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Emily Dickinson: An August Love on Earth

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Resumen

Esta tesis examina tres de los cuarenta libros manuscritos, o cuadernillos, de la poeta Emily Dickinson (1830-1886). La forma, el contenido y la disposición de estos tres cuadernillos 11, 12 y 13 (los cuales incluyen un total de 66 poemas y fueron compilados durante 1863), confirman la presencia de un amante cuya figura supuso una fuerza inspiradora durante este período. Leer estos tres cuadernillos consecutivamente nos ayuda a entender la historia y proceso emocional de Dickinson; los poemas incluidos reflejan un amor que es obvio en el cuadernillo 11, puesto que la sitúa en un estado de expectativa constante. Este amor comienza a disminuir en el cuadernillo 12, situación que puede constatarse a través de poemas como J293 F292 "I got so I could hear his name—," y J296 F301"One Year ago – jots what?" entre otros, hasta que es reemplazado, ya en el cuadernillo 13, por un notable número de poemas que tratan fenómenos naturales como la desaparición y la pérdida, sugiriendo una forma de renuncia. El cuadernillo 13 también contiene poemas que han sido identificados como textos que anuncian claramente la separación de Dickinson de su amante y el comienzo de una nueva fase en su vida emocional y poética.

Los poemas estudiados en esta tesis estarán enmarcados dentro del contexto específico que crean los cuadernillos como constructo poético, especialmente en la lectura detallada que realizo de los Cuadernillos 11, 12 y 13 en los Capítulos 2, 3 y 4. Pero cada uno de los poemas será también interpretado individualmente a lo largo de este estudio. El objetivo general de esta tesis es contribuir a ampliar nuestro conocimiento sobre la vida y arte de Emily Dickinson, y sugerir que la lectura de sus poemas puede ser apreciada mediante el uso de ambos métodos: dentro del contexto específico de los cuadernillos o individualmente. El objetivo específico de esta tesis es mostrar que tres de los cuadernillos de Dickinson, concretamente el 11, 12 y 13, compilados durante los cinco años de su mayor productividad literaria, muestran un punto de inflexión en el pensamiento y la vida de Dickinson, articulado en torno a un amor que la hizo voltear sus pensamientos hacia adentro y a adquirir una visión y, en consecuencia,

a desarrollar una conectividad sensacional con la naturaleza, conectividad que había comenzado mucho antes pero que ahora adquiere una mayor complejidad y madurez.

Estos tres cuadernillos suponen el mismo tipo de agrupación de poemas que los cuadernillos anteriores y posteriores. En este sentido me gustaría enfatizar que, después de estudiar estos tres fascículos y algunos otros durante los últimos años, me he inclinado a tener una visión más abierta sobre ellos. Junto con Ralph W. Franklin y con Paul S. Derrick, dos prominentes eruditos de los manuscritos de Dickinson, opino que la disposición de los poemas en los Cuadernillos es una organización aleatoria. Aun así, leer los poemas dentro del contexto de los Cuadernillos parece reflejar la historia emocional de Dickinson a través de algunos de los poemas que incluye en ellos, lo que a su vez agrega lógica y validez a mis argumentos. Después de todo, esta es una opción que Dickinson misma nos ha dado como amantes de la poesía.

En el Capítulo 1, "La Belle of Amherst," realizo una aproximación biográfica acercándome al perfil humano de Emily Dickinson, así como a las generalidades de su legado poético. Este capitulo contiene la sección "Delineating the 'Myth'," que constituye una introducción a Dickinson y revisa la forma en que ha sido mitificada debido a la opacidad que presentan la mayoría de sus cartas y poemas cuando son analizados individualmente. En esta sección se argumenta que no hay nada morboso, en realidad, en el retiro que Dickinson realiza, alejándose voluntariamente de la sociedad para centrarse en su obra. Tanto sus cartas como sus poemas demuestran que leyó abundantemente durante este período de tiempo, que mantuvo una amistad muy enriquecedora con Thomas Wentworth Higginson, y que perdió interés al ver su poesía impresa en algún momento de su vida.

La sección "Contracted Controversy" explora algunos de los controvertidos debates que los últimos 130 años de critica literaria han generado en torno a la obra de Emily Dickinson. Aquí, discuto tres puntos que nos ayudan a

entender las causas de estas variadas controversias; estos son el impresionante crecimiento de Dickinson a pesar de las dificultades, sus búsquedas ilimitadas y las razones por las cuales la religión tuvo que quedar atrás. Por otro lado, la sección "Hoarding Hunger" está dedicada al proceso de construcción y publicación de los cuadernillos, así como a los problemas que surgieron antes y después de la muerte de Dickinson, mientras que "My Letter to the World" es un breve viaje al mundo de las cartas de Emily Dickinson. Esta introducción a la vida y al arte de Dickinson es esencial para ayudarnos a comprender de un modo complejo los tres cuadernillos (11, 12 y 13) que forman el foco de los Capítulos 2, 3 y 4.

Esta tesis analiza poemas cuya compresión podría resultar imposible debido a un sinfín de factores epigramáticos, métricos o prosódicos, entre otros. Resulta fundamental no abandonar o rendirse ante la opacidad de los poemas de Emily Dickinson puesto que estos son a menudo esquivos, escurridizos, no solamente difíciles. Hay que tener en cuenta que el lector ha de aceptar la persistencia del misterio, un misterio que se intensifica conforme avanzamos en la lectura de esta tesis. Percibiremos que este aumento del misterio, ese crecimiento esotérico y cambiante, es la propia experiencia del texto: el amor de Emily Dickinson existe, pero la identidad del amante no se revela. Cabe decir que Dickinson era consciente de la complejidad de sus poemas. La poeta emplea una técnica deliberada que desarrolló para proteger su privacidad mientras dice la verdad de forma indirecta, como ella misma explica en el poema (J1129-Fr1263). Este poema revela que la verdad puede ser perjudicial o impactante para los lectores contemporáneos y, por lo tanto, requiere una revelación gradual. Una vez que la verdad ha sido revelada, el espíritu se sentirá mejor, tal y como sugiere la explicación del fenómeno del relámpago para reconfortar a los "Niños asustados." Aquellos que no buscan la verdad lentamente, y no la encuentran "gradualmente," serán como "ciegos" y fallarán en la compresión.

Dicho esto, añado que no estoy interesado en discutir la identidad del amante o amantes de la poeta. No es que sea un asunto sin importancia, sino que

Dickinson no lo revela. Aunque entiendo, como explicó Frederick J. Pohl, hace 83 años, que "la historia del amor de Dickinson en sí misma presenta un drama inspirador de renunciación; que solo cuando la historia de amor es revelada, las mentes curiosas pueden superar su preocupación por ella" (468-469), creo que mantener este misterio y no descubrir esa identidad en realidad es parte de la esencia de sus cuadernillos y también respeta la intimidad que tan celosamente guardaba la poeta.

Mis conclusiones se basan en datos concretos extraídos de sus textos. En el Capitulo 2, centrado en el Cuadernillo 11, podemos identificar 8 poemas de amor (incluidos los poemas 4 y 8 sobre la pérdida, y los poemas 9 y 17 sobre el dolor, el deseo y la exclusión) los cuales sugieren que Emily Dickinson había estado anhelando un amor que no podía alcanzar. El Capitulo 3, que analiza el Cuadernillo 12, contiene 4 poemas consecutivos de grave decadencia emocional como consecuencia de la separación de su amante. Por esta razón Dickinson en el Cuadernillo 12 está mucho más integrada directamente con la naturaleza en 5 poemas, tratando enérgicamente de dar forma a su propia identidad espiritual y más dedicada a su búsqueda poética, dirigiendo sus pensamientos al paso del tiempo, la vida y la muerte, el misterio de la puesta del sol, el valor de la vida y el cielo. Finalmente, en el Capitulo 4, que aborda el Cuadernillo 13, Dickinson habla de la pérdida directamente sólo dos veces en dos poemas. Ese amor que era obvio en el Cuadernillo 11 se ha convertido en un símbolo relacionado con un reino espiritual en el Cuadernillo 13. Su tono se ha vuelto tanto vindicativo como personalizado en el poema 6, y la única forma de que sobreviva es inmortalizándolo en el poema 15. Por un momento, ella se muestra distante pero sigue anhelando al amante.

Una consideración del trabajo crítico que se ha hecho sobre estos cuadernillos hasta la fecha, además de contextualizar estos poemas dentro del campo más amplio de poemas y cartas de Dickinson y de mi propio análisis de los textos, me lleva a concluir que este amor es parte integral de la exploración que Dickinson realizó en torno a diferentes aspectos de la compleja existencia de los

seres humanos: aspectos como el comportamiento de la naturaleza y la muerte, la vida futura, la inmortalidad y temas que, como veremos, ocupan un lugar destacado a lo largo de esta disertación. Además, las investigaciones de Dickinson sobre estos temas fueron el resultado de conflictos religiosos internos que comenzaron a una edad temprana, cuando ella, en la escuela, comenzó una rebelión al negarse a declarar a Jesús Cristo como su único salvador. En esta rebelión ella acabó encontrándose sola (L 35). Fue, como dice Alfred Gelpi, la mente calvinista volviéndose contra sí misma y su creadora (41). También es permisible, y es importante agregar, que la complejidad de la religión y su impacto sobre la mentalidad de los individuos de alguna manera hace que uno sea reacio al cambio o la innovación, y dado que Dickinson le dio la espalda a la religión y no mantuvo los valores tradicionales de su comunidad, su amor por las personas, la naturaleza y la poesía creció de manera exponencial.

La metodología crítica empleada en esta tesis combina crítica biográfica con el examen detallado de la poesía de Emily Dickinson a través de una lente sociohistórica. Para lograr esto, es necesario analizar los poemas en el contexto del cuadernillo en el que están enmarcados. En mi revisión literaria, he confiado en el libro de Eleanor Elson Heginbotham Reading the Fascicles of Emily Dickinson: Dwelling in Possibilities, y también en la observación de Robert Weisbuch de que cualquier combinación de los poemas individuales puede proporcionar una sensación de coherencia (1975: xiii). También estoy inclinado a considerar una visión más abierta sobre la importancia de los patrones que los cuadernillos van trazando consciente o inconscientemente; como el que se discutirá en el cuadernillo 13 en conexión al amor perdido de Dickinson, reflejado en la manifestación y desaparición de ciertos fenómenos naturales.

Sin embargo, es importante tener en cuenta también que los cuadernillos difieren entre sí. Heginbotham dice que cada uno "tiene su propio carácter, su propia huella digital, su propio torbellino de clusters de imágenes y su propio movimiento" (47). Mi objetivo principal aquí es demostrar que los cuadernillos

11, 12 y 13 están conectados en el sentido de que forman algunas corrientes históricas significativas en la vida emocional de Dickinson.

Dicho esto, y para los propósitos de esta disertación, interpreto los poemas que tratan sobre la naturaleza y los fenómenos naturales (como el fin del día y el paso del tiempo) como intentos de Dickinson de naturalizar la pérdida, específicamente la pérdida del amor, como Sharon Cameron propone en Choosing Not Choosing. Hay una secuencia de poemas de fenómenos naturales localizados en el fascículo 13 que tratan precisamente sobre la pérdida. El significado de estos poemas y lo que implican y por qué fueron organizados de esta manera serán discutidos más adelante. Para Dickinson, un poema sobre la puesta del sol podría ser una observación real que ella había experimentado, pero también puede tener un significado profundo que parte de un ejercicio de pensamiento que le da la virtud de mostrar la vida tal como es, en lugar de escapar hacia un mundo gobernado por la incertidumbre. Esto también se aplica a los poemas que tratan sobre el estoicismo, el escepticismo y los estados infelices, así como aquellos que tratan la victoria y la valentía. También confío en la observación de Cameron de que hay una fuerte conectividad entre ciertos poemas que forman la clave para la separación del amante y el tema del amor en el que se basa la discusión de estos tres cuadernillos. Para fortalecer mis argumentos, he confiado en las observaciones de William H. Shurr de que dos poemas específicos en el fascículo 13 (You see I cannot see—your lifetime—" y "There came a Day—at Summer's full—" que tratan la separación de Dickinson del hombre que amaba suponen el comienzo de una nueva fase en la vida emocional de Dickinson codificada a través de los cuadernillos; que ambos poemas expresan "una sensación paralizante de su soledad, el resultado de la separación que tuvo lugar inmediatamente después de la ceremonia de matrimonio privada" (73). Esto es esencial porque esta nueva fase a la que se refiere Shurr forma la base de mi tesis, esto a pesar de que Shurr identifica al amante como el reverendo Charles Wadsworth, mientras que yo dejo abierta esa posibilidad.

También he confiado en los argumentos esenciales de Richard Benson Sewall, cuyas formas convincentes de negar la naturaleza reclusiva de Dickinson han permanecido sólidas desde la publicación de su libro The Life of Emily Dickinson (1974). También sus razonados argumentos para posicionar a hombres como Benjamin Fraklin Newton, Samuel Bowles y el reverendo Charles Wadsworth en relación a la vida emocional de la poeta.

La lectura de los cuadernillos de Dickinson supone una tarea difícil, especialmente cuando esto implica leer más de un cuadernillo consecutivamente. Esto se debe a la variedad de temas que exploran así como a la expansiva filosofía artística que estos temas pueden ofrecer en un solo cuadernillo. En este sentido me gustaría resaltar que estos tres cuadernillos no tratan sólo el tema del amor, sino que abordan otras cuestiones como la pérdida, la desaparición, la eternidad y el paso del tiempo, cuestiones que pueden estar conectadas con este amor perdido, tal y como voy indicando y justificando en los Capítulos 2, 3 y 4. Estos tres cuadernillos están además íntimamente conectados con el resto de cuadernillos tanto en temática como en disposición. Ruth Miller, en The Poetry of Emily Dickinson, explica que "tan parecidos son los fascículos que parece posible trazar uno y obtener un modelo para todos" y los describe como "poemas de enlace largo" (249). Es posible, también, encontrar alguna historia emocional a través de algunos de los poemas que Dickinson incluye en ellos, y este es exactamente el objetivo principal de esta disertación.

Para mayor claridad, me gustaría exponer algunos de los elementos más importantes de mi metodología general. Primero, he optado por tratar los poemas de Dickinson en el contexto de los cuadernillos no porque se haya convertido en la norma para los estudiosos, sino por una razón inevitable basada en el hecho de que muchos de sus poemas son sutiles cuando se leen individualmente y parecen explorar las complejidades de un evento o la aparición de un tema que a veces no se puede captar por completo. Un solo poema en el contexto del cuadernillo puede verse influido por lo que sigue o precede. Tomemos, a modo de ilustración, el duodécimo poema en el fascículo 11 donde Jesucristo llama persistentemente a

una puerta vieja y cerrada con llave. Este poema puede leerse, inicialmente, como Jesucristo tratando de reconducir a una persona con dudas religiosas al camino correcto. Pero también se puede leer como un poema de amor, con el hablante, que adopta la forma de Cristo, llamando persistentemente al corazón del amante distante.

