends the limitation of mortality.

Critical Perspectives On “Ode to Nightingale”

In Romantic “Ode to Nightingale”, intertwining the mortality with the beauty, where death is not merely an end but a poetic transformation.

Keats’ meditation on death, death and transience is not an isolated theme but rather emblematic of Romanticism's broader preoccupation with " The tragic beauty of

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impermanence" by Wu, D. (Ed.). (2012). *Romanticism: an anthology*. [4 editions, A things of beauty is a joy forever, P 1398] John Wiley & Sons. Romantic poetry is focused on individual emotion and inclined to nature with the reflections of some realities, for instance, death.

According to Jonathan Bate (1997) "To autumn" [Wikipedia, criticism on Keats] that for Keats, mortality is both a poetic subject and a lived reality: "Keats did not merely write about death but he wrote from within its shadow" The same idea portrayed by (Ziegenhagen, 2020) and Sumantrao Kashikar (2022), in their articles [Harmonizing Two Horizons: Literature and Medicine in Poetry of John Keats]. In Keats' "Ode", death is portrayed as not a feared reality but a desired means to escape the burden of the temporal world, like human suffering, ageing and loss. Ferber enriches this understanding by suggesting that the poet's longing is not for literal death but for release from time, pain, and the limitations of physical existence.

Michael Ferber in *Romanticism: A very short introduction* (2010) characterizes the romantic death as a morbid fatalism but a metaphysical yearning (44-47). This can be understood from the "Ode to Nightingale" in "Fade far away and dissolve into the timeless ethereal realm"

Death is framed as a kind of solace for Keats. The "Nightingale" is immortal entity through which he trying to free from human suffering mortality, yet the speaker's returning to reality in the final stanza, with the illusion that he was in struggles to release pain by being immortal. His situation at the time exposed by Andrew Motion (In his biography Johan Keats life Poetry 1997), provides a detailed account of his circumstances surrounding the composition of the "Ode" which emphasized Keats' brother Tom and his anxiety about his health. Motion says that the poem is deeply rooted in the personal experience of loss and awareness. He interprets the speaker's contemplation of death as both a temptation and a source of profound artistic inspiration.

Similarly, Roe Nicholas in (John Keats and the source culture of Dissent, 1994) explores the same idea of his illness and its effect on poetry. He argues that Keats' health is not only suffering, caused by health, but also from the time of society, which was filled with poverty and political oppression and instability.

Mortality in Modern Poetry

Mortality is one of the recurring themes in modern poetry. Unlike romantic poetry—where death was often associated with beauty, nature and transcendence—Modern poetry tend to approach mortality through fragmentation, existentialism, and resistance against oblivion.

The modernist movement, emerging in the early 20th century after the devastation of World War I and 2, that shaped Poets attitudes toward death as they grapple with a world marked by uncertainty, loss, and disillusionment

Ezra Pound's "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" (1920) laments the waste of an entire generation, reducing mortality to a social and political tragedy. Mortality here is not treated as an individual existential crisis (like in Romantic poetry), but as collective west crisis—the mass deaths of young men in a pointless war.

"The waste land" presented a fractured world where death operates on multiple levels personal, collective, and symbolic. Unlike Romantic poets such as Keats, who often

saw mortality as an opportunity for transcendence, Eliot frames it as a condition of disorder, fragmentation, and despair of civilization.

Do Not Go Gentle into That Goodnight and Dylan Thomas Existential

"Do not go gentle into that goodnight" is one of the frequently analyzed poems in terms of death, with critical discussion revolving around the poem's powerful defiance, its biological context and its villanelle form. It was the time of war, industrialization and existential crises, so the poetry at the time is labelled with and often represents death with urgency, resilience or ironic detachments.

As "Bdar" argues, "Thomas's villanelle transforms death into a battlefield of language and emotion" (132). [Article on, the poetry of **Wilfred Owen (1893-1918)**, **Dylan Thomas (1914-1953)**, and **Ted Hughes (1930-1998)** "The concept of modern violence"], in modern poetry he **explore the concept of violence, thematically and technically** It shows that the obsession of modern poets with the concept of violence was a natural outcome of the Victorian crisis of faith; a crisis which was instigated not only by the industrial and scientific revolutionary spirit of the age, but also by the social, political, and materialistic theories

Although originally written in the aftermath of the Second World War, *Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night* has taken on a renewed significance in contexts such as the COVID-19 pandemic, where its exhortation to "rage against the dying of the light" embodies a universal human resistance to despair and death.

