



THE INFLUENCE OF EMILY DICKINSON'S LIFE
BACKGROUND ON THE CONCEPT OF DEATH
FOUND IN HER POEM ENTITLED
BECAUSE I COULD NOT STOP FOR DEATH

A final Project

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MOTTO

One of the ways to get your success is not to delay taking a decision, be aware, but don't be worried (Anand Krishna).

PAGE OF DEDICATION

This thesis dedicated to:

1. My beloved parents (Warsito & Sutarmi)
2. My beloved brother and sister (Wawan & Nuning)
3. My brother and sister in law (Zaim & Eny)

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ABSTRACT

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This final project is a literary analysis of Emily Dickinson's poem. The title of this study is *The Influence of Emily Dickinson's Life Background on the Concept of Death found in her poem entitled "Because I Could Not Stop for Death"*. This poem tells us about Emily Dickinson's perception of death. She expressed death as a pleasure journey and a nice experience.

I chose this topic since death is the natural and unavoidable event that befalls to human beings. However, people face and see death as the most terrifying event on their lives.

This final project has a general problem which is broken down into two sub problems. The general problem of this study is; Is there any influence of Emily Dickinson's life background on the concept of death found in her poem entitled "Because I Could Not Stop for Death"? The sub problems are: (1) How does her religious background give influence on her perception of death? (2) How does her past experience give contribution to her perception of death?

The method of investigation, which is used by the writer is a qualitative method. The data are taken from the lyrics of the poem and some references from several books, some information from the internet to support this study which is related to the subject matter. The data are in the form of words, phrase, sentences, and quotations. The analysis of this study uses the theory of biography and interpretation.

The result of the analysis shows that there are two factors that influence Emily Dickinson's poem; they are her religious background and her past experience. In other words the general problem of this study "Is there any influence of Emily Dickinson's life background on the concept of death found in her poem entitled "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" had been answered.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	vi
ABSTRACT.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
LIST OF APPENDIX.....	xi
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	
1.1 General Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Reasons for Choosing the Topic.....	2
1.3 Statements of the Problem.....	3
1.4 Objectives of the Report.....	3
1.5 Significance of the Study.....	4
1.6 Outline of the Study	4
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	
2.1 Calvinism.....	6
2.2 Puritanism.....	8
2.3 Transcendentalism.....	10
2.4 Concept of Death.....	13

2.4.1	Calvinism.....	14
2.4.2	Puritanism.....	14
2.4.3	Transcendentalism.....	15
2.5.1	Life Background of Emily Dickinson and her poetry.....	16
2.6	Theory of Biography and Interpretation.....	19
2.6.1	Biographical Approach.....	19
2.6.2	Interpretation.....	21
III	METHOD OF INVESTIGATION	
3.1	Research Approach.....	25
3.2	Object of the Study.....	25
3.3	Data of the Study.....	26
3.4	Types of the Data.....	26
3.5	Procedures of Collecting Data	27
IV	THE ANALYSIS	
4.1	Analysis of the Poem.....	28
4.2	The Concept of Death found in the Poem.....	35
4.3	The Influences of Emily Dickinson’s Life	38
4.3.1	Influence of Calvinism.....	38
4.3.2	Influence of Puritanism.....	39
4.3.3	Influence of Transcendentalism.....	39
4.3.4	The Contribution of Emily Dickinson’s past experience	41

V	CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS	
5.1	Conclusions.....	42
5.2	Suggestions.....	43
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	44
	APPENDIXES.....	47

LIST OF APPENDIX

Appendix	page
1. The poem.....	47
2. Emily Dickinson's picture.....	49

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Background of the Study

Everyone has a desire to improve his or her knowledge. One of the activities to increase knowledge is by reading. We will get a lot of information through reading. One of reading materials is literary work, such as poem, novel, short story and drama.

Such literary works mentioned above are the products of creative compositions of an author. Each of the writers creating a certain literary work owns a different life background. He or she may be a person from high class, middle class or even lower class.

There is a statement clarifying that the life background of an author will influence the literary work he or she composed. According to Rene Wellek and Austin Warren “the main reason of literary work given birth is the composer himself or herself namely an author. That is why the explanation of personality and the author’s life is the oldest and established method in the literary work study”. Furthermore, it is also said that biography explains and clarifies the truth composition process of literary work (Rene Wellek & Austin Warren, 1977:82).

Based on the previous explanation, the writer wants to present to the readers that there is an influence of author’s life background on the literary work he or she created.

Emily Dickinson is one of the great female poets in America in nineteenth century. She was the poet growing in a well-known and educated family. Calvinism, Transcendentalism, and Puritanism influenced the environment where she lived. Even, her family was adhering strictly to one of them called Calvinism. As long as she lived her life, the environment around her absolutely influenced her.

She spent almost the whole life of hers by writing a lot of poems. She had written many poems for the entire of her life. Most of her poems are about love, nature and death. The poem entitled “Because I Could Not Stop for Death” is one of hers, which tells us about death. By analyzing this poem, the writer wants to know whether or not there is any influence of Emily Dickinson’s life background on the concept of death found in the poem “Because I Could Not Stop for Death”.

1.2 Reason for Choosing the Topic

Emily Dickinson is a great poet with a unique life background. The environment around her, the education she got, and the books she read influenced the poems she wrote. Her poem “Because I Could Not Stop for Death” was inspired and influenced by such aspects mentioned above. She was also inspired on the concept of death from her past experience when she found the person close to her died one by one. Emily Dickinson wrote this poem and drove the readers to realize that death is not frightening just like what in their mind.

Although Emily Dickinson had not experienced death yet at that time, she tried to write down her expression dealing with death through her poem. The aim of analyzing Emily's poem is: the readers generally will understand that any feeling and happening at a certain time in someone's life can influence and inspire the process of one's creative composition.

