

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The exploration of sadness and depression as prevalent themes in literature has been a subject of considerable scholarly analysis. Numerous authors have utilized their literary works as vehicles for depicting and examining the intricate emotional experiences and ramifications associated with these conditions. Poetry has long been a powerful medium for expressing emotions and delving into the complexities of the human experience. One prevalent theme that has captured the attention of poets throughout history is that of sadness and depression. The realm of literature holds a distinctive position within cultural and social contexts, serving as a conduit for the examination and comprehension of diverse facets of the human experience. Through the medium of literary works, readers gain access to the inner realms of characters and their struggles, thus facilitating empathetic engagement, introspection, and potential solace through shared experiences depicted in the text. Consequently, the exploration of sadness and depression within literary discourse contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the spectrum of human emotions and the challenges individuals confront while navigating them. However, within some poems lie ambiguities that warrant closer examination.

Depression, classified as a mood disorder, encompasses profound feelings of sadness, apathy, and indifference. Its detrimental impact extends to cognitive and behavioral aspects, impairing one's thoughts, emotions, and overall functioning. This is not to be confused with sadness. Sadness represents a universal emotion experienced by individuals to varying degrees. It typically arises in response to distressing or disappointing life events, such as bereavement, relationship dissolution, or personal setbacks. Moreover, one popular psychological theory called “Cognitive Appraisal Theory” suggests that our emotions, including sadness, are influenced by our interpretations and evaluations of events or situations. When we experience sadness, it is because we have appraised a particular event or situation as negative, harmful, or as a loss. Our cognitive appraisals involve evaluating the significance of the event, the implications it has for our goals or well-being, and our perceived ability to cope with it. These appraisals shape our emotional responses, including the experience of sadness. Sadness and depression are related in a way that sadness is one of the core symptoms of depression. In psychology, to study depression, is often to assess the presence and intensity of sadness as one of the diagnostic criteria. However, it's important to note that depression involves a range of other symptoms beyond sadness, such as feelings of hopelessness, loss of interest, changes in appetite or sleep patterns, and difficulties with concentration (Kanter et al., n.d.). Co-occurrence may also happen between sadness and

depression. In the realm of psychological research, it has been observed that individuals who encounter the depths of sadness, whether due to personal circumstances or other factors, may also fulfill the diagnostic criteria for depression, suggesting a substantial overlap between these emotional states (Szuhan et al. 2021). Extensive investigations have indicated that individuals possessing a background characterized by episodes of sadness or other mood disorders exhibit an elevated susceptibility to developing depression, signifying a potential pathway by which sadness can pave the way for the emergence of this more severe mental health condition. Moreover, it has been noted that individuals grappling with depression often undergo heightened and protracted episodes of sadness, which surpass in intensity and duration when compared to those encountered by individuals who do not experience depression, further emphasizing the interplay between these two interconnected emotional phenomena.

Authors harness their personal experiences, observations, and perceptions of sadness and depression to create literary works that resonate with readers. Employing a range of literary techniques, including evocative descriptions, introspective narratives, and poignant dialogue, writers effectively evoke and communicate these emotional states. Through their artistic endeavors, authors aim to convey the intricate complexities and nuances of sadness and depression, thereby facilitating readers' deeper comprehension of these profound psychological states.

Literary works exploring sadness and depression hold the potential to exert a profound influence on readers. They provide solace and validation to individuals grappling with similar emotional experiences, fostering a sense of shared understanding and connectedness. Moreover, these works can serve as catalysts for discourse surrounding mental health, societal attitudes, and the imperative of empathy and support for individuals contending with sadness.

Within this study, the writer intend to discover more than just what seems to be shown on the table by subverting or deconstructing conventional symbols and metaphors using the deconstruction theory by Jacques Derrida. Deconstruction analysis' fundamental objective lies in elucidating the inherent intricacies, contradictions, and instabilities within language and cognitive frameworks. According to Derrida, language functions as a system of signs and symbols that shapes our comprehension of reality, rather than operating as a transparent medium for accurately describing the universe. Deconstruction challenges the idea that meaning can be fixed and clearly defined, emphasizing the complex and shifting nature of language and representation. Deconstruction opens up new possibilities for interpretation and understanding, challenging rigid and exclusionary modes of thinking. It encourages us to recognize the multiplicity and complexity of meaning and to question the assumptions and biases that underlie our conceptual frameworks.