Thomas Dylan asserts that death is fatal and one should resist till the last. This poem is written on his father's deathbed. He made the plea for his father to fight against death for life ["Dylan Thomas' Biography" (1989) by Ferris, Paul] Provides insight into the poet's turbulent relationship with mortality, particularly in the context of his father's impending death.

Stylistic Review on KEATS

Stylistically the poem "Ode to Nightingale" is very important because it portray the mortality [Aesthetic and Beauty] through its stylistic division from that modern [defiant and fragmented]. Some of the key literature reviews stylistically on poem "Do not go gentle into that good night" are given below.

Syntax and Tone in Keats

Stillinger and Jack (Hoodwinking of Medeline, 1979) argue that the poem's dreamy syntax and wavering tone stylistically mirror Keats' ambivalence toward death as both fear and desire P (212-15). Keats' narrative and tonal techniques—especially in poems like "Ode to nightingale" and "*The Eve of St. Agnes*", where dreaminess and emotional wavering are prominent features

Stillinger examines how the poem's syntax (how sentences are structured—fragmented, suspended, rhythmically "dreamlike") and tone (a gently shifting, emotional, uncertain mood) reflect Keats' poem's ambivalence, that is, both a pull of desire and a pull of fear.

Imagery in Keats

Similarly, in "History of modern poetry" (Perkins and David), they highlight Keats' mastery of evocative imagery and sensual language, asserting that "Ode to Nightingale" merges poetic form with existential longing (Perkins 382).

Stylistics Review on Do Not Go Gentle in That Goodnight

Jackson, R. C. (2016). *The pragmatics of repetition, emphasis and intensification*. University of Salford (United Kingdom) asserts that Thomas uses repetition as both a formal constraint and an emotion intensifier. This recurring refrain accumulates emotional pressure rather than redundancy.

This villanelle structure further critical analysis by, in a "2017 critical profile", a confrontation with death in structural chaos where order serves to heightened intensity (poetry foundational)

Comparative Criticism

Few studies have not directly compared Keats' Romantic embrace of poetic death with Thomas' modernist resistance. Though they noted their mutual concern with existential and emotional concern or dimension of dying in modernism and romanticism

Romantic Idealism Vs Modern Resistance

Abraham's "natural Supernatural" (1971), Abraham notes that the modernist movement from Romantic idealism to modernist fragmentation is crystallized in poetic meditation on death.

Cultural Shifts in The Understanding of Death

Cultural understanding of death shifting can be explore in Philippe Aries's "The Hour of our death (1981)" which traces the historical evolution of western attitude toward death from "tame death" to "forbidden death" This work provide provides insight in comparison of modern and Romantic period and pan point the treated of death culturally and in context from period to period.

Research Methodology

The methodological framework used to conduct a comparative study of mortality in John Keats' "Ode to Nightingale" and Thomas's poem "Do not go gentle into that good night" based on the above chapter, which provides a thematic and scholarly foundation. This chapter aims to examine the process of research, which is a qualitative, comparative approach grounded in textual analysis. Key focus on the thematic and stylistic to understand mortality in romanticism and modernism

Research Design

This study follows a qualitative interpretation, appropriate for literary analysis, where meaning is derived from a close reading of the text (Afaq et al., 2023; Ahmed et al., 2025; Akhtar et al., 2025) this study is comparative between modernism and romanticism through representative poetic texts like. This outlines how the research to

reveal the mortality an existential concern, is represented differently due to changes in historical context, literary form author perspectives.

Collections of Data

It consists of **primary data** and **secondary data**.

Primary data

Primary data consists of the two poems "Ode to a Nightingale" by John Keats (1919) and Thomas's poem "Do not go gentle into that good night" (1947)

These poems are selected due to their central thematic concern with death and their status as representative works of Romantic and Modern poetry, respectively. The selection also aligns with prior scholarly focus (as reviewed in Chapter 2), making them ideal for a focus comparative study.

Secondary Data

Secondary data include Scholarly articles, literary critics and books on Romanticism and modernism and essays on Keats and Thomas and included authors. Academic articles and journals are included. Biography studies of both poets, Keats and Thomas.

Analytical Framework

This study employs a dual-framework analysis

Thematic Analysis

The thematic component explores how each poet conceptualized death in their respective poems. The analysis includes:

The emotional tone surrounding death (resignation, resistance, transcendence]

The symbolic and metaphysical role of death (as transformation, escape, or adversary]

The relationship between the speaker and death (personal, universal, or poetic)

Thematic inquiry is informed by scholars such as Abrams (1953), Roe (1997), and Bode (2020), who emphasizes the philosophical and cultural roots of mortality in literature (Gill et al., 2025; Akhtar et al.,2025).

