Death Be Not Proud By John Donne Versus Daddy By Sylvia Plath

Death is an inevitable and a natural process of living even though it is feared by most humans. For some people, death is a gateway from the world into a life of immortality and afterlife whereas some see it as the last step of existence. Death is seen to be well-written about in literature with different concepts and meanings. Death is a topic that connects both of my poems including Death be no proud by Jon Donne and Daddy by Sylvia Plath. Both poems portray the fact that death brings peace into our lives as it allows humans to overthrow their problems and wake up in a new life. Donne believes that death allows us to take a nap and wake up in afterlife whereas Plath saw death as an escape from the world. Death should be accepted by humans as it is a way to achieve a better life given that Plath trying to kill herself to relieve herself from the haunting memories of her father and husband while Donne emphasizing that after death, it will get better as there is nothing to worry about. Death is something that is inevitable and should not be feared as it allows humans to finish our life in this world and start another one in afterlife while some might see death as the last step of existence as they believe that there is no journey after death.

Death be not Proud is an Italian sonnet written by John Donne which consists of fourteen lines and encourages the reader to believe that death has no power over humans. Donne uses personification to describe how he sees death as he talks of death as it is a person who is seen as a powerless ruler which will be overthrown as humans will wake up in afterlife after their sleep. Death not be proud seems to be devotional poetry as the concept seems to be taken from the bible with the whole idea of resurrection whereas “Daddy” by Sylvia Plath is a confessional poem which allows the reader to understand her life experience after the death of her father. Plath blames her father for dying early and holds a grudge against him which later turns into hatred and anger. The death of her father leads the main emotions that are in the poem and goes on to tell the audience that she Is finally free from the memories of her father that had her trapped.

Both poems talk about the concept of death where death is an opponent to which they must defeat to be able to go to afterlife .Donne compares death to “rest” and “sleep” ensuring people that death is nothing but just a nap from which we will wake up feeling refreshed. He also emphasizes the idea that even the best of us die which connects to Plath’s Daddy as she saw her father as her God and as an idol and even, he died confirming Donne’s idea of death of the best. Another similarity between both poems is the sense of freedom after death. Donne wrote about death as a way to free yourself from the world and wake up in afterlife and even Plath saw death of herself as freedom and this is confirmed when she said, “At twenty I tried to die/And get back, back to you” (521:58-59). Plath saw her death to free herself from the world and get back to her father so she could escape from his memories. Plath mentioned freedom again when she wrote “So daddy, I’m finally through/ The black telephone’s off at the root.” (521:68-69) This informs the reader that Plath was finally able to bury her father’s memories and overcome her inner demons. After freeing herself from the burden of her father’s memories, she eventually ends up marrying a man who was quite like the male she has buried quite a while ago. She ends up being confined and burdened by the memories of her husband who later leaves her for another women. Another similarity between the poems is the sense of

superiority of one over others. Death be not proud holds humans over the others as Donne compares death to “slave to fate, chance, king, and desperate men” (35:9) which summarizes the fact that death has no will of its own and is basically controlled by someone. In Daddy, Plath’s father holds a superior position as she compares him with the Germans and the Nazi’s when she mentions “And your Aryan eye, bright blue/ Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You” (520:44-45) which also declare dominating male and his inhumane heart which didn’t quiver while leaving her behind. At some point in the poem, male characters in the poem hold no other characteristics than evil or cruel as they are even compared to vampires who she tells “have drank my blood”(521:72).In both of the poems, death is passage which leads to a better life away from everything.

Even though the poems are quite like each other, they hold their own concepts which lead towards their differences. Death is seen to be given a place in both poems. In death be not proud, death is seen as an inferior as after death humans will rise again having overthrown the concept of death whereas in Daddy, Plath’s opponent is the death of her father which holds her back in her life. According to Plath, death of her father was what ruined everything for her. Death in Daddy ended up holding a superior position as it took her father away from her. For Plath death was inhumane, heartless as it took her childhood away from her leaving her a victim of hatred and anger. Another difference is that in Death be not proud, Donne talks about having courage to accept and stand up to death as it leads to a better life which is portrayed when Donne stated “ Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so” (355:2) which just indicates not to fear death as it presents us with a better opportunity of life whereas Plath in Daddy is broken by the death of her father and does not have the courage or will power to live so she forces death upon her multiple times. Donne explains death as a movement towards afterlife whereas Plath sees death as an escape from her problems and worries. Another key difference is the importance and the position of death in our lives. Donne describes death as a small nap when he claims, “From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be, / Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,” (355:5-6). He forces the thought of death as a refreshment which will later bring us pleasure whereas Plath holds the entire blame on death. Death in Daddy is an important issue which leads to many further problems in Plath’s life. Plath describes death as a significant matter which does not bring any joy in life, it further leads to emotions like anger, hatred and sadness.

The themes help bring both poems together as they are quite like each other. Death be not proud holds a theme of powerlessness. Donne shows powerlessness of death as it holds no authority or command over humans as it will be defeated once humans wake up in afterlife. The theme of powerlessness also shines in Daddy as Plath has no control or superiority over the death of her father. Plath shows how she had no dominance over the memories of her father or over her husband which leads to her being powerless Infront of the circumstances. Plath overcomes death when she kills herself leaving the reader feeling that she has taken her passage to get to afterlife and overcome her challenges. Another thing which connects the poem Is the theme of Freedom. Donne wrote about freedom after death as a way for humans to be free from the world and wakeup where life was going to be better with no worries or problems and this is seen when Donne wrote “ One short sleep past, we wake eternally” (356:13). Donne emphasizes on the fact that this freedom was nothing to fear as good Christians, they will achieve their freedom when they wake up in afterlife. Plath saw freedom two ways including freedom from her past and then freedom from the world. Plath for so long wanted to be released from the dark memories of her father which were holding her down and suffocating her. As she finally overcomes her fears and achieves her freedom, she gets

oppressed by the memories of her husband who was quite identical to her father. This pushes Plath to the edge and forced her to see her death as the only way she could achieve freedom. Her thoughts are revealed when she enunciated “ Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I’m through” (521:80) which reveals that she saw her death as the only way for her to get rid of her problems and worries and achieve what she has wanted from a while. Courage is also hinted in both poems as Donne believed that humans should have the courage to accept death as it leads to a better life. He also emphasizes the fact that courage will help us get over fears, and overthrow inevitable things. Plath on the other hand does not find the courage to forget about her father’s death until almost the end of the poem. She also sees her marrying someone as a courageous step to stop thinking about her father but unfortunately ends up in a relationship which forces her to find the courage to force death upon her.

Death is a sensitive topic for most humans as we deeply get affected by the loss of a close one. Some see it with fear while others see it as an accomplishment. For some death brings peace offering and a way to end their complications while for others it is unwanted and seen as a terrifying thought. Death in a sense is true peace and true freedom as it allows humans to start a new journey where they are free of disappointments, pains, problems and challenges which is seen in both Daddy and Death be not proud. To summarize Donne’s thought on death, it is quite accurate to say that he believes in afterlife and the pleasures it will bring humans. He is thought to have a strong belief that death is just a small nap which will transition humans into the luxurious life after resurrection. On the other hand, Plath first saw death as an inhumane act which led to saddened emotions but as her life goes on, she finds it hard to cope with her thoughts on her father’s death and chooses death as a way to relieve herself from the pressure of her life which led her to commit suicide. Both poems show death as a doorway to a life with peace where nothing could overpower them. Death is a natural process as every beginning has an end, every start must have a finish but for some end comes a bit earlier than others. Death must not be feared as it allows us to finish one journey and start another beautiful journey.