Derrida's deconstructive approach involves a meticulous examination of texts to unveil internal inconsistencies and paradoxes. He posited that texts possess an inherent "undecidability," whereby they cannot be definitively interpreted or reduced to a singular, fixed meaning. Deconstruction seeks to disclose these uncertainties and accentuate the various alternative interpretations within a given text. Rather than aiming to destroy or dismiss classic philosophical and literary works, deconstruction endeavors to scrutinize and challenge the assumptions and foundations upon which they are constructed. Its purpose is to expose the fissures, contradictions, and silences within these texts, dismantling their fixed meanings and opening them up to diverse interpretations. Consequently, deconstruction theory finds practical application in literary analysis, as language itself is dynamic, ambiguous, and unstable, capable of disseminating multiple meanings. Thus, it can be inferred that literature, similar to the language it is composed in, possesses dynamism, uncertainty, and instability. Poetry, in particular, embodies implicit meanings that are contingent upon the reader's engagement with language, as the nature of meaning generation is intertwined with the reader's interaction.

The issue of sadness and depression currently represents a significant concern within society. Historically, there existed a tendency to conflate sorrow and depression, viewing both as ordinary variations of emotional states. Sadness was often perceived as a transient reaction to life events

such as loss or disappointment, and it was believed to dissipate naturally over time. Conversely, depression was frequently misunderstood or overlooked as a distinct mental health condition. In the present era, continuous challenges stemming from economic uncertainty and social alienation have contributed to heightened anxiety among many individuals. Sadness, being a fleeting emotional state, commonly emerges in response to specific life events or personal losses. In contrast, depression constitutes a more severe and enduring disorder characterized by a profound sense of hopelessness, persistent sadness, and a loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities. Expressing and addressing sadness and depression can be accomplished through writing, particularly in the form of poetry, as it encapsulates meaning intended for the reader. Poetry itself cannot be dissociated from the life experiences of the poet, wherein they encounter sadness and depression. The poems titled "Richard Cory" by Edwin Arlington Robinson, "Rainy Day" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and "It was not Death, for I stood Up" by Emily Dickinson share a common theme of sadness and depression, with each poem serving as a reflection of the poet's personal experiences. These poems also convey messages that the poets wish to convey to their readers. Consequently, it can be deduced that sadness and depression represent phases of life that humans have grappled with across different eras, including the present.

The underlying issue explored in this comprehensive study delves into the intricate realm of depression and sadness experienced by a profoundly introspective author, intertwining it with the multifaceted tapestry of the surrounding environment in which said author found themselves submerged. Sadness, as a fundamental human emotion, arises as a natural response to adverse events or distressing experiences, embodying the profound sentiment of desolation specifically tied to a particular circumstance. Instances such as the loss or absence of a cherished loved one, the disintegration of a marital union, financial turmoil, or turbulent domestic complications can markedly and detrimentally influence one's emotional state. Nonetheless, this overwhelming disposition of sadness is transient, with its intensity diminishing over time or through the amelioration of the triggering tribulations that initially ignited this profound sorrow. Sadness, by nature, manifests as a fleeting sentiment lasting a mere fraction of a day or a few days at most, encapsulating a universally experienced facet of the human condition, whereby each individual encounters this poignant affliction on multiple occasions throughout their lifetime. Engaging in cathartic activities, such as shedding tears, unburdening oneself through verbal expression, or seeking solace and empathy by confiding in others, can serve as effective means to assuage the weight of this emotional burden. However, it is crucial to distinguish the ephemeral nature of sadness from the profoundly profound and protracted mental health disorder known as depression, which exerts

an unparalleled and far-reaching impact on one's daily life, seeping into every facet of existence, and warranting careful consideration and compassionate intervention. Sadness, qualified, he says, as depression, "is simply a moral failing, a moral cowardice, which is, ultimately, only situated by thought, that is, by the duty to speak well (*de bien dire*) or to find oneself again in the unconscious, in structure." And he adds: "if this cowardice, as rejection of the unconscious, ends in psychosis, there is the return in the real of what is rejected, of language; there is the manic excitation through which this return becomes fatal (Lacan 1990). Current literature with the theme of sadness and depression can be found in novels, such as the novel *Darkness Visible* by William Styron which tells the story of a boy who investigates the death of his mother who was the victim of a magic ritual in a asylum located in India.

Literature that raises a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience or a specific emotional response through language chosen and arranged for its meaning, sound, and rhythm (Nemerov 2020).