1.3 Statements of the Problem

The general problem of this study is: "Is there any influence of Emily Dickinson's life background on the concept of death found in her poem entitled "Because I Could Not Stop for Death". In order to make this study easier to solve, it is divided into sub problems, as follows:

1. How does her religious background give influence on her perception of death?
2. How does her past experience give contribution to her perception of death?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to discover the influences of Emily Dickinson's life background on the concept of death found in her poem "Because I Could Not Stop for Death". The main objective is expanded into two sub objectives, as follows:

1. To describe whether her religious background give influence to her perception of death.

2. To describe whether her past experience give contribution to her perception of death.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in the following way; first, it may open or even change the readers view dealing with death, which is depicted as the most avoidable scaring event. Second, this study is able to drive the readers to become more aware and appreciate life before death come to us. Third, this study will give a little contribution to the readers, especially the students in enjoying, understanding and studying the literary work deeply, particularly poems. It is because certain poems commonly give some important and worthy lessons to learn. Finally, this study will motivate the students and the readers in general to do further study on other aspects.

1.6 Outline of the Report

This final project is presented in five chapters. Each chapter explains different topics. Chapter I is Introduction, which explains general background of the study, reasons for choosing the topic, statements of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and outline of the study.

Chapter II presents Review of Related Literature, which comprises the general information of Calvinism, Puritanism, and Transcendentalism, the concept of death, background of Emily Dickinson and her poems, theory of biography and literary interpretation.

Next, Chapter III describes Method of Investigation. It comprises the object of the study, type of the data and the steps of the collecting data, and the procedure of analyzing data.

Chapter IV discusses The Influences of Emily Dickinson's life background on the Concept of Death found in her poem "Because I Could Not Stop for Death". This chapter contains the analysis of the poem, the concept of death found in the poem, and the influences of Emily Dickinson's life background on the Concept of Death found in her poem. And the last chapter, Chapter V presents Conclusions and Suggestions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Before analyzing the poem based on the statements of the problem mentioned in the previous chapter, chapter II presents some references from several books and some information from internet that support this study which is related to the subject matters. This chapter is divided into several subchapters. The first three subchapters explain general information of Calvinism, Puritanism and Transcendentalism. Then, the next subchapters describes concept of death, life background of Emily Dickinson and her poetry, and theory of biographical approach and interpretation.

2.1 Calvinism

Calvinism is a system of Christian theology and an approach to Christian life and thought. *John Calvin*, a Protestant Reformer, taught it in the sixteenth century. Naturally, Calvin held many beliefs in common with all Christians; such as that God is the Creator that human beings have sinned and that Christ is the savior.

Calvinism is a group of Christian people that were held by John Calvin but not all Christians are Calvinists. Calvinism believes in predestination. Predestination means that in eternity God decided without any reference to God's foreknowledge of how individual human beings would respond, to save one set of people and to damn another. Calvin believed that God sovereignty predestines whether or not each person will be saved. Concerning the Bible, many Calvinist

claimed that their view is the only Biblical view (<http://www.mercer.edu/baptiststudies/conferences/humphreys2005/calvinism.htm>).

Calvinism has something in excess. It is supportive of humility, piety, and worship. It has considerable support in the Bible. It is compatible with Christian experience. Calvinists have made enormous contributions to the Church and to the World. Calvinism grew rapidly in America as well as in England in the 1630s after it came into Baptist Life.

In English, the five points of Calvinism can be presented by means of the acronym TULIP. They are as follows;

(1) *Total Inherited Depravity.*

According to this view, people have inherited Adam's sin. It means that sin has affected the entire life of human beings. People are not by nature inclined to love God with their whole heart, mind or strength. They are inclined to serve their own worldly interests. They choose to reject the rule of God. Thus, all people by their own faculties are unable to choose to follow God and be saved because they are unwilling to do so out of the necessity of their own nature.

(2) *Unconditional Election.*

Unconditional election means that since man is so totally depraved when he is born, Calvinism believes that it is impossible for him to serve God. Therefore; God must arbitrarily choose who will be saved.

(3) *Limited Atonement.*

Limited Atonement is the position that since God arbitrarily chose those who would be saved. For a result the death of Christ actually takes away the penalty of sins. It is because human beings cannot save themselves.

(4) *Irresistible Grace.*

The saving grace of God is effectually applied to those whom he has determined to save. God decide who will be saved. In order to be saved by God, they have to believe and have faith in Christ.

(5) *Perseverance of the Saints.*

Any person who has once been truly saved from damnation must necessarily persevere and cannot later be condemned. The word saints is used in the sense in which it is used in Bible to refer to all who are officially recognized and honored by Christian Church because her / his life was a perfect example of the way Christians should live (<http://www.bibletruths.net/Archives/BTAR097.htm>).

The five points of Calvinism do not describe particular concepts of death analyzed in this study. As a result, the concepts of death believed by Calvinists will be taken from different source and will be presented in the next subchapter.

2.2 Puritanism

According to Henry Warner Bowden, Puritanism was a loosely organized reform movement originating during the English Reformation of the 16th century. The name came from the efforts to purify *the Church of England* by those who felt that the reformation had not yet been completed. Eventually, the Puritans went

on to attempt purification of the self and society as well. In the 17th century many Puritans immigrated to the New World, where they sought to find a holy Commonwealth in *New England*. Puritanism remained the dominant cultural force in that area into the 19th century (<http://mb.soft.com/believe/txc/puritani.htm>)

Just like the other religious movements, Puritanism had some beliefs. According to Stannard, the Puritan worldview included the thirteen following beliefs; Puritans regard that the earth is positioned at the center of the universe; the world is infused with design and divine purpose. Then the beliefs that related to the existence of God, they believe that God is omniscient, and the course of every man's life is predestined, God is inscrutable.

The next beliefs are death is inevitable, and it is God's punishment for the original sin of Adam, children are born with and imbued with this original sin, they also mention that evil spirits and evil men occupy the earth, death is a reward, at least at the chosen few and upon death, the soul is released from its earth and bound world.

Then, for the four last beliefs, Stannard mentioned that the millennium is at hand, whether one takes it to mean the apocalyptic Day of Judgment or the thousand years reign of Jesus prior to the Day of Judgment, the most glorious purpose to which a Puritan can espouse is to work to "bring God's Kingdom home", some will receive eternal salvation as a gift bestowed by God, but most face eternal damnation. Hell is a place of unspeakable terrors and it is impossible to know with confidence that you are among the saved. The best you can do is to

examine your life constantly and maintain faith in your own goodness and God's determination(<http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/2003/2/03.02.01.x.html#d>).