Segundo, esta tesis no pasa de la teoría a la práctica; el compendio de esta disertación es ineluctablemente la poesía de la propia Dickinson. A veces, el lector puede considerar que mis lecturas de poemas son exhaustivas, pero he hecho un esfuerzo para incluir, siempre que sea posible, todos los significados posibles, y este es un intento personal de mostrar que la integridad de los poemas, e incluso sus suspensiones de significado, deben ser preservadas. Esencialmente, entonces, parto de los poemas para llegar a un juicio o decisión alcanzada a través del razonamiento. Además, aunque trato de limitar mi compromiso con los extensos estudios académicos sobre la poesía de Dickinson a notas a pie de página, a veces incluyo estos debates en el texto principal cuando conviene dialogar con las fuentes críticas de un modo más explícito.

Tercero, aunque afirmo que estos tres cuadernillos reflejan la historia emocional de Dickinson a través de algunos de los poemas que incluye en ellos, ni intento, ni siquiera reconozco un orden cronológico definido. Los lectores que están familiarizados con la obra de Emily Dickinson saben que la fecha de creación de sus poemas siempre ha sido un asunto problemático. La fecha de composición de los poemas puede no ser la misma que la fecha de construcción de los cuadernillos. ¿Por qué elegí estos tres fascículos? La razón principal, como se dijo anteriormente, es porque muestran un estado de amor en forma de obsesión y expectativa (en el cuadernillo 11), que gradualmente disminuye hasta convertirse en una forma de renuncia en el cuadernillo 13. Por lo tanto, para mí, parecen poseer un carácter filosófico definido que revela un modelo coherente de pensamiento y, al mismo tiempo, decir algo concreto sobre los procesos mentales y las costumbres de Dickinson.

Finalmente, me gustaría indicar que esta tesis también aborda las formas a través de las que tanto la poesía como el personaje de Dickinson podrían haber sido moldeados específicamente por la religión, el género y la cultura de su época, las cuales pueden entenderse a menudo como una rebelión contra las presiones sociales, y principalmente porque estos enfoques son altamente reveladores por derecho propio. Para esto he confiado en el volumen Emily Dickinson's Approving God: Divine Design and the Problem of Suffering de Patrick J. Keane, y he aplicado estas cuestiones más amplias de manera específica a cada uno de los poemas analizados en los Cuadernillos 11, 12 y 13.

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Introduction

1.

Written in the 19th century, Emily Dickinson's poetry was ahead of its time. Only a few of her poems were published during her lifetime, and she hid nearly 1800 poems.[1] It is as though while they occupied that unknown, unsettling, and obscure space, they were floating on standby, like processes in time, like objects in space, navigating the path to eternity. It is a poetry that had survived being pressurized and warped by factors and certain circumstances that threatened to scupper it; while Dickinson lived, and also after she died. It is both a sign of the future and a memory of a past that was more resilient than anything the future of poetry is likely to give birth to.

The child-like lady who "Took Rainbows, as the common way, / And empty skies / The Eccentricity—" (J257-Fr317) lived an extraordinary life that is reflected in her poems, yet only those who possess the "privilege to scrutinize" (J629-Fr593) can see it. She deliberately created a heterogeneous poetry that accommodates every aspect of her life within the symbolic frames of her art: her arduous quests and thoughts and philosophy and emotions. But her thinking was not ordinary in many aspects, and that is why her poems were rejected and subjected to alterations while she lived, and even after her death her early editors continued to do the same thing with them in order to fit them in an era where only

[1] Only a handful of Dickinson's poems were published during her lifetime, and most of these were published without her consent. Ralph W. Franklin lists the dates and titles of the published poems in his *Variorum edition,* 1998. The editing of Emily Dickinson's poems and the actions of her early editors left her manuscripts in a state of confusion and disorganization; the poems were subsequently published according to editorial selection and personal preference. It was not until Franklin's *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson* (1981) that the forty fascicles were published as a sequence. Here, Franklin returned the fascicles to their original form, presenting the reader with a new reading experience. He introduced a study that examines Dickinson's poetry within the fascicle context, while in previous publications the unit of sense rested primarily within an individual poem. He relied on the original manuscripts to establish the internal sequence of the fascicles and revised Mabel Todd's sequence of numbers and made some changes to Johnson's *Variorum* dates.

the conventional could fit. It is not until Thomas H. Johnson's 3 volumes and Ralph W. Franklin's 3 volumes in the 20th century that Dickinson's poems could finally earn a respected place in the history of literature.[2]

Dickinson was aware of the complexity of her poems. It is a deliberate technique that she developed in order to protect her privacy while telling the truth in a slant way, as she says in (J1129-Fr1263). The truth could be hurtful or impactful for the contemporary readers, and thus requires gradual revelation. Once it has been grasped, the spirit will be "ease [d]," as an explanation of the "Lightning" phenomenom conforts frightened "Children." Those who do not search for the truth slowly, and do not find it "gradually," may be "blind," and thus fail to grasp the entire point of the poem.

However, the truth is not always there and at times cannot be found even gradually when reading Dickinson's poems individually. On many occasions, the reader is summoned to a place where Dickinson's genius enjoyed the finest of poetic navigations; summoned to an area where the reader feels that the truth is almost there, and then oceans of possibilities leave him or her absorbed.

This thesis examines three of the forty fascicles of Emily Dickinson, which were posthumously discovered in her room. The form, content and arrangement of these three fascicles 11, 12 & 13 (a total of 66 poems), show a period of time in the poet's life when she wrote about a large number of themes that deal with loss, the passage of time, and disappearance of natural phenomena, which, along with the existence of 19 poems about love located within these three fascicles in question (8 poems in fascicle 11; 8 in fascicle 12; 3 in fascicle 13), whether coincidentally or intentionally, form some significant historical currents in Dickinson's emotional life. It is, to be sure, of crucial importance to keep in mind that these three fascicles are the same kind of groupings of poems as in the

[2] I have called this period after Dickinson's death "Hoarding Hunger" and will be discussed in Chapter 2.

previous and later fascicles, but they reflect Dickinson's emotional history through some of the poems she includes in them.

I do not claim that these three fascicles show a love that does not exist in previous or later fascicles; fascicle 9, for example, contains at least six poems that can be read as love poems or poems about Dickinson's love. The reason I have chosen these three fascicles is obvious: nineteen love poems is a big number. But there is another important reason based on the fact that this love, which can be read as idolatrous in fascicles 11 and 12 (16 poems in total), will gradually diminish in fascicle 13 (becoming only 3 poems), which explains the existence of other themes instead such as disappearance and loss. It is important to know that the themes of disappearance and loss are present in Dickinson's work from the beginning but in these three fascicles they are connected to the theme of love.

These three fascicles are a testament to Dickinson's involvement with a lover in the same period when they were constructed. The date of composition of the poems may not be the same as the date of the construction of the fascicles, but a close examination of these three fascicles in question leads me to conclude that there is a strong reason behind arranging them the way Dickinson did. These 19 love poems distributed to three fascicles form a sequence that stretches and goes beyond the borders of an individual fascicle, forming an interesting pattern.

Among others, John Cody's *After Great Pain* emphasizes the role of the unfathomable "Master" to whom Dickinson dedicated at least three letters. But Cody's psychoanalytical study labels Dickinson as psychotic due to her disappointment in love with Master, which in turn triggered her burst of creative energy between 1858 and 1863. Cody's arguments are objectively good, and I do agree that Dickinson's love had indeed triggered her burst of creative energy, and this dissertation proves that; not only love for a man, or men, or women, but love for life, earth, poetry and the people she had corresponded with. But I believe that Dickinson should not be labelled as psychotic. She was simply a genius in love who had the time and space and circumstances to grow as a poet. This is one

reason why I have included a detailed introduction to Dickinson's life and art before delving into the large amount of poems, which are further examined in Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

That said I would like to add that I am not here concerned to argue the identity of the lover [s]. Not that it is an unimportant matter, but because Dickinson drew a veil over it. I understand, though, as Frederick J. Pohl stressed, some 83 years ago, that "the life of Emily Dickinson, even aside from her poetry, is as important as any ever lived by any woman; that the story of her love in itself presents an inspiring drama of renunciation; that only when the love story is clear beyond a reasonable doubt can curious minds overcome their preoccupation with it" (468-469).

A consideration of the critical work that has been done on these poems to date, in addition to contextualizing these poems within the larger field of Dickinson's poems and letters, leads me to conclude that this love is integral to an understanding of Dickinson's exploration of different aspects of the complex existence of human beings, such as the behaviour of both nature and death, afterlife, immortality; themes that, as we shall see, feature prominently throughout this dissertation. Also, it might be permissible to say that Dickinson's investigations of these themes were the result of inner religious conflicts, which started at an early age, when she, at school, started a rebellion when she refused to declare Christ as her only saviour—a rebellion where she stood "alone" (L 35).[3] It was, as Alfred Gelpi puts it in *The Mind of the Poet*, "the Calvinist mind turning against itself and its maker" (41). It is also permissible, and important to add, that the complexity of religion and its impact upon the mentality of individuals does somehow make one averse to change or innovation, and since Dickinson turned

[3] Emily Dickinson wrote over a thousand letters to family, friends, and people she did not know. She loved to communicate with people she could not see, and her letters reveal her habits of mind, passions, anxieties, and hints as to her most heartfelt concerns. Throughout this thesis, the letter L followed by a number will indicate the number of the letters according to the most complete edition of Dickinson's letters, which is Thomas H. Johnson's.

her back on religion and did not hold the traditional values of her community, her love for people, nature and poetry grew.

She believed that good poetry could be immortal, but humans? Perhaps. These words written to John L. Graves in late April 1856 do not form a credo, but a possibility left open, with some doubt that has been cast upon it: "[t] o live, and die, and mount again in triumphant body, and next time, try the upper air—is no schoolboy's theme" (L 328). At times death is simply a dark end, like a "crawl [ing]" creature that invades the "Village" (J291-Fr327). Yet, however esoteric or decisive this may sound, there are poems where she seems to be inclined toward a more open view:

> And bye and bye—a Change—
> Called Heaven—
> Rapt neighborhoods of men—
> Just finding out—what puzzled us
> Without the lexicon! (J246-Fr264) [4]

Throughout this thesis, I will argue that this kind of unpredictability and changeful moods regarding death, afterlife, and the issue of boundaries is a result of endless epistemology and not a negative obsession or fear of them. Again, it is important, if we are to understand Dickinson's poetry, which was unknown during most of the Victorian era and just began to be published during the end of it, to know that she was bound to feel a deep opposition against the underlying principles of the society she lived in. Her task was to achieve realism, to express the truth about life as it faced her. She transformed her thinking into original production of almost 1800 poems and over 1100 letters. To achieve this, there

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[4] The letter J followed by a number will indicate the classification of Emily Dickinson's poems according to Thomas H Johnson's *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Including Variant Readings Critically Compared with All Known Manuscripts,* 3 vols; Fr followed by a number will indicate the classification of the poems according to R. W. Franklin's *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Variorum Edition,* 3 vols.

In 1955, Thomas Johnson made Dickinson's work available as a whole through his *Complete Poems.* The step was huge, but it was Ralph J. Franklin who restored and published Dickinson's original manuscripts in 1981 and introduced a new strand in Dickinson's studies.

were certain sacrifices that she had to make. She did not marry and withdrew from community and selected "her own Society—" (J303-Fr409).

Throughout this thesis we will see that Dickinson's poetry depicts death and nature as two absolute forces that govern this world under the eye of an absent "Power behind" the "Cloud," who may or may not "care" (J293-Fr292).

The poems here will be studied within the fascicles' context, especially in my reading of the fascicles. But also they will be studied individually throughout my discussions. The general aim of this thesis is to help to enlighten the knowledge about the life and work of Emily Dickinson, and suggest that her poems can be appreciated by using both methods. The specific aim of this thesis is to show that three of Dickinson's fascicles, 11, 12, and 13, constructed during the five years of her greatest productivity, show a turning point in Dickinson's thought and life, represented in an unrequited love which made her turn her thoughts inwards and thus gain insight and, consequently, develop a sensational connectivity with nature that had started long ago.

I insist, these three fascicles are the same kind of groupings of poems as in the previous and later fascicles. After studying these three fascicles and others for the past few years I have become inclined to a more open view about them. Along with Ralph W. Franklin and with Paul S. Derrick, two prominent scholars of Dickinson's manuscripts, I believe that the arrangement of the fascicles was an aleatory organization. Still, reading the poems within the fascicles context seems to reflect Dickinson's emotional history through some of the poems she includes in them, which in turn adds logic and validity to my arguments.[5] After all, this is an option that Dickinson herself has given us as poetry lovers.

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[5] Franklin does not deny the existence of an artistic motive behind the construction of the fascicles, yet he says that the fascicles were a result of Dickinson's periodic "cleaning up" in an attempt to avoid "multiplicity and confusion" (1981: x), and that she gathered the poems randomly and bound them regardless of order (1998: 21).

This thesis is based on the absolute conviction that poetry is a living thing and therefore any attempt to dissect it for the sake of digging into its maker's private affairs is apt to result in its death. I would like to make it clear that it is not my intention to, as Dickinson would say, "Split the Lark" for the sake of discovering the "Music" (J861-Fr905). Here, I have striven for authenticity. We now have, as a result of Franklin's dedication, Dickinson's poems as she wrote them, so the poems here will remain intact. I have made it my primary aim to spell out Dickinson's fascicles 11, 12, and 13, and find out more about her love as well as the philosophical insights and emotions that result from the loss of this love and the way she uses natural phenomena to express it. The three fascicles are only one way of approaching Emily Dickinson's poetry. To understand her poetry, one should read it as a whole.

Dickinson transcribed the poems into fascicles 11, 12, and 13 when a new sense of order took hold in the construction of the fascicles after stopping the binding in the period referred to as her time of personal crisis during 1861-1862.[6] Although the date of composition is not necessarily the date of transcription, Franklin confirms that during this period that "the copying and the binding were now close to each other" (1998, 25).

Equally, I would like to underline that Dickinson's letters are tantamount to her poems, and here they will be valued as indispensable in approaching her poetry.

Many poems have been identified as love poems and their positioning within three consecutive fascicles confirms Dickinson's involvement with a lover, an involvement that complicated the poet's life. In fascicle 11 she is covetuos and idolatrous, in a state of expectancy. In fascicle 12 she distances herself, to's and

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[6] In April 1862, Dickinson wrote to Higginson, "I had a terror—since September— / I could tell none—and so I sing, / As the Boy does by the Burrying Ground— / Because I am afraid—" (L 261). In her 1987 biography, Cynthia Griffin Wolff insists that Dickinson's crisis was physical, an affliction of the eyes that threatened blindness.

fro's, until this love ceases to exist in fascicle 13, becoming an insignia of a far off psychic joy, a farrago of fact and myth, absorbed into the unsettling idea of the passage of time and change. An analysis of the three fascicles will be included in these Chapters with a conclusion after each.