Poetry is a complex arrangement of words. To understand it, we need to use many deep approaches and interpretations. Besides, the understanding of the meaning of poetry cannot be equated. Poetry, is a literature that is writing that uses words structured and chosen for its meaning, sound, and rhythm to evoke a focused imaginative awareness of experience or a particular emotional response. The readers and writers have their own meanings to understanding meanings in poetry, there are

various approaches that can be used. One of them is understood based on the words that built the poetry, but it can be short-lived in the fields of emotive, psychological, historical, biographical, and feminist. These approaches can be easier to understand and analyze than a poetry, especially poetry that are themed on sadness and depression. Poetry is an interesting literary works to be researched such as diction, style, rhyme, and imagination. Poetry is a metrical composition; it is the art of uniting pleasure with truth by calling imagination to the help of reason; it is essence in invention (Basappa 2014). Overall, poetry is a form of writing that uses language in a distinctive and creative way to express intense experiences and emotions. It often involves the use of rhythm, sound, and imagery to create a heightened response in the reader or listener.

Poetry with the theme of sadness and depression can not be separated from the life and reality experienced by the author. The Poet thinks and feels with the spirit of human passion (Berman 1999). There are three poetry that have similar themes and written by different poets. The interesting thing about these three poetry is that the author has a different background, but the researchers will center on their work.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) was an American poet and professor who is widely regarded as one of the most popular and influential poets of his time. He was born in Portland, Maine and grew up in a family of scholars and lawyers, Longfellow's poetry is characterized by its lyricism, moralistic tone, and celebration of American history and

culture. He wrote on a wide range of subjects, including nature, love, death, and spirituality. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Rainy Day*. *The Rainy Day* is a poem that explores the themes of sadness, resilience, and hope. It suggests that even in the midst of life's struggles, we can find comfort in the knowledge that we are not alone, and that better days are always possible. The poem's lyrical language and simple, powerful imagery have made it one of Longfellow's most beloved works, and it continues to be read and studied by poetry lovers around the world. Longfellow's was the most widely read poet in America during the nineteenth century. He is a very dear figure to his family, but he has a lot of tragedy in his life. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's works is as known as "Fireside Poets" named as such because they were well-liked by families across the nation who gathered around the fire in the evenings to read aloud the poetry of these writers. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow influenced from German Romanticism to his poetry works. Throughout a forty-year period, Longfellow authored poetry and received public adoration comparable to that of modern rock stars and superstars. However, in recent years, there has been renewed interest in Longfellow's work, particularly among scholars and readers interested in American literary history.

The second is Emily Dickinson, Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) was an American poet who is widely regarded as one of the most important and original poets of the 19th century. Born in Amherst, Massachusetts, she

lived most of her life in seclusion, rarely leaving her family's home and she came from a family of puritanism. Dickinson's poetry was not widely known during her lifetime, and only a handful of her poems were published during her lifetime. However, after her death, her sister discovered a lot of poems that Dickinson had written, many of which were published posthumously and became highly influential in American literature.

Dickinson's poetry is known for its unconventional style and form, including her use of slant rhyme, unconventional punctuation, and idiosyncratic capitalization. Her poems often explore themes of death, nature, love, and spirituality, and are characterized by their emotional intensity and profound insights into the human condition. Her poetry are short, a considerable lot of them being founded on a solitary picture or image. The solid impact of Puritanism on her idea (pessimism¹ and tragic tone of her poetry). She likewise thinks about death and interminability, 1/3 of every one of her sonnets discussed these, her number one subjects are love, demise, or common excellence. In her composing she expounded on life and demise, hoping to comprehend the importance of life by understanding the significance of death. from his work entitled "*It was not Death, for I stood up*" From the poem it can be seen that, she wrote about who is severely depressed tries to comprehend themselves.

Emily Dickinson is widely recognized as one of America's greatest poets and a major figure in the history of American literature.

During her lifetime, Dickinson was not widely recognized as a poet. She lived a reclusive life in Amherst, Massachusetts, rarely venturing out or seeking publication. Only a handful of her poems were published anonymously or under pseudonyms in various newspapers and magazines.

After Emily Dickinson's death in 1886, her sister Lavinia discovered a large collection of her poems. Recognizing the significance of Emily's work, Lavinia sought to have them published. The first volume of Emily Dickinson's poetry, titled "Poems by Emily Dickinson," was published in 1890, four years after her death. However, the editor, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, made significant changes to the poems, including altering their punctuation and often adding titles. This altered the original intent and style of Dickinson's work.

Following the initial publication, subsequent editors and publishers continued to make changes to Dickinson's poems, including reordering them, adding titles, and standardizing punctuation. These editorial decisions have influenced the way her poems are commonly read and referenced today. It wasn't until the 1950s and 1960s that scholars began to restore Dickinson's original punctuation and formatting based on the manuscripts she left behind. Today, Dickinson is widely regarded as one of America's greatest and most influential poets. Her unique style, profound insights, and exploration of existential themes have made her work enduring and beloved. The original manuscripts of her poems are carefully

preserved, allowing readers to experience her poetry as closely as possible to how she intended it.