By presenting the general concepts believed in Puritanism above, we know that some concepts related to death. In order to focus on the analysis of this study, in the other subchapter, the writer will rewrite the Puritanism concepts of death.

2.3 Transcendentalism

The Transcendentalist movement began flourishing in the early 19th century America, especially in New England. In America "transcendentalism" was mostly used in a literary form having a semireligious nature. American transcendentalism is not a religion; it is a pragmatic philosophy, a state of mind, and a form of spirituality. It is not a religion because it does not adhere to the three concepts common in major religions: a. a belief in a God; b. a belief in an afterlife; and c. a belief that this life has consequences on the next. Transcendentalism does not reject an afterlife, but its emphasis is on this life.

The formation of the movement was in 1836 with the establishment of the transcendental club of Boston, Massachusetts. The early transcendentalists included the essayist and poet *Ralph Waldo Emerson*, the feminist, social reformer, and author *Margaret Fuller*, a minister *Theodore Parker*, and the naturalist and author *Henry David Thoreau*.

The transcendentalists are usually associated with Concord, Massachusetts, but none of the members except Thoreau lived there. The town, however, became a literary colony. Emerson moved there in 1834 and later was followed by writers like Bronson Alcott, Ellery Channing, and Sanborn. Many of the transcendentalists were active in the lyceum movement in the *19th century*. Emerson gave over 100 lectures around Concord and many more from Maine to California. Practically everything he wrote was given from a lecture before being published. Thoreau gave lectures too but was never as popular as Emerson.

Although they stressed on self-reform, the transcendentalists participated in most of the social action movements of the times such as temperance, peace, universal suffrage, antisabbatarianism, and antislavery. Some members were particularly active in the latter especially Thoreau with his *Civil Disobedience* (1849), *Slavery in Massachusetts* (1854) and *A Plea for Captain John Brown* (1860). All these works were classics for the movement. Members, including Thoreau, participated actively in helping the Underground Railroad.

There are several certain concepts shared by many of transcendentalists found in <http://www.themystica.org/mystica/articles/t/transcendentalism>: transcendentalism is a form of idealism, the transcendentalist "transcends" or rises above the lower animalistic impulses of life (animal drives) and moves from the rational to a spiritual realm, the human soul is part of the over soul or universal spirit to which it and other souls return at death and therefore, every individual is to be respected because everyone has a portion of that over soul (God).

For the next concept, transcendentalists believe that this over soul or life force or God can be found everywhere - travel to holy places is, therefore, not necessary. Then, according to Ralph Waldo Emerson, God can be found in both nature and human nature. Another concept mentioned that Jesus also had part of God in himself - he was divine as everyone is divine - except in that he lived an exemplary and transcendental life and made the best use of that Power which is within each one.

It is also stated that "Miracle is monster." The miracles of the Bible are not to be regarded as important as they were to the people of the past. Miracles are all about us - the whole world is a miracle and the smallest creature is one. Transcendentalists considered that more important than a concern about the afterlife, should be a concern for this life.

Dealing with the concept of death, they said "Death is never to be feared, for at death the soul merely passes to the over soul". Furthermore, emphasis should be placed on the here and now; power is to be obtained by defying fate or predestination, which seems to work against humans, by exercising one's own spiritual and moral strength. Emphasise it on self-reliance. Hence, the emphasis is placed on a human thinking.

Finally, several concepts believed by Transcendentalists are as follows; evil is a negative - merely an absence of good. Light is more powerful than darkness because one ray of light penetrates the dark; the transcendentalists see the necessity of examples of great leaders, writers, philosophers, and others, to show what an individual can become through thinking and action; it is foolish to

worry about consistency, because what an intelligent person believes tomorrow, if he/she trusts oneself, tomorrow may be completely different from what that person thinks and believes today; next, the unity of life and universe must be realized. There is a relationship between all things; one must have faith in intuition, for no church or creed can communicate truth and reform must not be emphasized - true reform comes from within.

Based on the Transcendentalism beliefs, we can see that Transcendentalists have their own beliefs of death. There are only a few beliefs related to death. Furthermore, the concepts of death according to this religious movement will be explained in the following subchapter. The concepts are explored from other sources.

2.4 Concept of Death

As human beings, our existence in this earth is not eternal. We are to be human creatures. We start our life from baby, kids, teenagers, and adults then go to old age and finally we must die. Death is a certain and natural thing that we have to face although we want to avoid it. No matter how old we are, sometimes death comes to us unpredictably and unavoidably.

Most people are afraid of death, but it is useless. The death of someone who is mostly close to us whom we love very much will influence us. It will make us sad. It is natural and human. Our soul takes our body as their home, but when time comes, the soul will leave our body behind; and without our soul, our body is useless.

People's fear for death is just because they do not know how to be dead or to have the feeling of death, where they will go and what will happen to them. They imagine that death is painful, and full of sorrow. Because of their fear of death, they try to follow and take a religion or faith they believed to make them comfortable in facing death. They know more about death through religion. Different religion or faith will make different explanations about death. One believes that death is the end of life, but others believe that there is an afterlife or a life after death. It depends on whose beliefs we trust in.

From the general description about death above, there are some views of death according to the three religious movements, which are well known during Emily Dickinson's life that time she wrote her poems.

2.4.1 Calvinism

Calvinism is the religious movement that believes that a life exists after death where our individual souls will continue to have new experiences. In Calvinist belief most souls will be banished to Hell, which is defined as continued separation from God. A few souls will be rewarded after death with an eternal existence in Heaven of communion with God (<http://www.uuofscv.org/injustice-of-universalism.htm>).

2.4.2 Puritanism

In the previous information of Puritanism presented above, there are some general beliefs of Puritanism. This study will present the only beliefs, which are

related to death, such as; Death is inevitable, Death is a reward, and upon death, the soul is released from its earth and bound world (<http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/2003/2/03.02.01.x.html#d>).