2.

Reading the poems within the fascicle context one realizes that there are two events in Dickinson's life that can be considered as climacteric, or as she had named them, "Sacramental": the moment of love and the moment of death. [7] The first 10 fascicles of the forty are dominated by a variety of themes and ideas and motifs; deep investigations, fear, unfulfilled desires, the first steps in her poetic pursuit, etc.[8] Fascicle 11 shows an idolatrous love with a tone almost calm, yet not entirely positive, as if she is in expectation, until something goes wrong and she is deserted and starts to distance herself in fascicle 12. Finally, this love ceases to exist in fascicle 13, becoming an insignia of a far off psychic joy, a farrago of fact and myth, absorbed into the unsettling idea of loss.

This is not necessarily the love of her life or her first or last one, but its presence within these three particular fascicles shows that it is the love with which the status of wife and queen came to existence, growing and leaving youth behind. There is a sense of ecstasy in the poems but it is by no means an indication of a saccharine love story; it is, again, a state of expectancy. After love comes death, and then they both become interwoven with immortality, passage of time, change. In any case, considering the tremendous impact that love can have, one may speculate that because her love was unattainable, death's osmosis has deepened

[7] The term "Fascicles" is probably the most famous among Dickinson's readers. There are forty fascicles, each one an exquisitely complex booklet of poems (ranging in number between a minimum of eleven in fascicle 16 and a maximum of twenty-nine in fascicle 9), selected and arranged by Dickinson herself.

[8] In order to acquire a thorough understanding of Dickinson's early fascicles, one should study them completely with regard to every detail. Generally, though, there is an implication of the existence of love, but not as bitterly shown as in fascicles 11, 12, and 13, to be sure.

and become reality itself; and as it governed her life, so it governed her poetic language. As we shall see in the fascicles, her past is seldom visited, because as often as not she turns instead towards the time ahead; the passage of time and how things come to an end, and toward the death and immortality which lay in store for her.

So an inquisition had started and the conviction of Immortality becomes a revelation by which Dickinson elucidates and explains herself. Dread, inspired by death, is one of the marks of her pre-existential stance. She sedately waits for what had started to be considered a transition that would take her from one status to another. Love and death conspire to nullify the status she is currently in, opening the door to a new and better one, and a new start, granted by the ineffability of poetic immortality:

> Because I could not stop for Death—
> He kindly stopped for me—
> The Carriage held but just Ourselves—
> And Immortality. (J712-Fr479)

The stages of the transition in this poem go beyond what is natural; steadily, calmly, the speaker's life story is told in flashback, and she is all eyes, attaining an incredibly cogent vision of death like that of Shakespeare's Hamlet. There is an extreme sense of expectancy. But nothing goes wrong in this episode; there is a "School, where Children strove," "Fields of Gazing Grain—," and the "Setting Sun—," which is supposed to be the moment where silence pervades, darkness falls, and immortality originates:

> Great Streets of silence led away
> To Neighborhoods of Pause—
> Here was no Notice—no Dissent
> No Universe—no Laws—
>
> By Clocks, 'Twas Morning, and for Night
> The Bells at Distance called—
> But Epoch had no basis here
> For Period exhaled. (J1159-Fr1166)

The deserted street scene the poem starts with is terrifying; but what is more terrifying is the lawless place. For her, God's absence is no longer a doubt, and the good-evil war that constitutes our existence has ended; and uncertainty, which is the biggest terror of all, has begun to permeate the universe, which in turn has collapsed. While we sense that we are stuck in the middle of a battle of what is real and unreal, of what is certain and uncertain, we find in the last two lines the unavoidable fact of the existence of immortality.

If the soul is indeed eternal and precious, who could say where it goes after death? Does it have a dimensional value? In Dickinson, the moment she transitions from queen and wife to immortality does not imply disintegration but change. Inevitably, almost every question related with existence leads us to think of God; the one who arranged a flood in order to return the world to its pre-creation state because of man's evil deeds, which is the other side of the coin that God himself supposedly created. The idea of union with him does not figure high in Dickinson's list of priorities, as it happens. He is no longer in charge of the world, his emissaries, death and nature, are.

So, when Dickinson brings these matters into question, she does so because of her agony, distress, and knowledge, not for prayer or gratitude:

> Of Course—I prayed—
> And did God Care? (J376-Fr581)

God observes man coldly and he does not interfere with the mission that he assigned his emissaries. Death and love, as we observe, have something sacred in common, a mission of fulfillment. Nature, on the other hand, strongly allures and causes agony:

> There's a certain Slant of light,
> Winter Afternoons—
> That oppresses, like the Heft
> Of Cathedral Tunes— (J258-Fr320)

Reading these lines takes us back to the deserted streets of the above-mentioned poem because they have something in common, namely the use of abstract terms to introduce a moment of cessation and halt, "Pause." This is very common in Dickinson to picture the behaviour of nature and death. Consider this poem:

> I think that the Root of the Wind is Water—
> It would not sound so deep
> Were it a Firmamental Product—
> Airs no Oceans keep—
> Mediterranean intonations—
> To a Current's Ear—
> There is a maritime conviction
> In the Atmosphere (J1302-Fr1295)

Note how this natural observation seizes, expressing a transition from one form to another.

Dickinson learned two methods of self-realization; on the one hand, she acquired what G. K. Chesterton referred to when he said, "Humility is the mother of giants"; the quality of being humble and small features prominently in Dickinson's poetry, "I was a Phebe—nothing more—" (J1009-Fr1009), a "Mouse" (J61-Fr151), a robin and a daisy on several occassions, a "Wren" (J283-Fr254), a "Drop" of water (J284-Fr255), and a gnome, among many examples. On the other hand, home had become the only place where she felt safe and sheltered from pursuit, danger, and difficulty. Her poetry features these two states abundantly and they are necessary in order to understand the highest moments of her poetry and to comprehend the value of the tiny details that she gave great importance to.

Observe the delicate expression of her emotional state in the poem below. Since she feels sad (for an unexplained reason) she is afraid of the unrestrained joy of the early spring. But, when spring arrives, all of its representatives respect her bereavement (for what loss?) and salute her in their joyful procession:

> I dreaded that first Robin, so,
> But He is mastered, now,
> I'm some accustomed to Him grown,

He hurts a little, though—

I thought if I could only live
Till that first Shout got by—
Not all Pianos in the Woods
Had power to mangle me—

I dared not meet the Daffodils—
For fear their Yellow Gown
Would pierce me with a fashion
So foreign to my own—

I wished the Grass would hurry—
So when 'twas time to see—
He'd be too tall, the tallest one
Could stretch to look at me—

I could not bear the Bees should come,
I wished they'd stay away
In those dim countries where they go,
What word had they, for me?

They're here, though; not a creature failed—
No Blossom stayed away
In gentle deference to me—
The Queen of Calvary—

Each one salutes me, as he goes,
And I, my childish Plumes,
Lift, in bereaved acknowledgement
Of their unthinking Drums— (J348-Fr347)

Not everyone can hear the music that nature has the ability to produce in stanza 2; it is exceptionally astonishing because statements like this hint at the self-realization that the speaker had acquired in her connection with nature and all its infinitesimal phenomena. Equally important is Dickinson's muliebrity in her poetry, which is a result of her close connection with her home, which is, as already mentioned, the ultimate provider of safety. At times, her poetic vocabulary gets completely ladylike, a homely atmosphere, and with an air of love expectancy:

If you were coming in the Fall,
I'd brush the Summer by
With half a smile, and half a spurn,
As Housewives do, a Fly.

If I could see you in a year,
I'd wind the months in balls—
And put them each in separate Drawers,

For fear the numbers fuse— (J511-Fr356)

Another poem is one that will be discussed later in fascicle 13, J219-F318 "She sweeps with many-colored Brooms—," in which the perception of the sunset is governed by the "Housewife," whose careless behaviour bejewels the evening sky "With duds of Emerald." While this poem is about the limit of mortals' perception, the language of jewels is another prominent characteristic of Dickinson's vocabulary. Consider poem J466-Fr597 located in fascicle 26:

'Tis little I—could care for Pearls—
Who own the Ample sea—
Or Brooches—when the Emperor—
With Rubies—pelteth me—

Or Gold—who am the Prince of Mines—
Or Diamonds—when have I
A Diadem to fit a Dome—
Continual opon me—

This idiosyncratic characteristic is undoubtedly as prominent as the use of names of far-flung nations, such as "Zanzibar," "Peru," "Italy," "Frankfort," "Libya," or "Lybia," as Dickinson likes to spell it, among many others. Likewise, we may add to this list of realizations her yoking of the abstract and the concrete, such us the ones aforementioned, "Neighborhoods of Pause," "No Universe—no Laws—," "Epoch had no basis," "Slant of light," "Pianos in the Woods," etc. This would form a triangle, whose sides represent three forces in equilibrium, indispensable to understand Dickinson's exquisite, jewel-like vocabulary.

This triangle, and its connection with other aspects, such as the religious, mathematical, philosophical terminology as well as the tiny natural phenomena and homely terms, make us aware of two worlds in Dickinson's poetry: one where she deals with verisimilitude, the other with visionary escape. The bees, flowers, insects, birds are her garden's; the "Gown," "Drawers," "Lexicon," "Candle," to name a few, are items in her house; even the "Slant of light" enters through her window. But the far-off countries and precious stones are her escape towards a perfect, intellectual, inner world. Inspiration, then, becomes a necessary condition

to grow, to create an imagined world that nips the threat of total isolation in the bud. Consider this poem, which will also be discussed later in fascicle 12:

> Alone, I cannot be—
> The Hosts—do visit me—
> Recordless Company—
> Who baffle Key—
>
> They have no Robes, nor Names—
> No Almanacs—nor Climes—
> But general Homes
> Like Gnomes—
>
> Their Coming, may be known
> By Couriers within—
> Their going—is not—
> For they're never gone— (J298-Fr303)

Solitude breeds poetry. Out of it, the poetic imagination constructs another world, a fantastic one in which inner peace and success do not depend on the propinquity of other people. So, in a sense, Dickinson interiorizes the quotidian details and exteriorizes the tests of her inner strength, creating one of the summits of world literature, which is absolutely her own. This idea of how Dickinson interiorizes the mundane world is best captured in "There's a certain Slant of light," while in the following poem J650-Fr760 she exteriorizes the tests of her innermost feelings:

> Pain—has an Element of Blank—
> It cannot recollect
> When it begun—Or if there were
> A time when it was not—
>
> It has no Future—but itself—
> It's Infinite contain
> It's Past—enlightened to perceive
> New Periods—Of Pain. (J650-Fr760)

The perfection of these infinitesimal details, witticism, and mental capacity, are manifestly an escape, an evasion, and an adroit manoeuvre, not to run away from reality as much as to find a parallel realm where her creation can have a chance to grow. Generally, the various results throughout her poetry are spectacular; fugitive hours, fleeting glances, and rapid momentary association of things that

meet and pass. There is no doubt that she wanted to tease out truths. This in turn has given her poetry a gnomic characteristic, and the volumes of data handled are vast. Buckingham observes, "Emily Dickinson was gnomic in her utterances like Emerson, with all which that implies: conventions of form were not infrequently sacrified, consciously or unconsciously, for the preservation of what was essential, what was of higher worth" (523). Dickinson's poems have an aphoristic and minimalistic value that fits perfectly in the taste of today's reader, where revolutionary technology and busy life make us seek for what is less and more, for what is brief and profound. For the moment and for the sake of argument, let us say that as a real visionary, she took crucial decisions as though she had planned for her reputation to be valued in the future, in another era different than the one she lived in.

Methodology

The critical approach that was chosen combines biocriticism and an examination of Emily Dickinson's poetry through a sociohistorical lens. To achieve this, it is necessary to analyze the poems in the fascicle context. In my literary review, I have relied on Eleanor Elson Heginbotham's *Reading the Fascicles of Emily Dickinson: Dwelling in Possibilities* in my need for what she calls it, "a new approach, one that respects the books as evidence of Dickinson's mind at play at particular moments in her artistic life" (105), and also Robert Weisbuch's observation that, "any combination of the individual poems may provide a sense of coherence," and he prefers to see Dickinson's work "as one long poem" (1975: xiii). I am also inclined to a more open view about the importance of patterns in the fascicles; like the one that will be discussed in fascicle 13 as a result of Dickinson's lost love, which represents the manifestation and disappearance of natural phenomena. Heginbotham writes:

> Each poem has other contexts as well, but read together, they form an obvious pattern, but a web of metaphors for the process of making and the meaning of poems. This awareness leads the reader to appreciate Dickinson's care as self-conscious editor, one fully aware of her own creative power (40).

She continues:

> If one does not select four or five or six poems of a fascicle—or from many fascicles that suit a thesis (see Scholl, for example)—one is more likely to see that patterns exist everywhere and that Dickinson has slyly left not only the doublings such as in the prose/poetry pair but also a number of other "tight-rope tricks" as well. […] In choosing from her poems those for each book, Dickinson was probably as balanced between wilful planning and serendipity as her less verbal sisters who stitched intricate patchworks out of the fabrics of their lives (15).

Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that the fascicles differ from each other. Heginbotham says that each "has its own character, its own thumbprint, its own swirl of image clusters, and its own movement" (47). So, my primary objective here is to prove that fascicles 11, 12 and 13 are connected in the sense that they form some significant historical currents in Dickinson's emotional life.

That said, and for the purposes of this dissertation, I read the poems that deal with nature and natural phenomena (such as the end of the day and the passing of time) as Dickinson's attempts to naturalize loss — specifically the loss of love, as Sharon Cameron proposes in *Choosing Not Choosing*. There is a sequence of poems of natural phenomena located in fascicle 13 that deal precisely with loss. The meaning of these poems and what they imply and why they were arranged in this way will be discussed later. For Dickinson, a poem about sunset might be an actual observation that she had experienced, but still carries deep significance and an exercise of thought that gives it the virtue of showing life as it is, rather than escaping into a world governed by uncertainty. This also applies to poems that deal with stoicism, skepticism and unhappy states as well as victory and bravery. I also rely on Cameron's observation that there is a strong connectivity between certain poems that form the key for the speaker's parting from her lover and the love theme on which the discussion of these three fascicles is based. Cameron says, "the fascicle [13], considered as a whole, could be said to ground, by specifying, the source of the despair in 'There's a certain slant of light.' For with reference to 'There came a Day—at Summer's full—,' the source of the despair is the loss of a lover which in earlier poems is displaced onto multiple disappearances of natural phenomena" (101). These two poems among

others that I will point out later form the basis for my arguments, and of course they will be discussed later.