Stylistic Analysis

Stylistic analysis focuses on form, diction, syntax, imagery, tone, and structure, exploring how these devices contribute to the portrayal of death (Ahmed et al., 2025; Ishtiaq et al.,2021;Khan et al.,2025). Attention is given to Keats's use of sensuous imagery, fluid syntax, and Romantic symbols (e.g. the Nightingale, fading light). Thomas's use of repetition, villanelle structure, and imperative voice to resist death The stylistic approach aligns with critics such as Stillinger (1979), Vendler (2010), who argue that poetic form is integral to meaning.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a comparative framework grounded in Romantic aesthetics and Modernist poetics, supplemented by concepts from death studies. Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" is approaching through Romantic theories of imagination, beauty, and

mortality, while Dylan Thomas's "Do not go gentle into that good night" is reading in the light of Modernist existential resistance to death. This framework enables us thematically and stylistically of how two literary eras conceptualized the mortality (Gul et al., 2022).

ANALYSIS

This chapter presents a comparative analysis of the portrayal of mortality in John Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" and Dylan Thomas' "Do not go gentle into that good night". It is study based on a thematic and stylistic framework. It has two major sections: thematic and stylistic analysis. It examines the emotional and symbolical, and stylistically, through its techniques. This discussion highlights how each poem reflects its historical moment about death. Keats' Romantic Idealism and Thomas's Modernism - Resistance, which reveal the poetic evaluation of confronting death

Thematic Analysis

Mortality as an Escape in Keats' Ode to a Nightingale

Keats contemplates longing for Death. In "Ode to a Nightingale", Keats presents mortality as both suffering and a gateway to transcendence. The speaker desired to escape the "weariness, the fever and the fret" line 3, stanza 3) marked by Pain, loss and impermanence is described in the following lines.

"Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;"

Keats paints a picture of the human world as full of pain, illness, and complaints. Unlike the nightingale, which sings joyfully, humans are bound to a life of suffering and decay.

"Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,"

"Palsy" refers to paralysis or trembling from old age. This line shows the frailty of old people, their bodies weakened, their "last grey hairs" a sign of approaching death.

"Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;"

Even the young are not being spared: they grow "pale" and "spectre-thin," like ghosts, before dying. Keats may be recalling his own fear of early death (he was ill with tuberculosis when he wrote this). This is the tragedy of mortality, as both the old and young suffer.

"Where but to think is to be full of sorrow / And leaden-eyed despairs"

Merely reflecting on life brings grief. The weight of existential despair (the awareness of inevitable death) makes life feel heavy, "leaden-eyed," like being burdened by sorrow.

Keats considered death as a peaceful surrender to attend the immortal beauty " - Now more than ever seems it rich to die" stanza (6) line (6) __suggesting a longing for dissolution into beauty where one might emerge with the eternal song of the Nightingale. It is more comfortable than worldly suffering. The speaker's desire for death is not a simple suicidal urge but a longing for a transcendence state (Dawson, English journal) Keats' Death.

The line (2) stanza (6) "I have been half in love with easy Death", the speaker personifies death as a gentle and alluring figure to whom he is in love. This "easy death" is imagined as a release from the burden of consciousness, a "quiet Breath"

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that would allow him "to cease upon the midnight with no pain" Such romanticization of death is a hallmark of the romantic sensibility, which often sought solace from the harsh reality of life in the realm of imagination and sublime. (lots of essay.com) Speaker's yearning to dissolve into the "embalmed darkness" of the forest- the world of eternal, to become or associate one with the natural world reflects the romantic desire for union with the eternal (Cambridge University Publish) and Shahidha Bari.

The poem's first line, "My heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains/my sense of thought I had drunk". Symbolizing the human condition tied to mortality, "to escape, opium emptied some dull opiate to the drains" which reflected the transcendence by imagination from earthly world. The speaker's journey is one of the eternal conflict while he entertains the idea of peaceful demise. On the other hand, the very thought of "longing" for him to a sense of loss. He acknowledges that if he were to die, the Nightingale's song would become a "high requiem". The speaker's ambiguity is further underscored when he turns back from imagination by the word "forlorn", a word that refers to his "sole self" (Article from "Inquiries by Anna. R. Hill). This abrupt return to reality leaves him in uncertainty, questioning the nature of his experience.

"Was it a vision or a waking dream? Fled is that music--Do I wake or sleep" (79) line, which is the characteristic of Keats' "negative capability" ability to embrace uncertainty without the striving for a definitive answer (Awaken English Romantic poetry: life & death) by Jenke DANN.

This view aligns with Abrahams's (1953) observation that Romantic poets often turn death into a symbolic passage rather than an end. Keats does not fight death, rather romanticizes and contemplates it with melancholy resignation.