2.4.3 Transcendentalism

The view of death according to transcendentalist of transcendentalism: On “A Week” an optimistic book in its treatment of Death written by Thoreau, he presents death not as an end but as part of larger natural and universal processes. Death not only results in the reabsorbing of the body into the earth and into nature, but also in the transition of nature and the human soul into the infinity of the universe. The ‘seed’ imagery throughout the book suggests constant regeneration even as individual lives pass away. The decay of Indian bones provides rich soil in which the food of later men may be grown. Thoreau's discussion of friendship in "Wednesday" ends with the confident assertion that "Friends have no place in the graveyard." A friend who dies will live on in the memories and hearts of those left behind.

The transcendentalists said that death is never to be feared, for at death the soul merely passes to the over soul, but the orthodox tried to get people to feel bad about death and said that death was the wages of sin.

One product of Emerson's conviction that we can find God directly in nature was a profound optimism. God is good, and God works through nature. Therefore, even the natural events that seem most tragic --pestilence, death,

disaster--can be explained on a spiritual level. Death is simply a part of the cycle of life (<http://www.concordma.com/magazine/sepoct00/transcendentalism.htm>).

2.5 Life Background of Emily Dickinson and her Poetry

Emily Elizabeth Dickinson was born on December 10, 1830 in Amherst, Massachusetts. She was the second daughter of Edward and Emily Norcross Dickinson. Emily, Austin (her older brother) and her younger sister Lavinia were nurtured in a quiet, and reserved family headed by their authoritative father. Being rooted in the *puritanical Massachusetts* of the 1800's, the Dickinson children were raised in the Christian tradition, and they were expected to take up their father's religious beliefs and values without argument. (<http://www.edwardsly.com/dickinson.htm>).

The Dickinson family was prominent in Amherst. Emily had a good education and attended the Amherst Academy (Morris, et al; 1953: 231). After that, she left for the South Hadley Female Seminary. She was almost fun with her close friends, but she could be shy, silent, or even depreciating in the presence of strangers. Although she was successful at college, she returned after only one year at the seminary in 1848 to Amherst where she began her life of seclusion (<http://www.edwardsly.com/dickinson.htm>).

Although Emily never married, she had several significant relationships with a selected few, (Charles Wadsworth, Samuel Bowles, J.G. Holland and

Thomas Wentworth Higginson) (<http://poetry.poetrycom/poets/45/bio/>). The Reverend Charles Wadsworth had a powerful effect on Emily's life and her poetry. He became her "dearest earthly friend". He influenced Emily dealing with *orthodox Calvinism, transcendentalist* writings and easy assumptions of *Emerson*. It is widely believed that Emily had a great love with Reverend. (<http://www.cyberessays.com/English/324.htm>). In Emily's entire life, she took trips to Philadelphia (due to eye problems), Washington, and Boston. During this time, her early twenties, she began to write poetry seriously.

When Emily sought out somebody for advice about anonymous publication, and on April 15, 1862, she found Thomas Wentworth Higginson, an eminent literary man. Although Higginson advised Dickinson against publishing her poetry, he did see the creative originality in her poetry. Only seven of her poems were published in her lifetime - five of them in the Springfield Republican (Jay Martin, 1967: 286).

The year of greatest stress was 1862, when distance and danger threatened Emily's friends - Samuel Bowles, in Europe for his health; Charles Wadsworth, who had moved to a new pastorate at the Calvary Church in San Francisco; and T.W. Higginson, serving as an officer in the Union Army. Emily also had persistent eye trouble in 1864. Then, in 1865 she spent several months in Cambridge, Mass. for treatment. Once back in Amherst and after the late 1860s she never left the boundaries of the family's property (http://www.gale.com/free_resources/poets/io/dickinson_e.htm).

The later years of Dickinson's life were primarily spent in mourning because of several deaths within the time frame of a few years. Emily's father died in 1874, Samuel Bowles died in 1878, J.G. Holland died in 1881, her nephew Gilbert died in 1883, and both Charles Wadsworth and Emily's mother died in 1882. Over those few years, many of the most influential and precious friendships of Emily's passed away, and that gave way to the more concentrated obsession with death in her poetry. On June 14, 1884 Emily's obsessions and poetic speculations started to come to a stop when she suffered the first attack of her terminal illness. Throughout the year of 1885, Emily was confined to bed in her family's house where she had lived her entire life, and on May 15, 1886 Emily took her last breath at the age of 56. At that moment the world lost one of its most talented and insightful poets. Emily left behind nearly 2,000 poems (<http://www.edwardslys.com/dickinson.htm>).

As a result of Emily Dickinson's life of solitude, she was able to focus on her world. Emily was original and innovative in her poetry, most often drawing on the Bible, classical mythology, and Shakespeare for allusions and references. Many of her poems were not completed and written on scraps of paper, such as old grocery lists. Eventually when her poetry was published, editors took it upon themselves to group them into classes - Friends, Nature, Love, and Death. Fortunately in 1955, Thomas Johnson published Dickinson's poems in their original formats, thus displaying the creative genius and peculiarity of her poetry (<http://www.americanpoems.com/poets/emilydickinson/>).

2.6 Theory of Biography and Interpretation

2.6.1 Biographical Approach

According to Hudson, in Frederick's book, he said that to read and understand literature means to know and understand the author's social, cultural, and intellectual background (Juliana, 1988:4). While, Sylvan Barnet and William E. Cam state that the really good biographies enable us to return to the literary texts with a deeper understanding of how they came to be what they are (Sylvan Barnet and William E. Cam, 2003:113).

From the description above, it means that biography also plays a role in a literary work including poetry. Some people who like reading, understanding, analyzing, and interpreting literary works need to know and understand the author's life background if they feel that analyzing a literary work particularly poetry is not enough just by reading and analyzing it. As a result, the biography of the author or the poet becomes one of the sources of the appreciated literary work.

Furthermore, there is a statement of biographical approach according to Christopher Russel Reaske. In his book, he mentions that in biographical approach we examine the poem in relation to what is known about poet's life (Reaske, 1966:54).

Often a particular poem is subject to this kind of analysis simply by nature of the material. Emily Dickinson, as most people know, spent most of her life inside the privacy of her family home in Amherst, Massachusetts. She had a lonely and quiet childhood and life; her years were filled with many hours spent in

absolute isolation. This kind of information about the poets' life helps us to understand her poetry.