To strengthen my arguments, I have relied on William H. Shurr's observations that two specific poems in fascicle 13 (You see I cannot see—your lifetime—" and "There came a Day—at Summer's full—" that deal with Dickinson's parting from the man she loved are the beginning of a new phase in Dickinson's emotional life through the fascicles; that both poems express "a crippling sense of her aloneness, the result of the separation that took place immediately after their private marriage ceremony" (73). This is essential because this new phase that Shurr refers to forms the basis of my thesis — this in spite of the fact that Shurr identifies the lover as the Reverend Charles Wadsworth, while I leave that possibility open.

I have also relied on the essential arguments of Richard Benson Sewall, whose convincing ways of denying the reclusive nature as well as the "white-draped and spectacular household ghost" reputation of Dickinson have remained solid since the publication of his book *The Life of Emily Dickinson* (1974). And, equally important, his solid arguments to position men such as Benjamin Fraklin Newton, Samuel Bowles, and the Reverend Charles Wadsworth into the poet's emotional life.

A historical approach to Dickinson's life and art is provided in Chapter 1 because it is important for those who are unfamiliar or have little knowledge about Dickinson to understand what this dissertation is about; specially her love for a person [s] and her love of life and earth. Equally important, I must add that reading Dickinson's fascicles is a major task, especially when this involves reading more than one fascicle consecutively. This is because of the variety of themes and the immense artistic philosophy that these themes can offer within a single fascicle. I repeat, these three fascicles are not only about love, yet the themes of loss, disappearance, eternity and the passage of time may have been the result of this lost love. These three fascicles are like the rest of the fascicles in the

way they were arranged and in the themes that they contain. Ruth Miller, in *The Poetry of Emily Dickinson*, says that, "so similar are the fascicles it seems possible to chart one and obtain a blueprint for all," and she describes them as, "long link poems" (249). Miller adds, "each fascicle has a range of feelings and subjects and that single fascicles have "polar feelings" (248). It is possible, too, to find some emotional history through some of the poems Dickinson includes in them, and this is exactly the main aim of this dissertation.

For the purpose of clarity, these are the most important elements of my overall methodology. First, I have opted to treat Dickinson's poems in the fascicle context not because it has become the norm for scholars, but for one inevitable reason based on the fact that many of her poems are subtle when read individually and they seem to explore the delicacies and intricacies of an event or occurrence of a subject that at times can never be fully grasped. A single poem in the fascicle context can be influenced by what follows or precedes. Let us take, by way of illustration, the twelfth poem in fascicle 11 where Jesus Christ persistently knocks at an old and locked door. This poem, at first anyway, can be read as Christ attempting to bring a person with religious doubts to the right path. But it can also be read as a love poem, with the speaker, in Christ's form, knocking persistently at the heart of the distant lover.

Second, this thesis does not move from theory to practice; the compendium of this dissertation is ineluctably the poetry of Dickinson herself. At times, the reader might regard my readings of poems to be exhaustive to a fault, but I have made an effort to include, wherever possible, all the feasible meanings, and this is a personal attempt to show that the integrity of the poems, and even their suspensions of meaning, must be preserved. Essentially, then, I work from the poems to a judgment or decision reached by reasoning. Also, I have tried to limit my engagement with the extensive academic studies on Dickinson's poetry to footnotes, but sometimes I engage this in the main text when it suits.

Third, while I claim that these three fascicles reflect Dickinson's emotional history through some of the poems she includes in them, I neither try, nor even recognize a definite chronological order. Those familiar with Dickinson know that the dating of her poems has been a troubled issue. The date of composition of the poems may not be the same as the date of the construction of the fascicles. Why have I chosen these three fascicles? The main reason, as stated above, is because they show a state of love in the form of obsession and expectancy (in fascicle 11), which gradually diminishes until it becomes a form of renunciation in fascicle 13. Therefore, to me, they seem to possess a definite philosophical character that reveals a coherent model of thinking while at the same time say something about the cast of Dickinson's mind and customs.

Finally, I do specifically examine ways in which both the poetry and character of Dickinson might have been specifically shaped by religion, gender, and culture, specially as a rebellion against social pressures, and mainly because these approaches are highly revealing in their own right. For this I have relied on Patrick J. Keane's *Emily Dickinson's Approving God: Divine Design and the Problem of Suffering*. I have done this with the conviction that it is integral to make an introduction to Dickinson's life and thought before delving deeper into her poetry.

Chapter 1: The Belle of Amherst[9]

"And deal occasional smiles
To lives that stoop to notice mine—"
(J273-Fr330)

1. Delineating the myth

That Dickinson retired from society is not new to anyone. This propensity existed as early as 1854, when she wrote to her friend Abiah Palmer Root: "I don't go from home, unless emergency leads me by the hand, and then I do it obstinately, and draw back if I can" (L 166). To behave obstinately implies choice, and not an unwanted imposition. Rather than a trauma per se, this desire to remain at home, to disconnect from a world that became, in the words of Pip in *Great Expectations*, "all asmear with filth and fat and blood and foam,"[10] is a sensitive way to connect with the self. As humans, we have each felt the necessity to separate ourselves from busy life at one time or another, to find peace and bring ourselves back to a state of composure. But to embrace this desire as a norm for living, and to consider society a threat that "Obliterate [s]" the self rather than fullfil it, and have the ability and courage to "shut the Door" on it (J674-Fr592), one ought to be an intellectual of the first order. To this, Paul Scott Derrick sagely comments, "Her supposedly solitary existence was incomparably richer than ours, with our lifestyles molded by stress, technology and greed, as the ample body of her poetry and letters reveals" (2003: 62). This step shows the transcendental importance of the soul. Derrick comments, "It does not simply mean to sacrifice the pleasures and satisfactions of the world. It means to go beyond them, for a greater satisfaction of which only the highest sensibilities are capable" (1983: 60).

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[9] *The Belle of Amherst* is the title of a play by William Luce based on the life of Dickinson. It was premiered at Longacre theatre, New York, on April 28, 1976.

[10] Philip Pirrip, called Pip, is the protagonist and narrator in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*.

To possess these highest sensibilities can be a double-edged sword. These special individuals can sequester themselves in some sort of lifestyle that might be seen as peculiar in the eyes of others, and thus they usually become an easy target for gossip and speculation. The reclusive life reputation that Emily Dickinson earned is mainly a result of stories and revelations made by friends and family members. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, an acknowledged literary figure, and her friend, in his essay *Emily Dickinson's Letters,* admits to being bemused by her "quaint and nun-like" appearance and her "quaint and aphoristic" way of talking left him with an impression "of an excess tension, and of an abnormal life" (1891: 452-453). In *The Life of Emily Dickinson*, Richard Sewall mentions in the words of Joseph Lyman, a friend of Dickinson's brother Austin, that she was,

> A spirit clad in white, a figure so draped as to be misty, face moist, translucent alabaster, forehead firmer as of statuary marble. Eyes once bright hazel now melted & fused so as to be two dreamy, wondering wells of expression, eyes that see no forms but gla[n]ce swiftly to the core of all thi[n]gs—hands small, firm, deft but utterly emancipated from all claspings of perishable things, very firm strong little hands absolutely under control of the brain, types of quite rugged health [,] mouth made for nothing & used for nothing but uttering choice speech, rare thoughts, glittering, starry misty figures, winged words (1974: 425).

To her niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, as to the writer Helen Hunt Jackson, she was a large white moth, and Mabel Loomis Todd, who would become Dickinson's first editor, called her the "myth" when she wrote to her parents:

> I must tell you about the character of Amherst. It is a lady whom the people call the Myth. She is a sister of Mr. Dickinson, & seems to be the climax of all the family oddity. She has not been outside of her own house in fifteen years, [...] she dresses wholly in white, & her mind is said to be perfectly wonderful. She writes finely, but no one ever sees her. Her sister, who was at Mrs. Dickinson's party, invited me to come & sing to her mother some time and I promised to go [...] People tell me that the myth will hear every note—she will be near, but unseen.... Isn't that like a book? (Sewall, Vol. 1, 216-217)

130 years have passed since Dickinson's death and the cause of her self-imposed seclusion still puzzles readers. Certainly, solipsism is not the case. Those who were very close to her know that there was nothing morbid about her life. Susan Gilbert Dickinson, the poet's sister-in-law, an important person in Dickinson's life from whom she actively sought literary advice, and with whom

she had a long-lasting relationship, does not see any oddity in Dickinson's seclusion, she sees it as the fit choice. She said in the poet's obituary:

> Not disappointed with the world, not an invalid until within the past two years, not from any lack of sympathy, not because she was insufficient for any mental work or social career—her endowment being so exceptional—but the "mesh of her soul," as Browning calls the body, was too rare, and the sacred quiet of her own home proved the fit atmosphere of her worth and work.[11]

Dickinson's letters that she kept exchanging throughout her life provide a rich source of information about her sole abiding reality, "My life has been too simple and stern to embarrass any" (L 330, to Higginson in 1869). Unlike Susan, and along with his admiration for Dickinson, Higginson always added an aura of conundrum about her; an aura that did not waver, for him it was a truth that he had experienced first-hand: "You only enshroud yourself in this fiery mist & I cannot reach you, but only rejoice in the rare sparkles of light" (L 330a).

There are undoubtedly comments by the poet herself that made readers see her seclusion negatively, such as this written to Higginson in 1869: "I do not cross my father's ground to any House or town" (L 330). Comments like these have been taken as a psychological disorder as a result of domination imposed by Dickinson's father, Edward Dickinson. At the age of 18, in May 1848, Dickinson wrote to Abiah Root a letter that expresses resentment regarding her father's partisan treatment:

> At first I had recourse to words, & a desperate battle with those weapons was waged for a few moments, between my sophomore brother & myself. Finding words of no avail, I next resorted to tears. But woman's tears are of little avail & I am sure mine flowed in vain. As you can imagine, Austin was victorious & poor, defeated I, was led off in triumph (L 23).

Part of this letter reveals that unlike Austin, Dickinson had not been encouraged to extend her education. But it also reveals, at an early age, a critical aspect in the

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[11] See Sewall (1974: 228).

poet's sense of selfhood, supressed by a higher-ranking conquering power: father and brother. If that is true, then it is a shame because she was exceptionally clever. In *Emily Dickinson: A Biography,* Connie Ann Ark says that,

> She was an excellent student who loved her teachers and learning; she read widely, teaching herself as much, if not more, at home as she learned in a formal classroom. She was the kind of studious person who kept a large dictionary by her side when she wrote and often pored over it, studying its entries, their origins, and their alternate definitions for new and unique ways to use them in her work. Her teachers praised her early compositions and asked her to read them aloud to the class. Some of this early writing, playful and mischievous, was published anonymously in student publications (2).

So, Dickinson's withdrawal should be explainable in the light of the facts. It is a conscious decision to reside within the only kingdom where she could crown herself, as she celebrates in J466-Fr597 "'Tis little I—could care for Pearls—" and J631-Fr596 "Ourselves were wed one summer—dear—," and have the freedom to fully explore the "Undiscovered Continent" (J832-Fr814). She reaped pleasure from composing poetry, and this, in turn, intensified and elevated the quality of her inner life.

Her withdrawal was not because of anthropophobia, yet she was a shy person who has revealed her strong dislike of company and unease at the idea that "Somebody would see me, or ask me how I did" (L 127). She told Higginson on their first meeting, "Forgive me if I am frightened; I never see strangers and hardly know what to say" (L 342a and 342b). But apart from that she was a busy person who is "not too far" when she is "call [ed]" for house chores by the "Rest" (J273-Fr330). This is an indication of domestic duties and regular intercourse with family, which had increased from 1866 until 1869 as a result of the absence of help in the family house as the writer Sharon Leiter observes in her *Critical Companion* (18). During this period, her poetic production decreased after 7 years of flood creativity that gave birth to approximately 700 poems. Only in 1863 she wrote nearly 300 poems, the year described by Franklin as her "annus mirabilis" (1998: 25). During the period between 1866 and 1869 Dickinson wrote only 44 poems, which is a very low number compared to previous years, but she kept writing letters to keep contact with the outside world.

She began to write poems intensely again in 1870, producing many of her finest poems until her death in 1886. She had not married. She had enough time and space to be occupied in her garden, her long-lasting passion, and also corresponded with Susan and those she cared about, like Samuel Bowles, who visited every so often and, as we shall see later, had a deep impact on her, and of course Higginson, who saw her twice, in 1870 and 1873.

Additionally, she read passionately and her poems express that in a way that does not need any comment:

> There's no Frigate like a Book
> To take us Lands away
> Nor any courses like a Page
> Of prancing Poetry— (J1263-Fr1286)

Transcendentalism was in its most prospering period during the years in which she was growing to maturity. *The Scarlett Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1850) and *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville (1851), to name a few, were published during her early maturity and she had probably read them. She said in a letter to Higginson, who had inquired what she liked to read, "He [her father] buys me many books, but begs me not to read them because he fears they joggle the mind" (L 261. 25th April, 1862). Of Shakespeare's work she said, "Is any other book needed?" (L 342b) Poetry for her liberates the self:

> He ate and drank the precious Words—
> His Spirit grew robust—
> He knew no more that he was poor,
> Nor that his frame was Dust—
>
> He danced along the dingy Days
> And this Bequest of Wings
> Was but a Book—What Liberty
> A loosened Spirit brings— (J1587-Fr1593)

On other occassions, books are a source of comfort, as in (J604-Fr512):

> Unto my Books—so good to turn—
> Far ends of tired Days—

She explored the limits of her knowledge. In a letter to William Cowper Dickinson, she identifies herself with the protagonist of the novel *Picciola* by Joseph-Xavier Boniface Saintine (1836),[12] who becomes stimulated by a rose that he finds growing between the stones of his prison cell. She describes herself as a captive who nonetheless will not lose hope of a bright and free future, "I'm a 'Fenestrellan captive,' if this world be 'Fenestrella,' and within my dungeon yard, up from the silent pavement stones, has come a plant, so frail, & yet so beautiful, I tremble lest it die […] sometimes I fancy that it whispers pleasant things to me—of freedom—and the future" (L 27).

At the age of twenty, on April 1850, Dickinson shows an intellectual independence through a letter sent to Jane Humphrey, another close friend with whom she had actively corresponded: "I have dared to do strange things—bold things, and have asked no advice from any—I have heeded beautiful tempters, yet do not think I am wrong […] I could make you tremble for me, and be very much afraid, and wonder how things would end [...] life has had an aim [...] I hope belief is not wicked" (L 35). Written at an early age, the letter creates a vision of a world through a poet's eye, an eye that sees all things in a new way. Sewall says of this vision in particular, "She had found a way, through the language of figure and metaphor, to protect herself and to work around and ultimately transcend all that was frustrating her emerging view of life." He continues saying that there is, "Ample evidence that by the time she wrote the riddling letters to Abiah and Jane 'she was nineteen years old' she had begun to write poems" (1974: 396).