Thematic Analysis "Do Not Go Gentle into That Goodnight"

Thomas's Rejection of Death

Dylan Thomas is a completely different thematic representation of mortality in "Do not go gentle into that good night", where Keats' speaker contemplates a peaceful escape, while Thomas issues a passionate and defiant command to resist death. Its central theme is not the acceptance of death but the fierce affirmation of life, even in its final moments.

The poem's opening stanza (1) "Do not go gentle into that good night, old age should burn and rave at close of day" exhorts to resist death fiercely rather than accept it passively. In this line, he also believes that death is inevitable, but the old should resist death with passion and intensity rather than fading quietly. Speakers use a powerful metaphor, "dying Light" for death, which equates life with light and death with darkness. At the same time, the speaker did not deny the inevitability of death. It acknowledges in stanza (2) line (1) that "Dark is right" (Bartleby by research) essay on "Death comparing Do no go gentle into that goodnight" and "Death be not proud". However, he urges that this reality should not lead to passive surrender.

Thomas presented a series of examples of men who, at the end of their lives, "Do not go gentle" "wise men", "good men", "wild men" and "grave men" all should rage against the dying of the light. For example, in lines "Though wise men at their end know dark is right, / Because their words had forked no lightning they / Do not go gentle into that good night.

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His resistance is not to denial the death but to resist getting what he has not yet accomplished in life because he feels that their intellectual or creative contributions were not powerful enough so they need more contributions in the future. Death is linked to an unfulfilled legacy.

Stanza (3) line (2) " Good men the last wave by" "The last wave by" suggest that these men are part of the last generation approaching death, like a wave touching on the shore.

They are "good men," meaning those who lived morally upright, responsible lives, yet they are still subject to mortality, concrete to inevitability.

"Crying how bright / Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay"

At the approach of death, they look back at their lives. They regret that their good actions were "frail" (weak, limited, fragile) and did not shine as brightly as they could have. "Green bay" suggests life's vitality, freshness, and natural energy - their deeds could have "danced" there, but they fell short of this vibrancy. This shows how mortality intensifies the sense of unfulfilled potential - people realize too late that their actions could have been greater, and more radiant than. Thomas here executed the motivations for the men nearer to death.

"Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

Despite their regrets, they refuse to surrender quietly. Death (the "dying of the light") is resisted through anger, passion, and a refusal to fade away passively. Mortality, here, becomes a provocation for defiance — even regret fuels resistance.

And learn, too late they grieved on its way" stanza [4]and line [2] focus on the unfulfilled potential of life as a key aspect of modernist sensibility, in a world where old traditions and religious consolation are no longer universally accepted, instead meaning of life has to be found in individual experience (Meddle East University) "The concept of death and Resurrection in modern poetry". The last stanza of the poem in which the speaker directly addresses his father. "And you, my father, there on the sad height, curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray". This plea transforms a simpler universal statement of mortality into a deep expression of love and Grief –an emotional bond between the living and dying. In the last line, "Rage rage against the dying Light" serves as a powerful and enduring anthem of defiance in the face of mortality. Thomas does not present a metaphysical solution, but a modernist urgency shaped by 20 Century about death. Dylan Thomas emphasizes action over acceptance in terms of death.

Thematical comparison of both poems Keats

Attitude Towards Death	Contemplative And Asthetic
Death As	Ascetism And Sublim
Speaker	Passive Dreamer
Emotional Tone	Melancholic And Wistful

Dylan Thomas

Attitude Towards Death	Urgent, Emotional And Defence
Death As	Enemy To Resist
Speaker	Active Challenger
Emotional Tone	Intense And Desparate

Keats' merging with something eternal, forgetting death, while Thomas's urge to rage despite transience reveals a literary shift from Romantic idealism to modernist existential crises.

Stylistically Analysis Keats' "Ode to Nightingale"

Keats is romantic period poet, His language is more soft, natural, and natural imaginative words which make the transition between the imagination and reality. For this, he uses different imagery and metaphors to reflect the romantic struggle. Keats uses imagery in his poem "Ode to a Nightingale" and other diverse stylistic devices to

unveil the portrayal of death idea.

Imageries

Keats uses vivid imagery appealing to multiple senses, such as colors with sounds (melodious plot of beechen green). Similarly, testing of flora and the country green Which creates the effect in the imagination like existing in real life

Line (1-3)-My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains / My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk, / Or emptied some dull opiate... ” place the reader in dream like world which show physical intoxication experiences. The “hemlock” alludes to Socrates’ death, while “opiate” suggests both medical relief and self-annihilation. Stylistically, Keats represents death as a narcotic fading away of the senses, where mortality is experienced as “numbness” rather than violence.