Our familiarity with Emily Dickinson 's private world and with her lifelong tendency to reflect in poetry the self- chosen isolation of her soul, her inmost self, enables us to read this poem with a thorough understanding. In other words, biography can often be of great use. But we must not assume that this is always true; if a particular poem seems to have absolutely no personal element behind it, we will not understand it any better knowing the biography of the poet; if the poem's statement is very clear, we may not wish to investigate the poet's biography. The hardest decision is deciding when to use and when to avoid the biographical implications (Reaske, 1966:54-55). The references above show that we may use biographical approach or biographical criticism for our deeper understanding of a certain literary work.

There are two definitions of biographical criticism found from different sources, as follows; firstly, a biographical criticism is an approach that begins with the simple but central insight that literature is written by actual people and that an understanding of an author's life can help readers to more thoroughly comprehend the work. Hence, it often affords a practical method by which readers can better understand a text. However, a biographical critic must be careful not to take the biographical facts of a writer's life too far in criticizing the works of that writer: the biographical critic "focuses on explicating the literary work by using the insight provided by knowledge of the author's life. Biographical data should

amplify the meaning of the text, not drawn it out with irrelevant material” (<http://home.olemiss.edu/~egjbp/200/litcrit.html>).

Secondly, biographical criticism is an approach to literature, which suggests that knowledge of the author’s life experiences can aid in the understanding of his or her work. While biographical information can sometimes complicate one’s interpretation of a work, and some formalist critics (such as the New Critics) neglect the use of the author’s biography as a tool for textual interpretation, learning about the life of the author can often enrich a reader’s appreciation for that author’s work (http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/literature/bedlit/glossary_a.htm).

2.6.2 Interpretation

Reading and understanding literary works, particularly poetry are different from reading and understanding texts in general. A poem is written using words, which are sometimes difficult to understand by the readers. One word can be defined into two or more meanings. We are able to get the deep understanding more easily by interpreting the poem we read. Aminuddin quotes from Ricoeur that in literary work study “interpretation is a particular case of understanding” (Aminudin, ---:71). It means that interpretation, as a particular event in the literary work, an understanding process is explained to exist between explanation and comprehension processes.

While, according to Jan Van Luxemburg, Mieke Bal, and Willem G. Weststeijn, interpretation can be divided into six; first, interpretation has an

opinion as a starting point, so the text itself has been clear; second, interpretation tries to arrange the historical meaning; third, the new hermeneutic interpretation especially represented by Gadamer tries to combine the past and the present; fourth, interpretation is often done by pretending that we can show the meaning of the text meaning; fifth, interpretation has a basic point on a certain problem, for example the psychology or sociology. So it is a part of interpretation; it is not the truth that is to be shown but legacy of a certain interpretation on a certain limited field; and sixth, interpretation is to show the possibilities which exist on the text, so that the readers themselves can interpret it. (Mieke Bal, et al; 1982:63-64).

Furthermore, Mieke Bal and friends give some clues related to the steps in interpreting a poem. When an interpreter wants to present an expression related to the meaning of a proper or legal text, so she/he might divide it into four stages. But sometimes they are overlapping in practice. The four stages are, as follows: the first is decide the primary directed meaning, the second is explain the implicit meaning, the third is determine the theme, and the last is explain symbolic meaning (Mieke Bal, et al, 1982:65).

While, according to Seymour Chatman, he explains the three points of making interpretation: the first is we should make as rich an interpretation as possible; every detailed meaning, every connotation, and every inference that adds to the whole poem should be considered, and if we remain unclear about a point we should be honest with ourselves about the unclear and keep our minds open for future possibilities.

Second, we should not put more into the poem than what has been really there. Interpreting poetry is neither personal reminiscence nor a kind of spiritual work out. It is the reception of a more or less public message. Poem is constantly evoking our own personal experiences. Poems on love or friendship, our conflict or death cannot help but make us think about our own loves and friendships, or inevitability of death. In interpreting poems, the mind must be open, free and a little playful. Open discussions about what a poem means can very well lead to valuable insight about the interpretational process itself.

Third, one should finally remember that to decide upon an interpretation does not mean to wrap the poem in a neat package and stick it away in dead-storage. Poems are not for classifying; they are organisms full of life, a life that grows with us as we grow. A great poem is a repository of many meanings, which need time and contemplation to uncover (Seymour Chatman, 1968:83-85).

Emily Dickinson who lived in society at the time religious movements were strong was practically greatly influenced by the three theologies, Calvinism, Puritanism, and Transcendentalism. From the biography it was apparent that her concept of death was also influenced by both her religious life and the death of people she loved. As a poet she wrote a poem that showed her reaction toward deaths that happened to her.

In the following chapter, the writer tries to discuss the poem inspired by deaths of her beloved people. By using a biographical criticism and interpretation, the writer uses the approaches in analyzing the poem, by explaining the symbolic

meaning proposed by Mieke Bal and in an open, free and playful manners proposed by Seymour Chatman.

CHAPTER III

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

This study uses qualitative method in analysing the poem. This chapter will present the procedure of investigation in detail. For further information, it describes the following points;

3.1 Research Approach

The writer has mentioned above that this study uses a qualitative method, which means that the data are analysed qualitatively. Meanwhile, the definition of qualitative method according to Dr. D. Edi Subroto is the research or performance method to the problem which is not designed or planned by using statistical procedures (Edi Subroto, 1992:5).

Whereas, Dra. H. Mimi Martini mentioned that qualitative research is a research, which has characteristics that the data are explained in a normal situation or it has natural setting without changing it in the form of symbols or numeral (Mimi Martini, 1994: 174). Both of the description above clarify that the qualitative research does not use enumeration.

3.2 Object of the Study

According to Dra. H. Mimi Martini, the object of a qualitative research is the entire of human life fields / aspects, they are human and everything which is influenced by human. The object revealed the condition as the truth, it may be

related to life aspect, called economy, laws, administration and religion (Mimi Martini, 1994:175). The object of the study is the poem entitled “Because I Could Not Stop for Death” written by Emily Dickinson. This study discusses the influences of Emily life’s background on her poem as the main subject.

3.3 Data of the Study

The data in this study include the poem, the general information of religious movement, and life background of Emily Dickinson. The data are taken based on the explanation of Dr. D Edi Subroto that a researcher takes a note carefully and precisely in the form of words, sentences, text, pictures/ photograph, daily note, memorandum, and video type (Edi Subroto,1992:7).