When it comes to use of language, she is a mental and moral strength to be reckoned with. By her analytical eye, she has caught most of the truth about life by keeping a reciprocal, lifelong relationship with language, whose potentiality struck a blow for her poetry—much later, after her death. More than 1,700 poems,

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[12] The protagonist of *Picciola*, Count Charney, was jailed for scheming against Napoleon. During his time as a prisoner, he took care of a flower that he found growing in his cell, which became for him a symbol of hope, persistence and appreciation of the evolution of nature.

which only a selected "Society" had been aware of (J303-Fr409), made a striking comeback in the 20th century. They have managed to tickle poetry lovers' fancies, which gradually became aware of a poetic talent no less than any in history's roster. Most of her moral thought, especially in her mature years, occupied a transitional point between the 19th century's Calvinism, which had influenced her vocabulary and thinking, and the moral sense of a more private, complete spiritual identity that she acquired as a result of her many faculties of reasoning and understanding. Though we can only guess at her motives by what we have at hand, it stands to reason that she was afraid that her modernism would hinder the public's appreciation in that Victorian epoch. Her poems' ultimate goal was to reach minds that are willing to consider her innovative thinking and style, which, as we shall see, had little feeling for organized religion and none for the rules of language. So, Dickinson's question was, in a word, not whether her poems should be introduced to the world, but how they should be handled.

Unknown in her lifetime, she proved that there is no royal road to becoming a recognized poet. She adopted an attractively odd writing style by which she has become characterized. Her poetry's extreme complexity and peculiarity (illogicality, opacity, truncation, omission, grammatical, syntactic and punctuational violations) have violated every possible rule. Because of these "peculiarities," the poems she shared with Higginson were over his head, which is perhaps the main reason why he advised her not to publish.[13] But yes, that was

[13] Paul Scott Derrick offers a good reading on Dickinson's "psychology of renunciation" at the age of 30, and poses questions of great importance, such as why did Dickinson need a "preceptor," and why did she choose Higginson at the age of 31. But most importantly, why did Higginson refuse to help Dickinson to publish her poems. Derrick writes: "The reaction she got from Higginson, though, can hardly be the one we would expect that she had hoped for. It has practically become a cliché of Dickinson criticism to look back with disdain at his inability to appreciate the value of these strange new poems that she was sending him. But Thomas Wentworth Higginson was the typical conventionally minded and conformist man of letters of his time. In a sense, the very qualities that made him successful also made him ill-prepared to judge the poetry, or the personality of someone as original and enigmatic as Emily Dickinson. But who are we to throw stones? To point out a distinction that all of us salaried commentators in this academic business should at least be aware of, Higginson was a man who made his living from literature, while Dickinson, much more passionately, lived it (2003: 64-65).

her genius, and she had the courage to tell the man from whom she canvassed literary support:

> So I pull my Stockings off
> Wading in the Water
> For the Disobediance' Sake (J1201-Fr1271)

And continue to write in her way.

Two of the usual worn-out clichés about Dickinson are the constant and fruitless attempts to conjecture whether or not she desired to see her poems into print, and what would have happened if she had published them. She certainly had a natural appetite for recognition. Artists crave for an audience and feedback. But as early as 1863, she refuses the "Auction" of her "Mind" through "Publication," because it should not be reduced "To Disgrace of Price" (J709-Fr788).

Since Dickinson's innovative writing style would have hindered the public's appreciation, and since her thinking may have wounded many of the readers' sensibilities at the time, and since the few poems that she saw into print had suffered editorial alterations,[14] a more satisfactory question arises: was it better or worse for her to be disappointed by Higginson's response to her poetry? Her choice to preserve her poetic style and sacrifice publication was made wisely. She did not experience what it is like to be recognized while she lived, but her modernism succeeded in bringing her back to the literary stage in the 20th century when her niece Martha Dickinson Bianchi published the *Single Hound*, by which Dickinson was greeted as a pre-modern poet.

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[14] Samuel Bowles, the editor of *The Republican* and another important person in the poet's life, persuaded Dickinson to let him publish her poems, but with conditions that go against her artistic principles. Only few of her poems were published during her lifetime; it is probable that the dislike of seeing them become printed texts was partly caused by her refusal to see them subordinated to male editorial control.

2. Protracted Controversy

The diverse suggestions and opinions that the past 130 years of research and studies and criticism have created are not really a problem, for they have offered an outlook from which Emily Dickinson's readers of today can launch a challenging enterprise. The real threat is to take what has been said and absorbed so far as definitive. In Dickinson we have facts and mysteries, and we have almost 1,800 poems that work together to make her one of the most interesting American poets. In what follows I shall try to elucidate what I believe the cause of this diversity to be.

1.

Although she is known for her reclusion; the spinster deeply disappointed in love, and a victim of some sort of strange/odd introversion, her poems show that she was a rich character, veering and eluding, whose poems are like "Menageries" that cannot be tamed (J290-Fr319). If poetry could not tell us enough about its creator, what else could? As Susan said in Dickinson's obituary mentioned above, Dickinson was not insufficient, deficient, or poor. She lived in solitude because otherwise she would not be able to build the literary space that has caused 130 years of wrangling; and, above all, because she was a person absolutely adequate to write poetry. In a state in which others would lose momentum, will, and desire, her genius grew:

> Growth of Man—like Growth of Nature—
> Gravitates within—
> Atmosphere, and Sun endorse it—
> But it stir—alone—
>
> Each—it's difficult Ideal
> Must achieve—itself—
> Through the solitary prowess
> Of a Silent Life— (J750-Fr790)

Among all the facts provided and learned about Dickinson's life through her poetry, poems like this provide vital information that show a woman who knew very well how to grow. Let us suppose that (and one can only speculate) this growth started after the year 1853 when she had written "how to grow up I don't know" (L 241). So, based on what she said at the age of 23 it is safe to assume that her inner growth took place somewhere near that period, since the act of recognizing the inability to achieve something can start a motive and provide a stimulus, so to speak. So, at some point, she had turned her thoughts inward, and the circumstances, facts, and influences that contributed to this result are avaliable to us through her poems and letters. To turn your thoughts inward means to create a close relationship with the soul, to reach a territory that is available only for those who are willing to take a brave step in life; and this accomplishment, or process, exists within the mind, soul, and spirit, and often is not expressed. Little by little she separated herself from the outside world, and even considered "Society" a threat that "Obliterates" the self. Poetry offered a sublime way to express what cannot be expressed to others who "talk of Hallowed things, aloud—" (L 415). It fed her insatiable desire to contemplate and to pose questions others do not dare to ask; and even answer them freely and polemically. She was a real observer, questing after truth. She gave life and meaning to every tiny thing or creature she was surrounded with, in her garden, in her house, in the sky and on earth, and while living the life that she had been blessed with, and why not, perhaps counting on an afterlife reunion with her lover:

> All life—to know each other—
> Whom we can never learn—
> And bye and bye—a Change—
> Called Heaven—
> Rapt Neighborhoods of Men—
> Just finding out—what puzzled us—
> Without the lexicon! (J246-Fr264)

This afterlife reunion is not conditioned by pleasing God. It is something deeper and more complex. This immortality fixation led to "Calvary" renunciation, of which she had given herself the title of Empress (J1072-Fr194a). Such a crowning

is a triumph, a self-realization, and a fulfillment of one's own potential. This state is not easy to assimilate, but not impossible; it is a victory, an acquired taste that once it is accepted and developed, comes with a huge appetite for knowledge. Dickinson would then learn that,

> Superiority to Fate
> Is difficult to gain
> 'Tis not conferred of any
> But possible to earn
> A pittance at a time
> Until to Her surprise
> The Soul with strict economy
> Subsist till Paradise. (J1081-Fr1043A)

It is interesting that, in spite of the stormy relationship that Dickinson had with God, Paradise is not completely discarded. Its belief is supposed to mean hope, a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. Remarkably, one would think that she is transcendental and spiritual, who "never felt at home below" (J413-Fr437), but when the reader thinks that he or she starts to perceive the intended meanings, unexpectedly, in the same poem, we encounter one small problem:

> And in the handsome skies
> I shall not feel at home I know
> I don't like Paradise!

Reading Dickinson's poems individually puts our understanding at risk because they often have several interpretations. It is an undeniable fact that this quality is rich, and a single poem could be applied to everyday situations and circumstances. A single poem could also mean what we, as readers want it to mean. But this bright side becomes even brighter when the poems are considered within the fascicle context.

Joy is also sensed in Dickinson's poetry: the joy of being alive, the joy of living among trees and nature, the joy of being surrounded by family and friends; she is full of the joys of spring. Still, she is used to grief, and joy is too powerful for her:

I can wade Grief—
Whole Pools of it—
I'm used to that—
But the least push of Joy
Breaks up my feet—
And I tip—drunken—
Let no Pebble—smile—
'Twas the New Liquor—
That was all!

Power is only Pain—
Stranded—thro' Discipline,
Till Weights—will hang—
Give Balm—to Giants—
And they'll wilt, like Men—
Give Himmaleh—
They'll carry—Him! (J252-Fr312A)

The poem's worthwhile quality has a lot to unfold, which will be fully discussed later in fascicle 13; but for now note how the drunken speaker fears that the pebbles would smile at her for being drunk. As a matter of fact, the intriguing mystique in Dickinson is the question as to how a lady could relinquish the external world, physical needs and desires, and publication, and yet gain such insight, joy, and completeness. How could she be jubilant while living on abstinance?

Who never wanted—maddest Joy
Remains to him unknown—
The Banquet of Abstemiousness
Defaces that of Wine—

Within it's reach, though yet ungrasped
Desire's perfect Goal—
No nearer—lest the Actual—
Should disenthrall thy soul— (J1430-Fr1447a)

When hope does not cease; when it remains solid and alive by sheer grit and determination, a "Bloom" (reference to poetry) will "raise" upon a "Rock," with the assistance of one of the hottest "Sun [s]" on earth, which shines over a nation which is also known by "Palm [s]":

On the Bleakness of my Lot
Bloom I strove to raise—
Late—my Garden of a Rock

Yielded Grape—and Maise—

Soil of Flint, if steady tilled
Will refund the Hand—
Seed of Palm, by Lybian[15] Sun
Fructified in Sand— (Fr862. Only numbered by Franklin)

The knowledge of the world and the desire to travel to what is beyond the limits of knowledge makes the impact of the questions raised above even deeper:

Experience is the Angled Road
Preferred against the Mind
By—Paradox—the Mind itself—
Presuming it to lead

Quite Opposite—How complicate
The Discipline of Man—
Compelling Him to choose Himself
His Preappointed Pain— (J910-Fr899A)

She did not become boring in her continuous epistemology. The temerity to question this kind of conclusion has found discipline as a strong counterpart. She moved further and questioned more deeply and limitlessly. She could, repeatedly, fathom out death. She deprived God of his rank and authority. She reached aeons. Silence has defeated prayer. Even marriage has become a mere convention. Nature has manifested in her garden, and dying "for Beauty" was worthy, although meager and barely relevant (J449-Fr448a).

2.

In her epistemological journey of growth, belief and disbelief have been brought into question—they may coexist:

Ourselves—we do inter—with sweet derision
The channel of the Dust—who once achieves—
Invalidates the Balm of that Religion
That doubts—as fervently as it believes— (J1144-Fr1449)

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[15] Lybian is a variant spelling of Libyan. The hot Libyan sun has (although in the next century) registered a very high temperature, perhaps the highest in history.

Dickinson had been brought up to believe that religion is mankind's salvation. But her sharp-wittedness gave her thought freedom to break free from any restraint and delight in knowledge's bliss and to refuse any dominion. Led by reason, she first separated herself physically from religion, and brought "Church" and "sermon" to her garden, which is often equated with the writing of poetry (J324-Fr236). She rejected Calvinism's claim to be the only way to obtain salvation. Calvinism had a very active life that influenced the poet's childhood. The writer Alfred Habegger says of the intentions of the Calvinists, "these institutions served to foster the mysterious inner act based on surrender or submission and known as conversion. This was the system the poet was born into and grew up taking for granted" (11).

It was not an easy task to carve out a successful poetic reputation mainly due to the modern attitude of the poems and the inconvenient coincidence with the general conception of what people were thinking in that era. The levity and frivolousness of the religious poems, the pithy character of all, and the mix of thought and belief with satirical drollery were obliged to go on standby and wait for the right time:

> 'Heavenly Father'—take to thee
> The supreme iniquity
> Fashioned by thy candid Hand
> In a moment contraband—
>
> Though to trust us—seem to us
> More respectful—'We are Dust'—
> We apologize to thee
> For thine own Duplicity— (J1461-Fr1500)

Dickinson was not an atheist, nor, so far as her beliefs and philosophy went, was she solitary, although the sceptical tone and attitude of her poetry was not of the sort generally accepted in the years between 1830 and 1886.

More profoundly than what the members of society might think, turning her back on religion was not an easy task because God had always found a way to prove his existence, although as an absent "Power behind" the "Cloud" who may

or may not "care, in some remoter way." He was not there for her when she prayed and supplicated. Still, she thought that he would not be "subject to Despair" as human beings are (J293-Fr292). In this way, she did not keel over into nihilism. She was not blind to the religious depths, however, at times she seems to be sailing perilously close to atheism; and at other times she seems iconoclastic, creating a logjam that is hard to break, like when she addresses God, "an Eclipse, every morning" (L 404). And who once was an "Eclipse," has earned a more polemical description:

> "Nothing" is the force
> That renovates the World— (J1563-Fr1611)

Note both the quotation marks and the polemic against a creator who is unable to keep up with his creation. Yet, one must not be at loggerheads because of Dickinson's beliefs or disbeliefs. To question God's existence, or distance, or whether he cares or not, is not to deny. It can only indicate epistemology at its purest. Those with the highest sensibilities often fall prey to inquietude, and some would argue that this is God's way to test believers. But the effect of a poem is nuanced by the social situation of readers. Those who were brought up in religious societies understand these sorts of inner conflicts, these compulsive urges to find God. On this particular point, Derrick provides important insights into Dickinson's Calvinistic heritage of New England: "All earthly life was only a fleeting, immaterial dream, and that real life, for the Elect—the immortality of divine salvation—begins with death" (2003, 64).

Influenced by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Dickinson regularly articulates ideas of self-reliance. Since her youth, she was taught all the beliefs of Calvinism, and later reacted exhaustingly against them, creating a paradoxical attitude towards the divine. At times, her attitude towards the divine conveys the impression that it is pushed from pillar to post. She had written about Christ respectfully; church is a matter of indifference; and she had doubted God all along:

> I know that He exists.
> Somewhere—in silence—

He has hid his rare life
From our gross eyes. (J338-Fr365)

Traditionally, humans are a fallen race because of a sin. Yet Dickinson sees the whole thing as the consequences of the creator. To corroborate the impression, if she had converted, her view of life would have been manipulated, and she would have seen divine evidences everywhere, and thus become religious. Yet she did not back down, "I am one of the lingering bad ones, and so do I slink away, and pause and ponder, and ponder and pause, and do work without knowing why, not surely, for this brief world, and more sure it is not for heaven, and I ask what this message means that they ask for so very eagerly: you know of this depth and fulness, will you try to tell me about it?" (L I, 98 to Abiah Root).