Similarly, "embalmed darkness", "the Lethe", and "drowsiness" evoke death as escape from mortal pain, portraying a tension between life's harshness and desire for transience.

Structure

“Ode to a Nightingale” have structured ‘of eight stanzas in a regular rhyming scheme ABABCDECDE, emphasizing formal beauty that mirrors the meditation on permanence and fleeting nature beauty.

Metaphor

Metaphors like "embalmed darkness", "Lethe," and "Drought of vintage" emphasized soft and immersive death and escape from mortal harsh pain to immortal beauty. Metaphors like “*I have been half in love with easeful Death, / Call'd him soft names in many a musèd rhyme*”. Death is metaphorically figured as a suitor, one who can be loved, wooed, and imagined as “easeful.” By styling the death as an intimate presence, Keats creates a metaphors of seduction that reveals Romantic ambivalences: mortality is both terrifying and alluring.

The metaphor of the “Nightingale” itself carries mortality. The bird is described as “*immortal Bird*” not because it lives forever, but because its song transcends time. The metaphor positions the Nightingale as a foil to human mortality; eternal song versus transient human life. By structuring mortality through metaphorical contrast Keats dramatizes humanity’s frailty against art’s endurance.

Symbolism

The **Nightingale itself** is the central symbol. Unlike humans, the bird is symbolic as an “*immortal Bird*” Its song has persisted across history, “heard by ancient kings and clowns”. Symbolically, the Nightingale represents poetic art, beauty, and the continuity of imagination, which outlasts human mortality. The bird’s immortality does not lie in its literal life but in the song that transcends time, contrasting with human fragility. **Flowers and nature** symbolize beauty and “The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves” — symbolize the ephemeral beauty of life. Flowers bloom briefly before decay, becoming natural symbols of mortality. Similarly, death itself symbolizes “love” in the line “*I have been half in love with easeful Death*” shows the intimation of a transient, seductive presence.

Tone

Tone use by Keats is often reflective, melancholic, and wistful as he contemplates the inevitability of death, in contrast with timeless beauty. In the start, as in his first stanza, the tone is melancholic where mimicking the lethargy of approaching death, pulling the reader into a state of somnolence. In the middle, the tone becomes as in the stanza "Away Away" where urgency replaces lethargy. Sudden lifted in tone embodied the desire to escape with an immortal bird. In the stanza, the tone is tender and contemplative, "I have been in love with easeful death" which is intimate and embracing the death as aesthetic. In the last stanza, the tone becomes uncertain as "Was it a vision, or a waking dream? / Fled is that music: —Do I wake or sleep? Underscored the instability of humans in the face of mortality

Diction

Diction in *Ode to a Nightingale* reinforces the centrality of mortality. Words such as "Hemlock," "Lethe," "Palsy," "Spectre-thin," "easeful Death," "buried," and "fades" repeatedly foreground death and decline. This lexical reinforces the inescapability. But he also uses juxtaposed like "melodious plot," "full-throated ease," "immortal Bird," "viewless wings of Poesy." This score the tension between the somber mortality and luminous transcendence.

Stylistics Analysis "Do No Go Gentle into That Goodnight"

Dylan Thomas's "*Do not go gentle into that good night*" is a villanelle structure whose stylistic texture intensifies its meditation on mortality. The poem employs formal structure, urgent diction, recurring refrains, vivid imagery, and tonal complexity to dramatize the inevitability of death while simultaneously calling for resistance to the death, its finality.

Form and Structure as Resistance to Death

The poem is written in the strict form of a villanelle, which consists of 19 lines with two refrains and a rigid rhyme scheme (ABA ABA ABA ABA ABA ABAA). This cyclical return of refrains mirrors the inescapable of death. Yet, the villanelle's recursive nature also performs resistance: the repeated plea "Do not go gentle into that good night" enacts a stylistic refusal to accept death passively. The tension between inevitability (form) and defiance (content) itself dramatizes the struggle against mortality.

Repetition and Refrain

The repeated refrains—"Do not go gentle into that goodnight" and "Rage Rage against the dying Light" become the motto of Resilience, defiance in the face of inevitable death, and repetition provides the emotional intensity to disclose the life cycle.

Diction

Diction and tone of "Do not go gentle into that good night": passionate, forceful and imperative like "Rage" and "Burn", emphasizing the resistance. Similarly, blind eye could blaze like meteors," enforce power and control.

"*Good night*" symbolizes death, couched in a deceptive way

"The Dying of the Light" portrays life's extinguishing flame.