3.4 Types of Data

This study uses the data to be classified into two categories, the first and the secondary data. The primary data are the subject analysed namely; the poem “Because I Could Not Stop for Death”. The secondary data are textbook, Internet websites related to the study, such as; general information of Calvinism, Puritanism, and transcendentalism, the life background of Emily Dickinson, theory of interpretation, and theory of biographical approach.

3.5 Procedures of Collecting Data

In doing this study, there are several steps the writer takes to analyse data. The first step is reading the poem repeatedly to know and understand the meaning. The writer tries to get the deep meaning of the poem. The next step is finding the concept of death found in the poem. Later, the writer observes the life background of the poet. The result of the observation from the life background will explain the influences of the poet's life to the poem being analysed.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSES

The analysis of the study will focus on the influence of Emily Dickinson's life background on the concept of death found in her poem. As the writer has presented in the first chapter, the sub problems would be two factors which influenced her perception of death. The first is her religious background and the second is her past experience. In this analysis, we can find some concepts of death from the poem. Then the concepts will be analyzed to see their similarity with the concepts of death found in the three religious movements (Calvinism, Puritanism, and Transcendentalism) described in the previous chapter. The influence or the contribution of the poet's past experience to her poem will be discussed as well.

4.1 Analysis of the Poem

The poem written by Emily Dickinson entitled "Because I could not Stop for Death" contains six stanzas. In every stanza there are four lines. In order to know the concept of death, the analysis of each stanza is presented below:

(1) *The first stanza:*

Because I could not stop for Death----
He kindly stopped for me----
The Carriage held but Ourselves
And Immortality.

In the first stanza, the poem begins with “*Because I could not stop for death*”. The first line also becomes the title of the poem because this poem does not have any title. This line shows to the readers that the speaker or the poet wants to tell about death. The object of the poem is death. She (Emily Dickinson/the poet/the speaker) stated that she has no ability to stop or to avoid the death’s arrival.

The second line “*He kindly stopped for me*”, he refers to death. It means that the speaker personified death as a man, to be exact as a gentleman as it is stated by Fiwer found in one source from internet. The arrival of the kind gentleman is something that is unexpected. The speaker regards the gentleman as really kind so that he is willing to pick up the speaker. It means that the death is very kind to give a reward to the speaker.

Next, “*The Carriage held but Ourselves*” shows that actually, the gentleman asks the speaker to ride a carriage (a vehicle which usually has four wheels pulled by horse or horses for carrying people). The carriage is ridden by the speaker, the death and the immortality as it is in the final line of the first stanza “*And Immortality*” (immortality means the state of being immortal). This line shows that the carriage will take them into a journey which the speaker does not know where the destination of the journey is. She just knows that the journey will be a new experience for her.

(2) The second stanza:

*We slowly drove---He knew no haste
And I had put away*

*My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility----*

The second stanza, “*We slowly drove---He knew no haste*” means that *Death* / gentleman drives her so well (unhurriedly), so smoothly and gently that it suggests pleasantness as it is mentioned by Iqbal (21120) found in one source from internet. It means that the ride makes the speaker very happy. There is no fear for the speaker. She enjoys the journey without any worry and suspicion.

Then, in line one and two of the second stanza “*And I had put away (line 1), My labor and my leisure too, (line 2)*”, for the pleasantness that *Death* has given to her, she appreciates him by leaving her labour (hard work) means worldly activities and putting away her leisure (her freedom/ free time from work or other activities/spare time).

Even, the speaker still emphasizes on the last line of the second stanza “*For His Civility*” that *death/the gentleman* has a polite behaviour for treating the speaker. This stanza pointed that *death* treated her as an honoured woman.

(3) The third stanza:

*We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess—in the Ring---
We passed the Field of Gazing Grain
We passed the Setting Sun---*

In stanza three, it begins with “*We passed the School, where Children strove*”. This line tells the readers about the stage of life that is childhood. The

speaker recalls and wants to tell about her childhood stage, she often tries hard for a long time to obtain or achieve something). Next, “*At Recess—in the Ring*” means the break between classes at school in the ring, the place to hold competition. She spends her childhood competing for what she wants.

The second line “*We passed the Field of Gazing Grain*”, presents the second stage of the speaker’s life when she grows into youth or maturity. The drive symbolizes her life cycle from birth to death. She progresses from childhood to maturity (the “gazing grain” is ripe).

At the end of this stanza, it is written “*We passed the Setting Sun*”, the setting sun presents the final stage of life. It is the stage where the time comes to the end of life. The speaker mentions dying implicitly in this line by using the phrase the “setting sun”.

The word “passed” is repeated four times in stanzas three and four. They are “passing” by children and grains, both are the cycles of life. They are “passing” out of time into eternity. The sun passes them as the sun does everyone who is buried. According to Fiwier, symbolically, this stanza presents three stages of life: firstly, childhood, youth or maturity, and the last stage is the dying stage represented by the setting sun. The speaker feels that the journey of life is short.

(4) The fourth stanza:

Or rather --- He passed Us---
The Dews drew quivering and chill---

For only Gossamer, my Gown---
 My Tippet--- only Tulle---

In stanza four, line one “*Or rather --- He passed Us*” the speaker presents and tells the existence of the death (he refers to the death). *He passed Us* means that the death is the last part of the speaker stage of life. This line is still related to the previous stanza. It is connected with the phrase of “*setting sun*” (dying/death).

In the second line of stanza four “*The Dews drew quivering and chill*”. The speaker changes her topics (stage of life) to the new topic. On the way of her journey, she feels that the journey becomes so far and the weather becomes so cool. Her body becomes quivering and *chilling* by the *dews* (tiny drops of water that is formed on cool surfaces outdoors when the air is damp, especially at night). (Usually, a death body is cold; it means that the speaker is dying).

Furthermore, in the next line “*For only Gossamer, my Gown*” lines three and four in this stanza illustrates the reason of her coldness. The speaker is worn in a light *Gown*, it is Gossamer. Gossamer is any soft light delicate material. ‘*My Tippet--- only Tulle*’, this line also mentions the reason of the speaker’s coldness.