She tells Jane Humphrey on April 30, 1850, "Christ is calling everyone here, all my companions have answered, […] and I am standing alone in my rebellion" (L 35).

To her, God is not what he used to be in her early poetry:

Which from it's solemn abbeys—
Such resurrection pours! (J7-Fr16)

In *Emily Dickinson*, Cynthia Griffin Wolff touches upon a very delicate matter and also what could be Dickinson's ultimate goal:

> So long as we live on earth, we are in thrall to God's power as it is exerted through unvarying natural laws. Thus because we cannot change them, we bow to the tyranny of time and to a cosmos whose significant categories and regulations have already been defined by the Deity. To escape the reach of His power, we must somehow escape His "Design." "Death's large—Democratic fingers" offer one release, […] Yet such release is scant comfort, for we are transported either to oblivion or to an uncertain eternity where we must confront the Avenger unmasked. If we could "die" alive—if we could find a way to step out of time without stepping into the wilderness of hereafter, if we could reject "Design" while preserving the "I" intact and strong—then perhaps we might command the power and authority to counter the assaults of the Divinity.

Unheard prayers, natural disasters, wars, hunger, greed, and an uncertain end are factors and circumstances that attach an infernal character to this world. What Wolff bitterly says, and what Dickinson may have believed in, is that if one

gains independence from God, if one can endure loss and suffering, if one can be unaffected by afterlife promises—then this person can break free from any restraint and develop a sufficient inner power.

She had crossed the boundaries that God has "Designe [d]" between his realm and that of human, and thus worshipping and pleasing have become unnecessary, "The Bible dealt with the Centre, not with Circumference" (L 950), and "My Business is Circumference—" (L 268). She had an advantage over the holy books because she was able to retake control over language and initiate a rebellion that would last long. Resurrection had been dismissed, and so had prayer:

> Of Course—I prayed—
> And did God Care?
> He cared as much as on the Air
> A Bird—had stamped her foot— (J376-Fr581)

The reason is because prayers bring nothing but silence, "I have a King, who does not speak—" (J103-Fr157). For her, the promise of resurrection seems iffy, and the belief in its triumphant end is foolish:

> I'm glad I don't believe it.
> For it would stop my breath,
> And I'd like to look a little more
> At such a curious earth. (J79-Fr128)

Judith Farr says that Dickinson's poetry offers, "a precarious convergence between her inner experience and her religious inheritance" (1992: 105). Still, she gives significance to the suffering that Jesus went through on earth:

> Jesus! thy Crucifix
> Enable thee to guess
> The smaller size—
> Jesus! thy second face
> Mind thee—in Paradise—
> Of Our's. (J225-Fr197)

Patrick J. Keane argues that Jesus' suffering had provided Dickinson with a sort of comfort to know that, "Through the suffering of Jesus, God was aware of the

human condition; that her own pain and 'renunciation' had the 'Flavors of that old Crucifixion'" J527-Fr404 (95).

At times, Jesus is sent by God to woo in his stead, therefore he is not as distant as his father:

> God is a distant—stately Lover—
> Woos, as He states us—by His Son—
> Verily, a Vicarious Courtship— (J357-Fr615)

God woos humans through death and by implication he forbears. But if one cannot leave life when his or her time comes, God respectfully sends his own majestic carriage to pick up the person for a ride towards immortality:

> Because I could not stop for Death—
> He kindly stopped for me—
> The Carriage held but just Ourselves—
> And Immortality. (J712-Fr479)

3. Hoarding Hunger

Dickinson was fully aware of the value of her poems when she said of them, "My Splendors, are Menagerie—" (J290-Fr319). During the summer of 1858 Dickinson began the process of copying out her poems and binding them into fascicles. Between 1858 and 1864, she transcribed 814 poems into forty fascicles. The early fascicles, one to eight, are neatly copied in ink, and the transcribed poems are finalized versions. Following the completion of fascicle eight in the summer of 1860, Dickinson did not make any further copies until 1861, when fascicle 9 was finalized. Fascicles 10, 11 and 12 contain mixed paper and were transcribed with no particular order over the course of a year—early 1861-62—the period described as her time of personal crisis.

In April 1864, Dickinson had a series of treatments of an eye ailment during her stay for seven months in Cambridge with her cousins Frances and Louise and she did not write during that period. In a letter to her sister Lavinia she

expresses a deep desire to return home, “Wont you help me be patient?” she continues, “The Doctor is not willing yet, and He is not willing I should write” (L 289).

She suffered further trouble with her eyes after returning home in November 1864; and in 1865, she had to take a second series of treatments. Franklin says that Dickinson may have stopped binding because after her personal crisis, her need for self-publication declined and her eye-trouble became worse, so she found binding the books difficult. He confirms, “By 1862 the fascicle idea had itself come apart.” But from later in 1862 to 1864, “a new sense of order took hold in Dickinson’s workshop” (1998 22, 24). During this period, she produced twenty-six fascicles. These later fascicles frequently include variant readings and have structural features in common, such as the adoption of six folio sheets as the norm and the binding into place of additional leaves used for the overflow of poems. After 1864, although she continued to make copies of her poems until the late 1860s, she did not bind them. The loose papers form sets, and Franklin says that she may have found it easier to locate poems in this format (xii). Dickinson destroyed her earlier versions of the poems once transcribed into the fascicles in order to “reduce disorder in her manuscripts” (ix). She could then return to the fascicles to make copies to send to friends, included in a letter.

Dickinson’s hermitic life and the story of the discovery of her poems after her death by her sister Lavinia is almost a fairy-tale. To appreciate fully what they have become today requires going down the jumbled and knotty path the poems took after they left that locked box.

Dickinson’s family has been blamed for not doing enough to introduce her poems to the world. One reviewer of the *Collected Poems* in 1924 said that Dickinson’s poetry was “first published thanks to the persistence of a niece,” and that her family were “fortunately too unintelligent even of its ultimate value to

burn the poetry as the poet had requested, and so the bundle of priceless lyrics, tied up with bits of blue ribbon were allowed to repose in a drawer undisturbed."[16]

This popular account of the survival of uncared for manuscripts has little if any basis. It is doubtful that Dickinson's family and friends had not urged her to publish while she still lived. Susan and Lavinia, for instance, cherished every poem they could find, as did the nearly forty friends and correspondents to whom she sent about 600 copies of the poems in letters, and the first volume of poems was published just a few years after her death, mainly through the efforts of Mabel Loomis Todd, who in turn succeeded in getting Dickinson's good friend Higginson on board, with whom the poet continued to correspond to the end of her life. He cared about her artistic pursuit by sharing books with her and giving her literary advice, which she almost never adopted although she called him "teacher." The following words show what the man meant for her: "Of our greatest acts we are ignorant. You were not aware that you saved my life. To thank you in person has been since then one of my few requests" (L 330).

The poet, writer and activist Helen Hunt Jackson wrote to Dickinson in 1884, "What portfolios full of verses you must have! It is a cruel wrong to your day and generation that you will not give them light."[17]

Susan was the first whom Lavinia asked for help. Dickinson sent Susan approximately 250 poems over the years, so her opinion was valued. She said to her in a letter: "Your praise is good—to me—because I know it knows—and suppose—it means" (L 238).

History says that Susan did not act fervently and Lavinia eventually took the poems back. Perhaps, had Susan taken command and introduced the poems to us, she would have focused attention on Dickinson's brilliant mind as stated

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[16] J. G. Fletcher, "Woman and Poet," *The Saturday Review of Literature*, I, 77 (August 30, 1924).

[17] Taken from William J. Buckingham's *Emily Dickinson's Reception in the 1890's* (P 236).

earlier in Susan's obituary for Dickinson, unlike, for example, Higginson's constant attempts to justify his unease as produced by her odd manner:[18] "at first I tried a little,—a very little—to lead her in the direction of rules and traditions; but I fear it was only perfunctory, and that she interested me more in her—so to speak—unregenerate condition" (188).

Susan had, as Dickinson states in her letter above, a brilliant literary taste. But instead Lavinia took the poems to Mabel Loomis Todd, the married lady who had been Austin's lover since 1882, and then began a strange and long publishing journey. With the collaboration of Higginson, they published two volumes (1890 and 1891). Then Todd alone brought out two volumes of letters (1894) and another collection of poems (1896). Neither Todd nor Higginson expected that Dickinson would ever have a large audience. But then a battle royal started between Todd and Lavinia over a parcel of land after the death of Austin, which led to a widely known court case that Todd lost. Consequently, Todd stopped her work on Dickinson's poems. She kept some manuscripts that would be later passed to her daughter Millicent Todd Bingham. After Lavinia's death in 1899, Susan's daughter Martha Dickinson Bianchi took the manuscripts that Lavinia had, and the daughters continued the rivalry that the mothers started. Bianchi brought her aunt back to the literary stage in the 20th century by the publication of *The Single Hound*, and after Bianchi's death, Bingham published a volume about Dickinson and an edition of 250 unpublished poems.

The year 1955 gave birth to the first complete and faithful edition ever to appear; the hallmark three-volume edition of the poems by T. H. Johnson *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, then *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1960), and the selected poems, *Final Harvest: Emily Dickinson's Poems* (1960), and last but not least the three-volumes of the letters. Dickinson was championed, and her

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[18] Higginson's honesty has introduced us to Dickinson as she really was, and that must be treasured. He knew her personally and had a lifelong correspondence with her. She shared her heartfelt concerns with him. We owe Todd and Higginson gratitude, for without their commitment, Dickinson's poetry and letters would not likely have been rescued from the dark.

entire ouevre was presented for the first time with *Variant Readings Critically Compared with All Known Manuscripts*. Johnson gave importance to the history of the manuscripts, and corrected past mistakes. Moreover, he tracked the relationship of the manuscripts with Dickinson's letters and life. Perhaps, because Millicent Todd Bingham still lived, he could not pay that much attention to the relationship that the Dickinson and Todd families had.

In 1960, Dickinson's name grew astonishingly with the birth of two great works: Jay Leyda's two-volume, *The Years and Hours of Emily Dickinson* and Charles R. Anderson's critical study, *Emily Dickinson's Poetry: Stairway of Surprise*. The publishing events did justice compared to the modest iota of Dickinson's past reputation. It was time to recognize Emily Dickinson as one of the original poetic geniuses of America's 19th century. But all this did not bring matters to an end so much as to a new beginning. The giant step took place in 1981 with the work of R. W. Franklin, who represented the original texts. He collected facsimiles of the manuscripts and placed them in their original sequence, and published them as *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson*, which was followed by another edition in 1986. Moreover, he brought to us the letters as Dickinson wrote them. And then, in 1998, came the most complete edition of all, Franklin's three-volume *Variorum,* which is a collection that presents all of the known word variations of each poem. Wendy Martin explains it this way: "If a reader wanted to compare a poem sent to Susan Dickinson, for example, against a version sent to Higginson, Franklin's variorum provides the differences" (2007: 120).

It was a difficult task. The crossover points between 1861 – 1862 and 1864 – 1865 are noted as being difficult to establish and Franklin confirms that the question of "dating is a judgement, albeit an informed one, subject to imprecision that increases across time" (1998: 39).

But the biggest question remains unanswered. What was Dickinson's purpose in binding her poems? Many critics have given their opinion about the

nature of the fascicles and this has produced diverse suggestions. Franklin suggests that there is an artistic motive, yet the fascicles were a result of Dickinson's periodic "cleaning up" in an attempt to avoid "multiplicity and confusion" (x) and that she gathered the copied poems randomly and bound them regardless of order (1998: 21). He suggests that no order was intended, whereas the writer Robert Weisbuch says that "any combination of the individual poems may provide a sense of coherence," and he prefers to see Dickinson's work "as one long poem" (1975: xiii). Ruth Miller, after a close study of the forty fascicles, comes to the conclusion that the fascicles should be regarded as artistic gatherings, "So similar are the fascicles it seems possible to chart one and obtain a blueprint for all" (249). The writer William Shurr claims that the fascicles show Dickinson's love for the Rev. Charles W. Wadsworth and thus are not intended to be read by others (181-194), whereas Dorothy Huff Oberhaus positions Dickinson as a meditative Christian poet claiming that "the fortieth fascicle is a carefully constructed poetic sequence and the triumphant conclusion of a long single work, the account of a spiritual and poetic pilgrimage that begins with the first fascicle's first poem" (3). This despite the fact that Emily Dickinson said of her family, "They are religious—except me—and address an Eclipse, every morning—whom they call their 'Father'" (L 261).

To be able to answer this question and appreciate this work of art, one should read it as a whole. Obviously, Dickinson's lack of publication during her lifetime has fuelled the debate concerning her purposes in binding her poems.

4. My Letter to the World

All the letters I can write
Are not fair as this—
Syllables of Velvet—
Sentences of Plush,

Depths of Ruby, undrained,
Hid, Lip, for Thee—
Play it were a Humming Bird—
And just sipped—me— (J334-Fr380)

Apart from being a reference of great importance, the letters of Dickinson show how brilliantly she wrote, and that is a reason why they were kept and cherished by those with whom she corresponded on a regular basis. She was aware of the everlasting, eternal effect that a letter can produce: "A Letter always feels to me like immortality because it is the mind alone without corporeal friend" (L 330, to Higginson). Heginbotham writes, "Dickinson's own practice of writing letters to some ninety-three known correspondents in her life (Tingley 1987, 15) was bound so tightly to the writing of poetry that the two enterprises are sometimes difficult to differentiate (108). She found relief in writing letters and she gave it a definition at the end of her life. In 1885, she wrote, "A Letter is a joy of Earth— / It is denied the Gods—" (J1639-Fr1672).

Dickinson's letters are important because they reveal valuable details of her personal life. Her first editor, Mabel Loomis Todd, says that Dickinson's letters suggest "a refreshing atmosphere of homely simplicity" (2003); while Jane D. Eberwein says that "Since Dickinson did not keep a diary, the letters were the only prose available to her readers; their publication offered a rare insight into her private world, thus providing a much needed context for her poems" (1998).

A letter gives her warmth, grace, and fondness:

> Warm in her Hand these accents lie
> While faithful and afar
> The Grace so awkward for her sake
> It's fond subjection wear— (J1313-Fr1307)

It is very probable that she wrote more letters than the ones that we have at our disposal, and that there were letters that, once written, instead of sending them, she "stacked them neatly in a box, put the box in the drawer of her writing table, and shut the drawer firmly," as Elizabeth Spires says in her interesting book *The Mouse of Amherst* (2001).