By juxtaposing the comforting word *"good"* with the finality of *"night"*, Thomas destabilizes the reader's acceptance of death. The diction surrounding mortality is thus paradoxical: soft in surface (night, sleep) but fierce in implication (dying, rage).

Imagery

Thomas uses natural things like fire, light and darkness as visual and kinetic. For example, "Rage against the dying Light", "Burn", and "Rave" and the imagery like fighting, raging and "Light burning bright" reinforce the passion and resistance against death.

Symbolism of Light

"Light" in the poem is consistently symbolic of **life, consciousness, and vitality**. Its "dying" is mortality itself. Yet, the act of "Raging against" this dying transforms death into a **symbolic battlefield**. Mortality is not depicted as passive erasure but as an adversary to be confronted. The repeated imagery of light fading intensifies the stylistic drama of resistance.

Thomas uses Symbolism like "Night", "Light", which represents death, finality, while "light" symbolizes life, knowledge, and the human spirit symbolized to resist for life "till the last".

The mentioned ("wise men", "good men", "grave men") symbolized different attitudes to mortality and ageing.

Metaphor

Thomas uses the metaphor in poem "Do not go into that good night" title used as a metaphor for resisting death with passion. Thomas used a metaphor like "meteors" in line "Blind eyes could blaze like meteors" equate with burning flame, emphasizing that even someone who loses their faculty can still shine brightly and resist till the end.

The central metaphor of **"Day turning to night"** is a metaphor for mortality. Day (life) inevitably descends into night (death), yet Thomas insists the transition must be resisted by using strong verb like rave and burn etc. This metaphor frames death as a natural rhythm, but the imperative to "Not go gentle" injects unnatural rebellion against the cycle, heightening mortality's dramatic tension.

Tone in Thomas's Poem

The tone shifts between **commanding urgency**, e.g imperative like "Do not" and "Rage" and **personal**, especially in the final stanza, addressed to Thomas's dying father. Stylistically, in this poem, the oscillation reflects mortality's double presence, for example, both as an impersonal, universal force and as a deeply intimate loss. The strong verbs used in the poem, like rag, burn, and rave, create an impression of intensity for raging against death.

Stylistic comparison Keats' and Thomas's Poem

Stylistic Elemets	Keat's	Thomas
Form	Ode [Circular And Fluid]	Villenille
Imagery	Nature, Sensual, And Symbolic	Visual, Kinetic And Forceful
Diction	Elevated And Elaborated	Urging, Simple And Direct
Tone	Meditating	Imperative

Philosophical and Emotional Response in a Comparative Context

Romanticism embraces feeling vs. modernism's confrontation with the void

The contrast in both philosophical and emotional responses to mortality is rooted deeply in their respective literary and cultural contexts in both poems. "Ode to a Nightingale" is a product of the Romanticism movement, which celebrates the emotion, the individual and the power of imagination (Lots of "Essay.com"). Death in Romantic poetry:

Romantic literature often sought refuge from industrial society to the locality of nature and sublimity. Keats' poem is a perfect embodiment of this impulse. The speaker wants to escape from the "weariness, the fever and the fret" of human life in this world and to merge with the timeless beauty of the Nightingale song. "Do not go gentle into that goodnight", on the other hand, is a poem of the modern era shaped by the trauma of world wars, the rise of psychoanalysis and a growing sense of disillusionment with traditional religious and social structure. (Middle East University) "Concept of death in modern poetry" Modernists want to seek meaning in the noisy world; they focus on individual struggle to create meaning in a meaningless world (Keats). Themes reflect the modernist sense and rejection of passive acceptance of death and celebration of individual will. In his poem, the value, the life is to be found in the profound intensity of struggles, not after life unlike Keats' presented in poem "Ode to nightingale"

Convergence and Divergence

Despite their difference, "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Do not go gentle into good night" share some ground.

Both use the natural world as a backdrop for their meditation on life and death. The "Nightingale song" and the "Dying of the light" both serve as powerful symbols of the transition from life to death.

Both are fed with emotional intensity; one makes the transition aesthetic and beautifies, and the other deploys its force to confront the transition. This arose solely from the inner world they existed. Keats' poem is one of contemplation and yearning. The speaker drew the idea of a peaceful "easeful" death is a release from pain. In contrast, Thomas calls for "vigorous action" in his poem; he demands a "furious and defiant" struggle against death. The tone is petition and urgency. Both poems have some divergence in terms of conclusion. Keats concludes with a sense of ambiguity and unresolved questions called "negative capability" between waking and dreaming, while Thomas leaves no room for doubt, ending with a powerful command.