The last one was a poetry called *Richard Cory* by Edwin Arlington Robinson. Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869-1935) was an American poet who is widely regarded as one of the most important poets of the early 20th century. Born in Head Tide, Maine, Robinson grew up in a family of modest means, and his early years were marked by financial struggles and personal tragedies. Robinson's poetry is known for its clear, precise language and its exploration of themes of alienation, despair, and the struggle for personal identity. Many of his poems are set in small-town America, and depict characters who are struggling to find their place in a rapidly changing world. Robinson's work has been described as both modernist and traditional, and his influence on later poets such as Robert Frost and Wallace Stevens has been widely noted. Edwin Arlington Robinson wrote a poetry entitled "*Richard Cory*" inspired from his brother named Herman Robinson, Herman married a woman named Emma Shepherd. Herman was failed in business after being wrong in terms of investment, then experienced alcohol abuse. According to Emma Shepherd, the death of her husband Herman was seen by Emma herself as the basis of Robinson's most famous poem, *Richard Cory*. Robinson won three Pulitzer Prizes for his poetry, in 1922, 1925, and 1928, and was also elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Despite his critical success, Robinson struggled with personal demons throughout his life, including depression and alcoholism. He died in 1935 at the age of 66. Currently, *Richard Cory* is widely

regarded as one of Robinson's most important and enduring works, and it continues to be read and studied by scholars and students of American literature.

From these three poems can be concluded that everyone has their own motivation to produce a special work of poetry. This research discusses three American poets: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Emily Dickinson, and Edwin Arlington Robinson. Longfellow is known for his poetry's lyricism, moralistic tone, and celebration of American history and culture, and his work was widely popular during the 19th century. Dickinson, on the other hand, was an unconventional poet whose work was discovered and published posthumously. Her poetry explores themes of death, nature, love, and spirituality, and is known for its emotional intensity and unconventional style. Robinson, a poet of the early 20th century, is known for his exploration of themes of alienation, despair, and personal identity in the context of small-town America. His most famous work, *Richard Cory*, was inspired by personal tragedy and continues to be studied today. As a result of which the poetry they produce contains a meaning that is intended for the reader or just pours out their emotions and life into the work of poetry. A previous study explained that deconstruction theory is applied to objects in the form of novels, which examine the characters in the novel and the style of storytelling. This is certainly different from the research that the writer researched by using objects in the form of poetry because poetry contained meanings that are not absolute depending on the reader, although the theories used are the same, they will give different meanings and understandings. By delving into these themes, we can

convey the multifaceted nature of sadness and depression, thereby offering profound insights into the human experience and the broader human condition.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

The writer acknowledges the existence of certain problems related to the meanings and technical structure of the poetry being studied, specifically in relation to rhyme and rhythm. However, the writer states that the focus of their research will be on the meanings conveyed in three specific poems. By highlighting the significance of meanings in poetry, the writer implies that understanding and interpreting the messages, emotions, and themes conveyed by the poet is crucial for a comprehensive analysis. Three selected poems hold particular importance and warrant in-depth exploration. It is worth noting that the passage does not provide explicit details about the poems in question, their specific problems, or the writer's research objectives beyond examining their meanings. To gain a better understanding of the writer's intentions, it would be necessary to refer to the broader context of the study or any subsequent information available.

1. How are the ambiguous meaning of sadness and depression described in the poems?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

From the statement of the problems above, it could be stated that the study aims to:

1. Reveal how the ambiguous meaning of sadness and depression are described in the three poems.

1.4 Significance of the Study

I hope that study of literary works provides a rich source of data and inspiration for exploring a wide range of topics, from the cultural and historical context of a particular time period, to the psychological and emotional dynamics of the human experience. Poems, in particular, offer a wealth of insights into the ways in which language and metaphor can be used to convey complex ideas and emotions, making them a valuable resource for researchers in fields such as psychology, sociology, and linguistics. the significance of studying literary works, especially poems, lies in their ability to provide a deeper understanding and appreciation of the human experience, to stimulate intellectual inquiry and analysis, and to offer valuable insights and inspiration for researchers across a wide range of academic fields, especially for students of English Literature, Faculty of Humanity.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

- Deconstruction : A pair of related terms or concepts that are opposite in meaning. Binary opposition is the system of language and/or thought by which two theoretical opposites are strictly defined and set off against one another. (G. Smith 1996)
- Deconstruction : The production of meaning, and the relationship between literature and the numerous discourses that structure human experience and its histories. (Johnson 1980)
- Poetry : The spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility. (Wordsworth 1798)