The Letters of Emily Dickinson, published in 1894, represented her as a letter writer and was intended to extend the reader's knowledge of her life. An

announcement that appeared in the Boston Herald in 1894 presents the book as something that reveals more of Dickinson's life:

> Those who have been interested in Emily Dickinson's poems, and the number is very large, have been eager to see her letters, which contain all the prose she is known to have written. In the poems there was a somber and even weird outlook upon this world and the next. They were written in a mood which was unusual, if not really strange, but they expressed the reality of her life, and it is in their unhackneyed character and strange fervour that they have attracted general attention. These letters have been collected with great difficulty, and it would seem as if some of them were too trifling for publication, but, inasmuch as they contain the only record of her life, they will be received with special interest by the large number of persons who are attracted to her poems.[19]

The book's intention was not really to present Dickinson's letters as another literary genre. Recently, however, critics like Marietta Messmer have begun to see the letters as the most important part of Dickinson's literary work, saying that they are her only "systematically 'authorized'" texts (2). Other critics have begun to see her letters as something more profound that offers more than an explanation for her poems. Thus, a series of diverse debates began over which type of writing Dickinson took more pleasure in. In fact, both genres are closely interwoven in Dickinson's writing because prose offers what poetry cannot and vice-versa.

She assumed an authoritative language that was a result of her continuous spiritual unrest and thirst for knowledge. This, in turn, led her to acquire a distinctive diction and power of expression. Consider her very first letter at the age of 11:

> Mr Jones has found in looking at his policy that his insurance is 8 thousand dollars instead of 6 which makes him feel a great deal better than he did at first; Mr Wilson and his wife took tea here the other night [;] they are going to move Wednesday—they have made out to get one of the Mt Pleasant Buildings to its place of distination which is a matter of great rejoicing to the public (L 1).

This unique personality would continue to write letters until the end of her life, contemplating things around her and writing of mature matters. At the age of 12,

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[19] See Buckingham (362).

according to one of her teachers, Daniel Fiske, she had shown a deep interest in language. He says that her "Compositions were strikingly original: and in both thought and style seemed beyond her years."[20]

Every simple word becomes a major story in her letters, as she shows in a letter to Abiah Root in 1845: "We'll finish an education sometime, won't we? You may then be Plato, and I will be Socrates, provided you won't be wiser than I am" (L 5). In another letter to Root, Dickinson speaks about her decision to help her mother with domestic work: "I found a quantity of sewing waiting with open arms to embrace me, or rather for me to embrace it, and I could hardly give myself up to 'Nature's sweet restorer,' for the ghosts of out-of-order garments crying for vengeance upon my defenceless head" (L 14).

It was within her power to manipulate words to express her version of reality as well as her thoughts and feelings. This letter written in 1846 was also sent to Root: "The New Year's day was unusually gloomy to me, I know not why, and perhaps for that reason a host of unpleasant reflections forced themselves upon me which I found not easy to throw off" (L 9).

Her soul yearns for something she cannot yet define, or does not want to express openly: "How many things have we omitted to do which might have cheered a human heart, or whispered hope in the ear of the sorrowful, and how many things have we done over which the dark mantle of regret will ever fall!" (L 9).

Her letters also have the quality of being amusing and comic. In the following letter she blames her uncle Joel Warren Norcross for not sending her a promised letter:

War Sir—'my voice is for war!' Would you like to try a duel—or is that too quiet to suit you—at any rate I shall kill you—and you may dispose of your affairs with that end in

[20] See Habegger (152).

view [...] You can take Chloroform if you like—and I will put you beyond the reach of pain in a twinkling. The last duel I fought didn't take but five minutes in all (L 29).

As a member of a family of lawyers, Dickinson possesed an understanding of legal language and politics, which were not activities for women at that time. In a letter to Susan, she says in a frustrated tone, "Why cant I be a Delegate to the great Whig Convention? —dont I know all about Daniel Webster, and the Tariff, and the Law?" (L 94)

In her understanding of God and divinity and her search for spiritual enlightenment, Dickinson examined the 19th century's liberal religious movements such as Unitarianism and Transcendentalism. Many followers accepted Unitarianism for its simplicity and absence of religious complications. In a letter to Jane Humphrey, Dickinson shows that she holds to her soul-searching of her Puritan upbringing,

The halt—the lame—and the blind—the old—the infirm—the bedridden—and superannuated—the ugly, and disagreeable—the perfectly hateful to me—all these to see—and be seen by—an opportunity rare for cultivating meekness—and patience—and submission—and for turning my back to this very sinful, and wicked world. Somehow or other I incline to other things—and Satan covers them up with flowers, and I reach out to pick them (L 30).

Her appreciation of Transcendentalist thinking had grown. In Christmas 1876, she sends a volume of *Representative Men* by Emerson to Marry Channing Higginson, accompanied by a letter that says, "I am bringing a little Granite Book you can lean upon" (L 481).

Apart from Emerson, Dickinson also wrote about Thoreau in a thank-you letter sent to Higginson for his gift *Short Stories of American Authors*. She describes the book that contains a critical sketch of Thoreau "Magic" (L 622). Her admiration for Thoreau is shown in another letter sent to Susan, asking "Was the Sea cordial? Kiss him for Thoreau—" (L 320). In another letter sent to her cousins, Dickinson says, "The fire-bells are oftener now, almost, than the church-bells. Thoreau would wonder which did the most harm" (L 691).

In another letter to Humphrey, Dickinson shows that she is open to a new experience of spirituality: “If every prayer was answered, there would be nothing left to pray for—we must ‘suffer—and be strong.’ Shall we be strong—wont suffering make weaker this human—” (L 30). She continues expressing her feelings about the circumstances she is trapped in: “The path of duty looks very ugly indeed—and the place where I want to go more amiable—a great deal” (L 30). She says that she was left alone to carry on with domestic work: “My two hands but two—not four, or five as they ought to be—and so many wants—and me so very handy—and my time of so little account—and my writing so very needless” (L 30). These words are clearly out of absolute frustration because her time may be much better spent on writing.

This is only a sample of letters from a poet that wrote all her life. Throughout this study, I shall refer to her letters to support my ideas and to extend our knowledge of Dickinson’s private life while studying fascicles 11, 12, and 13. But we should also recognize that this is only a simple part of her her story. One must keep in mind that Dickinson made drafts of her letters and many of them were lost or simply destroyed after making a copy to send. It is also difficult to assess the full extent of Dickinson’s letters and the nature of her manuscripts, partly because many of them were mutilated and destroyed intentionally by others, presumably, by her own brother Austin and Todd, the woman with whom he was having a secret relationship, in order to hide Dickinson’s intimate details about her private life, especially her intimate letters to Susan.

Chapter 2 — Fascicle 11: "Two lives, One being"

P1-J283-Fr254 "A Mien to move a Queen" introduces us to fascicle eleven with an air of well bred worldliness about a woman; it is a highly characteristic, kid-gloved poem that ties inner nobility and humility into a knot that cannot be easily unraveled. Dated by Johnson as about 1861, when Dickinson was thirty-one, the poem springs from mature experience. It reveals, with instantaneous impressions, a great deal of knowledge about a woman's personality.

The poem's alternations of metaphors of limitation (references to the "Tear," "Wren," "Hands—so slight," and soft "Voice") with those of inner royalty ("Queen," "Duke," "Realm," "Diadem") keep us constantly aware that it extols a woman of many faces and moods. The mystery of the poem, then, could be summed up in a single question: has Emily Dickinson written a poem of self-appraisal in the third person as if she were objectively examining some other person? It is well acknowledged that Dickinson considers herself humble and small in her poetry.[21] But it is also known that she harbours ideas about her inner royalty and divine gift of poetry. Eberwein says that, "Dickinson probably liked Bowles's queen image—one of a constellation of royal terms she tended to employ in interchanges with him. Often she combined it with shrinking, humble metaphors that also reflected aspects of her expending and contracting self-image (1985: 31).

The third stanza describes a woman who is empowered by her divine gift of poetry. She achieves power and status when uttering "On Subjects Diadem." Her voice, which is described as gentle as the Snow on the Ear, can be changed to a sonorous tone like that of a ruler of a "Realm" giving a public speech.

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[21] It is significant that in her references to herself she is always modest and throughout her poetry she humbly belittles herself. But the objective of this technique is to grasp the reader's attention and thus produce the contrary effect. At times, she is the little hearth as in Fr703 "To my small Hearth His fire came"; she has a "timid head" and "simple bosom," as in Fr237; she has a "little hand" Fr268, "small" foot Fr300, and "little Boot" Fr406, among many other examples.

The poem seems to gradually reveal more than one side of the poet's nature. On one hand, she underlines what, according to Judith Farr, is Dickinson's synonym for integrity, the "Snow."[22] This brings to mind Dickinson's well-known poem J709-Fr788 "Publication—is the Auction / Of the Mind of Man—," where she urges artists not to invest their snow, or honour, by publishing (1992: 180).[23] On the other hand, she tells us that she is both great and small; she can adopt a manner that would move a "Queen" emotionally, yet she is still "Half Child." She can have a noble look like that of the Duke of Orleans, and with his Bonnet too, but she has a great concern for the less fortunate, because she knows that sympathy with others fulfills the self, "puts its manner by / For humbler Company."

This represents a high level of nobility. Reading the poem, we sense that self-realization is an absolute imperative, and the speaker is close enough to this ethic herself to appreciate its force. The more one ponders this poem the more the speaker's most heartfelt concerns grow. She cries when there is nobody around—and the tear is her eye's frequent visitor:

> When none are near
> Even a Tear—
> Its frequent Visitor—

In the second stanza, she goes on harboring ideas about inner nobility, "A Bonnet like a Duke—"; however, keeping an alignment with the minimal all along. She can be shyer than the wren with its modest peruke, and her "Hands—so slight—" that they would fill a fairy with merriment.

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[22] Farr suggests that the "Snow" in Dickinson also represents virginity. In J275-Fr332 "Doubt me! My Dim Companion!" (which will be fully discussed later) a gay but impassioned apology, she tells a man of whom she dreamed and who had asked about it—Bowles?—That her snow, her virginity in this case, is intact and, indeed, kept so for him: "hallow just the snow / Intact, in Everlasting flake— / Oh, Caviler, for you!" (1992: 180)

[23] Her resistance to publication will be fully discussed later in P19-J250-Fr270, "I shall keep singing!"

The speaker ends the poem with her typical modesty, and lends the last stanza a relaxedly conversational air:

> Too small—to fear—
> Too distant—to endear—
> And so Men Compromise—
> And just—revere—

She is "Too small—to fear—," yet inevitably distant from the world, "Too distant—to endear—" herself to others who neither fear her nor have warmth for her. Her smallness, on the other hand, wards "Men" off, because she is noble, and thus she conveys the impression that she is better off when she is distant, because distance, while hindering chances for fondness, impedes disdain. Men therefore compromise in their attitude towards her, and they esteem what they might scorn because being distant makes the speaker's royal scene more compelling.

With this given sense of apparent inconsequentiality, insufficiency, and susceptibility, it seems natural that Dickinson should have associated herself closely with humble and minimal creatures, as in J1009-Fr1009 "I was a Phebe—nothing more—," and J61-Fr151 "Papa above! / Regard a Mouse / O'erpowered by the Cat!" among others. In the next poem, P2-J284-Fr255 "The Drop, that wrestles in the Sea—," however, she is the smallest of the small, a drop of water.

Written about 1861 and sent to an unknown recipient (1998: 203), the poem is a rotund one in which Dickinson projects through the multivalent symbol of the sea one of her biggest needs: in this case, her longing for losing her "locality," her self, in the larger self of a beloved person.

After setting up an identity in the previous poem, Dickinson uses the sea to express her assorted needs and impulses to cross boundaries. At times in her early

poetry, when she still believed in resurrection, she compared life to a sea journey to the other shore, eternal heaven.[24]

In the first stanza, it is uncertain whether the fact that the Drop "Forgets her own locality" is a motive for unease at losing her self—or ecstasy in the fusing with the beloved. The verb wrestles argue not only a conflict with the sea but also an inner conflict with what she is undergoing. In the second stanza, she becomes involved in a Delphic debate, playing with the terms "small" and "all." In the variant version of the poem she says, "She knows herself an incense small—." In Dickinson's Webster's dictionary, incense is a blossom; it is also a prayer; an offering for a deity, which in this respect can be the sea-god Poseidon, a probability given by mentioning the god's wife Amphitrite, the Greek nymph, in the last stanza. The poem thus seems to suggest a trinity relationship. If the unknown recipient of this poem was Samuel Bowles, then Amphitrite could be a reference to his wife Mary Schermerhorn. Or, one may speculate that this third person could be Maria Whitney, who Leiter calls, "the lovely and accomplished single woman with whom Bowles had enjoyed a long, intimate friendship (20), and who Dickinson befriended 1878, after Bowles' death (401). In that case, the speaker "Pleads" to lose her "locality"—her self—in a place that is already taken.[25]

This intimates the existence of a prohibited relationship, a love she desires, but cannot attain. She no longer has a "locality" of her own, only that within the boundless, immeasurable waters of her beloved. However, minimal and

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[24] In J4-Fr3 "On this wondrous sea," the only poem dated in 1853, Dickinson shows an early Christian belief. The speaker in the poem asks the "Pilot" who is "Sailing silently" to the unknown if he can guide her through this "wondrous" life, and asks if he is familiar with "the shore / Where no breakers roar—." The pilot, then, answers that he will become the guide and that he will take her to eternity, to Heaven, "Thither I pilot *thee*—Land Ho! Eternity! Ashore at last!" in spite of the difficulties, she is confident and says that she will arrive safely and enter eternity.

[25] Farr describes Samuel Bowles as "vigorous, earthy, and dashing. That all the Dickinsons admired him would have improved his attractiveness for Emily, to whom family ties meant much" (1992: 187).

insignificant this Drop seems to be, she also seems convinced by the fact that only by merging with the "all" will she grow larger herself.

> Yet small—she sighs—if All—is All—
> How larger—be?

Speaking from her smallness, she is asking how she could be a "larger" offering. A fair reading of these lines is that she is speaking from an aggrieved sense of experiencing this unfair situation because the person she desires is unavailable, and thus asking: how can I become larger?

The given fact that the ocean, in this case Poseidon, "smiles at her conceit—," indicates that he may be smiling in mirth at her astuteness—or superciliously at her pride. If pride and self-satisfaction is the case, for it offers a quite likely interpretation of the term "conceit," then the noun "incense" could be interpreted as the speaker's desire to provoke the sea to some more belligerent reaction than the given smile.

The final lines imply that forgetting how Poseidon brutally overpowered Amphitrite, —whom he kidnapped from her father's home, the titan Nereus, and forced to dwell forever in the underwater world—the speaker emphatically wants to experience the same, and be absorbed in the sea, and "Pleads" take "Me" as wife.

So we are informed at an early stage of the fascicle of the existence of a love that puts the speaker in a bitter state of expectancy. It is not surprising that "The Drop, that wrestles in the Sea—," like all of Dickinson's poems, was surreptitious. Packed with underpinnings and sedimented with half-legible meanings, the poem tempers the reader's impulse to judge it too absolutely. It is neither surprising that the poem does not carry its significance on its face. For Dickinson, this unease caused by the unattainable desire the poem discloses could be the very essence of her inspiration.