Discussion

The preceded analysis of John Keats's "*Ode to a Nightingale*" and Dylan Thomas's "*Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night*" demonstrates that mortality functions as a central thematic and stylistic concern in both Romantic and Modern poetry, though it is articulated distinctly. This discussion chapter synthesizes the thematic and stylistic insights drawn from close readings, compares the poets' approaches, and situates their treatments of death within their respective literary traditions.

Summery on Thematic of Both Poems

Keats's romantic views death with ambivalence, simultaneously as a threat to existence and a possible release into permanence, as in "Ode to the Nightingale" morality became a threshold where pain may dissolve into the nightingale's eternal song, suggesting an imaginative transcendence beyond temporal life. In contrast, Thomas speaks from the modernist sensibility shaped by the turbulence of the 20th century, not as a release but as confrontation. In "Do not go gentle into that good night", mortality is resisted, fought against, embodying the desperate affirmation of vitality. Both poems reveal how death to re-imagine

Summery on Stylistics of Both Poems

In Keats' choices, such as rich sensory imagery "The weariness, the fever, the fret" and symbolic motifs [Nightingale, Wine and Darkness] create a dreamlike earthly suffering and imagined transcendence. The "Ode" form and its fluid structure mirror the poet's oscillation between longing for release and return to impermanence. Thomas employed the villanelle form with its cyclical refrain and stick rhyming scheme to dramatize morality as a struggle. The repeated imperative "Do not go gentle" and "Rage against dying light" create an urgent resistance. Similarly, the diction of "Light" and "Night" intensifies the binary between life and death. This all emphasizes an ambivalence and aesthetic contemplation, while Thomas's defiance and existential urgency. The comparison reveals the philosophical division between

romanticism and modernism for Keats, morality is tied to beauty, imagination and possibility of impermanence through art. His idea outlasts human life, echoing the romantic belief in art's transcendence power, while Thomas rejects this transcendence. He refuses consolation and insists on vitality even in death. This aligns with modernist anxiety about the meaning in a fragmented, war-torn world, where morality is being considered as a rupture rather than a passage.

In both poems "ODE TO Nightingale" and "Do not go gentle into that good night", morality is presented abstractly. But as a deeply felt experience, for Keats, morality is aestheticized as a beauty, music and imagination. For Thomas, it is existential, defiance, urgency and rebellion.

Synthesis of findings

This discussion clear that romantic and modern treatment of death differ not merely in theme but stylistically in embodiment Keats' ambivalence towards death is communicated through imagery, symbolism and fluid structure reinforce transcendence, while Thomas's resistance to death is communicated through repetition, imperative diction and villanelle structure enforce modernistic confrontation.

Concluding remarks

The discussion reveals that Keats' and Thomas's poems the "Morality" remained as a defining poetic concern. It reveals how morality, through universal inevitability, acquired distinct imaginative and stylistic contours within different literary periods. Keats presents death, as feared dissolution and a desired escape and lyrical ambivalence to merge with esthetic transcendence". Conversely, Thomas refigured death as a site of resistance where an insistent refrain, villanelle structure, and imperative tone embody a modernist perspective in the fear of extinction, while both grapple with the same existential reality. Their approach highlights divergent cultural and philosophical orientations. Romantic idealism that seeks beauty in morality and modern defiance that transforms death into confrontation

Conclusion

This paper set out to examine two poems and the compassion of mortality in two significant literary eras: The Romantic era, John Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale", and the Modernist era, Dylan Thomas's "Do not go gentle into that good night" Using comparative and qualitative methods on both thematic and stylistics, in terms of tone, symbolism, diction, metaphor and imagery.

Comparative Thematic Findings

The analysis reveals that while both poems are pre-occupied with universal reality of death, their diverged significantly. Keats' romantic sensibility situate death as a release from worldly suffering and a gateway for transcendence, while Thomas's modernist outlook frame death as an adversary to be resist until the death.

Keats' Romantic Vision of Death

Keats portrays mortality as an escape from suffering, pain, and the fleeting nature of human existence. His tone is melancholic and wistful, marked by sensual imagery and fluid syntax. The Nightingale became a metaphor for poetic immortality, contrasting with the fragility of human life. Death, for Keats, appears peaceful and alluring, yet it exists primarily in the realm of imagination—where song and beauty endure eternally. Upon awakening from this reverie, however, Keats is confronted with the unresolved tension between mortality and immortality. Thus mortality is portrayed with melancholy, acceptance, and a longing for release. Keats in “Ode to Nightingale” presented as, an aesthetic and romantic existential, used for escaping from earthly world pains. At the same time accepted death is as a “loss”. This can be understood from the last stanza.