Besides wearing gossamer, she also wears *Tulle* (it is a kind of soft fine silk or nylon material like net especially used for veils or dresses) as her *Tippet* (a long piece of fur worn by a woman round the neck and shoulders with the end hanging down in front). In the 19th century, when people died they were usually attired with this kind of dresses. Because the speaker does not prepare her journey, she is just dressed such clothes.

From this stanza, the writer can interpret that when death comes, we will bring nothing. In other words we will leave our worldly materials. After death, we are only a soul which has a spiritual quality (*For only Gossamer, my Gown---My Tippet--- only Tulle---*).

(5) The fifth stanza:

*We paused before a house that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground---
The Roof was scarcely visible—
The Cornice --- in the Ground---*

Stanza five shows that they have arrived in the journey's destination, "*We paused before a house that seemed*". At the end of the journey the poem's speaker arrived at a new place. The speaker describes the place which looks like a house (represented by the word *house*). But, the house mentioned is not like a common house.

She furthermore describes the characteristics of the house on the next three lines. The second line "*A Swelling of the Ground*", the third line "*The Roof was scarcely visible*", and the last line "*The Cornice --- in the Ground*". The speaker sees that the house is *A Swelling of the Ground*, it means that the ground becomes larger around. It has a *Roof* but it is *scarcely visible*. If it is a real house, the roof will be clearly visible. But, the speaker says that it is invisible, it means that the roof is underground. Then the last characteristic is that it has a *Cornice* (an ornamental border, for example; in stone which is round at the top of the outside walls of a building) but it is beneath the Ground.

Based on the descriptions above, the speaker tells the readers about a graveyard as it is described by Iqbal (21120). It means that the speaker or the poet is buried down the earth. A death body will be buried down the earth. The speaker explains that the graveyard becomes the new house where she will spend her time after the journey ends.

In this stanza, she does not mention the existence of the gentleman or the death. It means that she is alone. Nobody accompanies her. As the death comes to people, they have to face it by themselves.

(6) The sixth stanza:

*Since then --- 'tis Centuries--- and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses Heads
Were toward eternity.*

In the final stanza, from the first line until the fourth line, the speaker does not mention about the death or the gentleman as she mentions in the previous stanzas anymore. Line one and two “*Since then --- 'tis Centuries--- and yet*” and “*Feels shorter than the Day*” means that after the journey finishes or ends or after death leaves, the speaker feels that the time runs quickly. It is not like when she is still alive in the world.

The next two lines “*I first surmised the Horses Heads*” and “*Were toward eternity*”, firstly, when the speaker begins her journey, she does not know where the destination is. She only surmised that she does a common journey. Actually, at the end of her journey she realizes that her journey is toward eternity (endless life

after death/ time without end). In this stanza, the speaker has moved into death (*toward eternity*) where she will stay in a better place far away.

This poem has a mixed tone. It means that Dickinson or the poet changes the tone in each of the stanzas. In the first three stanzas, the tone is joyous and happy. The stanzas mentioned above show that Emily Dickinson feels so happy and pleased with her journey. Then, in the fourth stanza, the tone becomes contemplative; it shows that the poet is confused about her existence in the world. She is still doubtful whether she is still alive or she has already died. Finally, in the last two stanzas, the tone used by Emily Dickinson is a sad tone. The poet perceives the reality and becomes calm when she realizes her destiny that is death.

4.2 The Concept of Death found in the Poem

After the poem is analyzed, there are some concepts of death found in the poem. The concepts are as follows;

(1) Death is unavoidable and unexpected

Death naturally happens to everyone. It is a natural fact of life. Everyone will face death although they still do not want to die. Death cannot be stopped by anyone; although we try hard to stop it. We can do nothing about the fact of death. Because death happens to us we have to prepare ourselves facing death. We must not ignore and deny it; but always remember it as long as we live that someday death will come unexpectedly.

(2) Death is not frightening

Most people in the world are afraid of death, but actually “death” is not to be afraid of. When death comes we do not have to be afraid of it. Death is a natural process. It is mentioned in <http://www.stephen-knapp.com> that death is not an enemy; it can be like a friend who is very generous, kind, helpful and gentle to us. Death will deliver us gently through the journey of immortality.

Death is believed to give freedom, joyful, peace and happiness to the dead. So do not be afraid of death. Believe our faith, develop our spiritual quality, never deny the existence of death as long as our life, and believe that God will take care of and protect us. Those are the ways to dispel our fear for death.

(3) Death is not the end of life

Death appears as the start or the beginning of eternity. Stephen Knapp stated that after death, we are going to a bigger and beautiful home (<http://www.biblehelp.org/feardeath.htm>). It means that when we die we are going to a better place far away that is believed to be the place full of joy. It is a bigger and more beautiful place for us than the one on earth.

The process of death will take us to the way where we become closer to attain freedom from this worldly place and from the dictates of the senses, the service of the body, and the impression in the mind. Although we have died, our spirit or our soul remains alive; it can go anywhere, to the material or spiritual world.

(4) Death stops our worldly desires

Whenever death comes to us, there will be a complete and final separation of the soul from our body. Our body will have no soul or spirit anymore. Without it, our body is useless. We cannot do anything in the world after we die. We have to leave our worldly desires. All of our willingness to fulfill our needs such as material and love will end because of death.

People in the world have done many things in their life. After they die, there is nothing to do anymore. Whereas, while we are still alive, everything we have accumulated in this life, have to be left behind. All activities, all relationship, all material possessions, even our talents and skills which are temporary in nature are left behind.

(5) Death is the learning process to come closer to what we really are

As it is explained by Stephen Knapp that while we live in this material world, death helps alleviate and release us from our accumulated attachment positions, and superficial desires (<http://www.biblehelp.org/feardeath.htm>). It means that death shows us what is not important, and makes us give up those things which can no longer help, or which keeps us on understanding what we really are. Even though we are here to experience the innumerable aspects of material existence, if we are completely engrossed with the earthly affairs, we will never understand our spiritual identity.

Furthermore Stephen Knapp mentioned that thus, death is an assistant, which forces us to come to grip with what is temporary, and to give it up. It is another step in the learning process to come closer to what we really are.

- (6) Death is a reward.