Thomas's Modernist Defiance

In contrast, Thomas's treatment of mortality is rooted in defiance and struggle. His villanelle form, with its strict repetition, amplifies the intensity of his plea against passivity in the face of death. Death is presented as an enemy to be fought, not embraced. His tone is urgent, forceful, and universal, urging men of all kinds—wise, grave, and old—to resist. This fierce resistance reflects the Modernist context, shaped by war, rationalism, and disillusionment with traditional religious comforts.

Together, these poems show two distinct presentations of mortality: Keats' Romantic vision of contemplative acceptance and transcendence, and Thomas's Modernist vision of resistance and confrontation.

Comparative Stylistic Findings

Keats' “Ode to a Nightingale”

Imagery: Rich sensory images convey the tension between life and death. Example: “Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies” presents death as part of inevitable decay, contrasted with the bird's timeless song.

Symbolism: The **nightingale** symbolizes immortality and continuity, standing against the poet's mortal condition.

Tone and Diction: Melancholic, meditative, and lyrical — words like “fade,” “forlorn,” “embalmed darkness” heighten the mood of sorrow and longing.

Form: Ode structure with ten stanzas in iambic pentameter, employing fluid rhythm to mirror both contemplation and emotional depth.

Metaphor: Death is metaphorically imagined as a kind of release or passage into beauty: “Now more than ever seems it rich to die, / To cease upon the midnight with no pain.”

Thomas's “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night”

Repetition & Villanelle Form: The repeated lines “Do not go gentle into that good night” and “Rage, rage against the dying of the light” create urgency and emotional insistence.

Imagery: Vivid depictions of different men's responses to death — “Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay” (grave men) illustrates resistance through fiery imagery.

Tone and Diction: Forceful, imperative, and passionate — verbs like “*rage*,” “*burn*,” “*blaze*” emphasize struggle.

Contrast: Each stanza contrasts inevitability of death with human determination, reinforcing the theme of defiance.

Personalization: The final stanza shifts to an intimate plea to his father — “*And you, my father, there on the sad height*” — grounding universal struggle in personal grief.

Comparison:

Keats employs **lyrical imagery, symbolism, and meditative tone** to present mortality as melancholy acceptance and transcendence. Keats transience, is for hope and loss also. For example, he wants to escape from painful world for hoping somethings better to be. At the same he considers death as a loss.

Thomas uses **villanelle structure, repetition, imperative diction, and fiery imagery** to present mortality as confrontation and resistance. Dylan Thomas death considers death is complete loss and emphasize on “Hope” will exist when someone live. Not after death

Stylistically, Keats’ Romantic lyricism contrasts with Thomas’s Modernist intensity, yet both transform personal grief into universal reflections on death.

Shifting Attitude from Romantic to Modernism

Taken together, the poems exemplify a shift in Western literary sensibilities: from Romanticism’s contemplative embrace of mortality as a doorway to imagination, to Modernism’s insistence on confronting death through human will-power and emotional resistance. This evolution illustrates how literary art both reflects and shapes cultural understandings of mortality.

Broader Literary and Philosophical Implication

By situating these poems in dialogue, the study highlights the broader philosophical question of how humanity interprets mortality. Keats invites readers to romanticize death as a release into imaginative permanence, whereas Thomas urges readers to resist passively surrendering to it. These divergent perspectives reveal not only the genius of both poets but also the evolving human struggle to find meaning in mortality.

Final Reflection

Ultimately, the comparison underscores that “*Ode to a Nightingale*” and “*Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night*” remain timeless works, continuing to resonate with readers across generations. Their enduring beauty lies in their ability to confront life’s most inevitable reality—death—through vastly different yet equally powerful artistic visions. In doing so, they compel us not only to reflect on mortality but also to reconsider what it truly means to live.

Contribution to Literary Scholarship

This paper contributes to scholarly discourse on poetry and mortality by offering a focused on two poems by comparative analysis with thematically and stylistically inquiry. while previous works studies often Keats and Thomas independently, this work place it in direct way exposing how literary form, emotional tone, evolve

philosophical stance evolve over time and the study enhance our understanding of how poets from different historical context have shaped challenge and redefine the death—the poetic confrontation

More ever this research bridge the two separated academic discussion of romanticism and modernism, showing that despite their differences, both movements share a profound concern with limits of human experiences and the expressive power of language.

Future Direction

Future research could expand the comparative model to include more poets like Shelley Eliot, or Auden or considered how mortality is framed by female poets like Emil Dickinson or Sylvia Plath. Further studies could also examine how mortality is portrayed in postcolonial feminist, or critical context, revealing broader culture variations in literary.

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