“Death is a reward” as it is believed by Puritanism and Calvinism means that many people regard death as the most miserable thing in their life. But actually it is not true. If we believe and trust God, we have to feel that when death comes to us it means that God loves us. Our soul is one of the souls which is chosen by God to go to a better and eternal place.

4.3 The Influences of Emily Dickinson’s Life

In the previous sub chapter, the analysis of the poem has been presented. Next, the similarity of the concepts of death found with the general belief of death found in the three religious movements; Calvinism, Puritanism, and Transcendentalism will be analyzed. Besides that, the past experience of Emily Dickinson which gives contribution to the perception/ concepts of death on her poem will also be discussed.

4.3.1 Influence of Calvinism

As it is mentioned in one source (<http://www.uuofscv.org/injustice-of-universalism.htm>), Calvinism believes that *after death, our individual souls continue to have new experiences*. This belief is also found in Emily Dickinson’s

concepts. She describes death as a journey which she feels that it will bring her to a new experience. Then finally, her journey's destination is a better place far away.

The second belief of Calvinism is; a few souls will be rewarded after death (<http://www.uuofscv.org/injustice.of.universalism.htm>). This belief is similar to Emily's perception that death gives her pleasure and happiness; it means that when death comes to her, she feels that her soul is rewarded by God as a chosen soul.

4.3.2 Influence of Puritanism

Puritanism believes that death is inevitable and death is a reward (<http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/2003/2/03.02.01.x.html#d>).

Inevitable means that it is impossible to avoid or it is certain to happen. In Emily Dickinson's poem, the writer also found that there is a concept of death that death can not be avoided or it is unavoidable. She was picked up by death without any preparation. While death is a reward, it has similar concept with Calvinism's concept of death. In Emily's perception, death treats her as an honorable or respected woman; it means that it is a reward for her from God.

4.3.3 Influence of Transcendentalism

According to Henry David Thoreau, a greatly famous transcendentalist and a writer, in his book entitled "A Week"; he stated that death is not as an end but as a part of larger natural and universal processes. While Ralph Waldo

Emerson, a Transcendentalist and a writer too, he mentioned that death is simply a part of the cycles of life. Both concepts of death above have a similar general view about death that death is a natural fact of life or a stage of our existence in this world.

In Emily Dickinson's poem, the concept that sees death naturally happens to everyone is also found. It is a natural fact of life. She mentions three stages of life; childhood, adulthood or maturity and the last is death (*the setting sun*). It means that everyone or even every living creature in this world at a certain time will face death. In her poem, it also shows that when she is in the final stage of the journey, she arrives alone in a place which is like a house. There is nobody accompanying her there.

Furthermore, transcendentalists said that death is never to be feared (<http://www.concordma.com/magazine/sepoct00/transcendentalism.htm>). This concept is also found in the poem "Because I Could Not Stop for Death". In the first and second stanza of this poem, Emily presents her happiness. She is taken away in the carriage and death takes her into a journey. The death gives her happiness and joy and not misery/sadness. This poem tells the readers that death is not frightening just like what they imagine it. But the other way around, she wants to show the joyful moment of the journey toward eternity. She describes death as a pleasant event.

4.4.4 The Contribution of Emily Dickinson's Past Experience

When a poet writes a poem, it may be influenced by his / her feeling and situation. In line with this sentence, in Emily Dickinson's biography, it is told that since 1874 she spent her life in mourning because of several deaths. Emily's father died in 1874, Samuel Bowles died in 1878, J.G. Holland died in 1881, her nephew Gilbert died in 1883, and both Charles Wadsworth and Emily's mother died in 1882. For over those few years, many of the most influential and precious friendships of Emily's passed away (<http://www.edwardslys.com/dickinson.htm>). The situation that happened to her absolutely influenced her feeling. Then, it may give her a way to the more concentrated obsession with death in her poetry.

As human in general, the death of the people close to her certainly makes her depressed and sad. She must have thought that she could not stop death that took away the people she loved. Death easily took them away unexpectedly. To express her depression, she wrote poems with the theme of death. In her poem, she believes that the people who have died will go to a better, an eternal place and find many pleasures.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Conclusions

From the analysis in the previous chapter, the writer can conclude that there is influence of Emily Dickinson's life background on the concept of death found in her poem "Because I Could Not Stop for Death". The poem is influenced by the poet's life background as follows;

Her religious background includes Calvinism, Puritanism and Transcendentalism give influence to her perception of death. First, Calvinism believes that after death, our individual souls continue to have new experiences and a few souls will be rewarded after death. Second, Puritanism believes that death is inevitable and it is a reward. Last, Transcendentalism believes that death is not an end but it is a part of larger natural or universal process, it is a cycle of life and it is never to be feared.

Next, her past experience giving contribution to her perception of death is the deaths of her dear and close relatives (her father, mother, and nephew) and the deaths of her dear and close friends (Samuel Bowles, J.G. Holland, and Charles Wadsworth).

5.2 Suggestions

The result of this study is expected to give lessons to the readers so that they do not have to fear death because death is not frightening just like what they think. The writer thus suggests the best thing to do is that we have to trust God, try to do every thing the best we can do. We must believe that what we do as long as we live our life will be worthy and paid off after we die.

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APPENDIX :***Because I Could Not Stop For Death***

*Because I could not stop for Death
 He kindly stopped for me----
 The Carriage held but Ourselves
 And Immortality.*

*We slowly drove---He knew no haste
 And I had put away
 My labor and my leisure too,
 For His Civility----*

*We passed the School, where Children strove
 At Recess—in the Ring---
 We passed the Field of Gazing Grain
 We passed the Setting Sun---*

*Or rather --- He passed Us---
 The Dews drew quivering and chill---
 For only Gossamer, my Gown---
 My Tippet--- only Tulle---*

*We paused before a house that seemed
 A Swelling of the Ground---
 The Roof was scarcely visible—
 The Cornice --- in the Ground---*

*Since then ---'tis Centuries--- and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses Heads
Were toward eternity.*

Source: The American Experience Poetry (1968)



Emily Dickinson
(1830-1886)

*"If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire ever can warm me,
I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken
off, I know that is poetry. These are the only ways I know it. Is there any other
way?"*