P3-J285-Fr256 “The Robin’s my Criterion for Tune—” conveys the speaker’s enviable interaction with local nature.

While giving very little coherent explication of her secretive life, poems like “The Robin’s my Criterion for Tune—” speak of the poet’s provinciality as being fundamental in developing her personality. It sensibly transforms the raw stuff of nature into meaning. Firstly, the speaker associates the “Robin,” a frequent visitor that flutters in and out of Dickinson’s poetry,[26] with her musical taste, and adds that it is her standard for judging music, “my Criterion for Tune.”

The reader can get a clue about the time or the mood in which this poem was written. Robins are known for their cheery singing and early appearance at the end of winter, and Dickinson had probably contemplated this from a close distance, in her garden. She states, “I grow—where Robins do—”; however, she adds, if she had been born where the “cuckoo” exists, that bird would be her standard, and she would “swear by him—,” too. Secondly, the speaker in line 6 says that because “we’re Orchard sprung,” she determines preference for another harbinger of spring, the buttercup. She wanted to have the yellow flower that symbolizes cheerfulness at her funeral,[27] and chooses it as her flower of resurrection, “my Whim for Bloom—.”

Again, the speaker uses the conjunction “But” to add that if she were “Britain born,” she would reject the daisies, and with disdain, too. Nonetheless, she would appreciate the “Nut” tree, which causes the seasons to move in haste

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[26] In F1-P13 “I had a guinea golden,” she says that she lost a “crimson Robin” friend that was special because he “sang full many a day,” but in the end he “did fly away—” when the seasons changed, “when the woods were painted.” She calls the robin “traitor,” because he left and she finds no “consolation / Beneath the sun.” He could not be replaced by other robins: “Time brought me other Robins— / Their Ballads were the same—,” because he was her unique “missing Troubadour.”

[27] Dickinson mentions in one of her letters to Mrs Holland, “When it shall come my turn for [funeral bouquets], I want a Buttercup […] Doubtless the Grass will give me one, for does she not revere the Whims of her flitting Children?” Remarkably, nature granted her this simple wish. According to Higginson, the fields were full of buttercups and wild geraniums that day. See Farr (1992: 3).

when "dropping" the ripened nuts. And this, she believes, includes the four seasons: fall when the nuts ripen and fall; winter when they get buried in the ground by squirrels; spring when the young branches spring from the trees; and summer when the plant develops and ripens—at least that is what "I'm taught," she adds.

This regional identification continues in lines 13-14. The speaker conjures up the gentle snow of the first poem, and says that she has to see it falling on the ground to believe that winter came; this is how winter is, "to me –." But she also knows that in other places on earth they do not experience the snow phenomena.

The poem starts by treating the specific animals and plants that constitute life and home to the speaker, and then the seasons. She lists the simple things that she appreciates in life, those meek phenomena that shape her visual perception. Then, she tells us where she comes from is fundamental in developing her personality, because our characters form in response to what we are surrounded with at an early age:

> Because I see—New Englandly—
> The Queen, discerns like me—
> Provincially—

This provincial simplicity, however, is delicately converted into aristocracy and discernment. She chooses the queen to be her companion, because both of them "discern,"[28] and they do so provincially. In other words, the speaker sees the queen as one responsible for her province whereas she sees the simple things she is surrounded with as part of her province.

Dickinson's fascination with nature attests to her love of earthly life. Nature is a pillar of Dickinson's art, a landmark of her poetry. It was, by and large, the onmipresent companion with whom she had a lifelong journey of

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[28] According to 1828's edition of Webster's dictionary, the term "discern" means "To separate by the eye, or by the understanding."

maturity, the one who had usurped religious faith, and the one who had granted her the virtue of Sophrosyne. It was a book wide open, from which she learned how to commune. She walked through life as the "little Tippler" of Nature (J214-Fr207), and felt "lonely without the birds" on a rainy day (L 340), and envied the "Butterflies" that can keep "flowers" company (J137-Fr95), and a "Bird" of Nature for her can be a symbol of "Hope" who gracefully asks for no "Crumb" in return. This mix of generosity and abstinence is just one of the many virtues that peep out unabashed in Dickinson, and, perhaps the most important in the long run.

Her connection with nature is emotional as well as intellectual. Consider what she writes in her second letter to Higginson: "You ask of my Companions Hills—Sir—and the Sundown—and a Dog—large as myself, that my Father bought me—They are better than Beings—because they know—but do not tell—and the noise in the Pool, at Noon—excels my Piano" (L II 404). The Hills, the Sundown, and her Dog are her preferred Companions, because they "do not tell," they do not ruin this sacrosanct moment of integration. But, the question naturally arises: what would make a human being prefer Nature to other beings? Inevitably, this takes us back to the solitude our poet had savoured to the full. In an attempt to add some logic to the reasons behind her renunciation of the external world, one may think that when life gave her short measure, nature came as a refuge to her, and together created a cardinal bond.

As a young girl, she disingenuously says that she sees angels in nature, with a poet's eyes: "When much in the woods, as a little girl, I was told that the snake would bite me, that I might pick a poisonous flower, or goblins kidnap me; but I went along and met no one but angels, who were far shyer of me than I could be of them, so I haven't that confidence in fraud which many exercise" (L 271, sent to Higginson in August 1862).

In most cases nature is a friendly spirit that has given her boon companions: "It is lonely without the birds today, for it rains badly, and the little poets have no umbrellas" (L 340, sent to Louis Norcross). And these companions

flutter in and out of her poetry in the shape of "Crimson Robins," "Hummingbirds," "buccaneering" "Blue Birds" (J1213-Fr1194), and "Jays" who "bark like Blue Terriers" (L 315), to name a few. She has been yielded "Witchcraft" by the "murmur of a Bee" (J155-Fr217), and the turf has become her residence, with her fellow "Cricket" (J1104-Fr1104) and the butterfly that poses elegantly "with a vest like a Turk" (L 377).

Yet cautiously, she would compare the world of nature with that of man, exposing to view the widening gulf between these two worlds:

> Like one in danger, cautious.
> I offered him a crumb,
> And he enrolled his feathers
> And rowed him softer home (J328-Fr359)

Suspiciously, the bird rejects what has been offered, presenting two worlds that seem impossible to bridge.

This natural world is a world she resorted to because she felt unsuitable in the other (love; publication; organized religion); it is thus a presentation of a hankering for a new and free life. Consider the polarity between the external world of a lady under the radar of an inveterate Puritan community and the world she had chosen to be part of:

> Inebriate of air—am I—
> And Debauchee of Dew—
> Reeling—thro' endless summer days—
> From inns of molten Blue— (J214-Fr207)

This poem will be discussed later in fascicle 12, but for now note how the speaker favours the natural world.

Dickinson's interest in nature is strongly shown by what she wrote about the cycle of the seasons. The dedication is so enormous that it would hardly be possible to cite all the poems and letters that in one way or another have touched upon the subject. In her earlier spring poems (1859-1864), expectancy and half suppressed enthusiasm are felt, and this is due to the concept of rebirth and

growth the season is associated with. In J74-Fr137 "A Lady red—amid the Hill," dated 1859, she is expecting the "Orchard, and Buttercup, and Bird," but she is wonderstruck by the current lull imposed on the world by winter:

> How nonchallant the Hedge!
> As if the "Resurrection"
> Were nothing very strange!

On other occasions, historical rebirth miracles like that of "Nicodemus' Mystery" are conjured up, called an "annual reply," as she contemplates the "Hills" through her "furtive look" (J140-Fr90). At times, in order to exist and be part of the cycle in "March and April" some conditions have to be met, as recorded in J844-Fr948:

> But during March and April
> None stir abroad
> Without a cordial interview
> With God—

The poems of spring from the 1870's and 1880's represent a new dimension of profound inspiration, at times as a fussy and moody "Fellow" bird who,

> With gay delays he goes
> To some superior Tree
> Without a single Leaf
> And shouts for joy to nobody
> But his seraphic Self— (J1465-Fr1484)

In J1333-Fr1356 the spring's alluring transformation inspires "A little Madness" that is healthy "even for the King," yet not very healthy for the "Clown," who, by seeing the "tremendous scene—" develops a false belief that he "own [s]" "This whole Experiment of Green—."

Summer for Dickinson meant joy and zest; it is the time when the flowers bloom, and the poet herself prospers. Her state of mind produced by the delights of summer is one of inebriate celebration as mentioned before in J214-Fr207. Summer was her favourite season, and the impact of its departure occurs

repeatedly in her poetry. In the Indian summer, Dickinson begins solemnly to reconsider the summer that is about to end. There are approximately twenty poems centrally concerned with the Indian summer theme written from 1858 until within two years of Dickinson's death in 1886—that is to say, 20 Indian summer poems out of 28 Indian summers, at a rough guess. The earliest of these poems is J18-Fr21, "The Gentian weaves her fringes—," written in 1858, and the first poem of fascicle 1. The poem's salient point is that, at this time of her life, Dickinson connected the death of the summer with human death in a scene that seems naturalistic in every sense but copying the forms of the inherited tradition of Puritan Christianity. As though in a church service the "aged Bee" gives a sermon, after which the mourners "knelt in prayer," and the ceremony ends by a trinitarian blessing,

> In the name of the Bee—
> And of the Butterfly—
> And of the Breeze—Amen!

In November of the same year she would write to her friends Mr. and Mrs. Holland:

> I buried my garden last week—our man, Dick, lost a little girl through the scarlet fever. I thought perhaps that you were dead, and not knowing the sexton's address, interrogate the daisies. Ah! Dainty—dainty death! Ah! democratic Death! Grasping the proudest zinnia from my purple garden,—then deep to his bosom calling the serf's child! Say, is he everywhere? Where shall I hide my things? Who is alive?" (L 195)

In September of the following year she would say to the Hollands that the "gentian" is a symbol of mortality for both human and nature: "The gentian is a greedy flower, and overtakes us all. Indeed, this world is short, and I wish, until I tremble, to touch the ones I love before the hills are red—are gray—are white—are 'born again'"! (L 207)

In her last decade Dickinson approached summer more profoundly. She became more aware of its departure in silence, of the passage of time, and her desire to seize each moment had intensified. She senses the birds' "Dirks of Melody" (J1420-Fr1450) for a fleeting moment, and the hummingbird is on a

scenic "Route of Evanescence" (J1463-Fr1489). Regret is intensily sensed at times; still, there is a positive idea that life sails to a better shore:

> As imperceptibly as Grief
> The Summer lapsed away—

The same poem ends saying,

> Our Summer made Her light Escape
> Unto the Beautiful— (J1540-Fr935)

The joyful drunkeness of summer becomes alarmed sobriety in autumn, as though she has been caught up and turned out by the "inns" (J214-Fr207). Then she enters in a state of reflective awareness. As she looks behind, the memories of the past season are not diminished but, rather, intensified as she encounters the inescapable depredations of age which autumn represents:

> So we evade the Charge of Years
> On one attempting shy
> The Circumvention of the Thought
> Of Life's Declivity— (J1346-Fr1341)

Here is when the luxuriant leaves and foliage that summer gives life to turn brown, red, and yellow, a sign of aging and progressing deterioration. Still, Dickinson loved both the colours and feeling of this season and attached to it a sense of eminence. On 16th October 1855, she wrote to Jane Humphrey: "tell him it is Autumn—and tell him I have nuts and squirrels, and gold and scarlet trees—and tell him here is the king!" (L 180)

Winter in Dickinson's poems starts to send its dispiriting emissaries such as the "Frost," "blonde Assassin," who meanly "beheads" the "happy Flowers" of summer, or the "certain Slant of light" which,

> When it comes, the Landscape listens—
> Shadows—hold their breath—
> When it goes, 'tis like the Distance
> On the look of Death— (J258-Fr320)

In this delicately built poem, nature does nothing but unfold its inexplicable coldness. Literally and figuratively, winter is the harbinger of death, motionless and immobility, monotone boredom, low spirits. Its surface lies between the terror and awe and false promises that reside underneath, and the external, ornamental beauty that shams. Consider this Indian summer poem:

> These are the days when Birds come back—
> A very few—a Bird or two,
> To take a final look—
>
> These are the days when skies resume
> The old—old sophistries of June—
> A blue and gold mistake
>
> Oh fraud that cannot cheat the Bee,
> Almost thee plausibility
> Induces my belief (J130-Fr122)

Note how summer, which has already gone, pretends to be still there, but Nature could not keep up the masquerade for long, for it would have brought disgrace on the Bee and the few birds whose return was only for confirmation.

As a provincial poet, Dickinson became one of life's eternal observers, living an experience with engagement, which she wished for and could attain. If her position as an observer is a privileged one, it is a privilege she had to pay for in terms of uncertainty and doubt, expressed through an awareness of loss through time. A good example of how her poems turn on absences and eloquent silences is the next poem written in 1861, P4-J243-Fr257 "I've known a Heaven, like a Tent—," in which a dramatic disappearance of heaven takes place.

The poem welds together a rich variety of experience in order to preserve some sense of a coherent self. Nevertheless, this self is constantly on the point of drowning into the feeling of loss. The opening line represents a spiritual insight that allows an uplifting moment. It tells us about those visions of heaven that are perceived in moments of revelation. This, in turn, provides the speaker with a sensation of "Gaiety." But this gaiety that "dazzled, Yesterday," will be like a

circus tent taken up and, all of a sudden, gone from "View." By representing the circus as a metaphor for heaven, the spiritual insight the opening line provides directly becomes an ominous example of how a vision of heaven can lapse into pure sardonic scepticism.

As a part of the circus' display, Dickinson offers its overtones in a very descriptive way to depict the dismantlement before the departure. It was quiet and unnoticed; however, the way everything "Dissolved as utterly" is preoccupying, engrossing, and leaving behind a huge gap in the reader's mind. The circus folds together its cross-beam that supports the tent, tears up by the roots the sharp wooden pieces used for setting the tent, and is lost to sight:

> To wrap it's shining Yards—
> Pluck up it's stakes, and disappear—

All this happens in total silence, neither the "sound of Boards— / Or Rip of Nail—Or Carpenter—" is heard. All the noise of packing up, the "Ring," or circle where the action occurs, the hitting and beating of the hammers were unheard. It left "No Trace—no Figment" of the "Marvel" "That dazzled, Yesterday." "Men, and Feats—," the acrobats and the extraordinary act of skill faded away. Their absence is depicted as a "Bird" "swallowed up" in the distance, and this "Bird" fades in the sky described as though it were rowing through it, "A plash of Oars," until it becomes barely perceptible, provoking sorrow, "just a Hue—."

An accurate reading of this poem would be that it describes the inevitable disappearance of everything in the world. The transience of nature was one of Dickinson's major themes (and transience leads inevitably to death). Here she is talking about how we are always left looking into the void for what has disappeared from our experience. And this, too, is associated with her repeated expressions of the pain of loss.

The next poem P5-J223-Fr258 "I Came to buy a smile—today—," addresses "Sir" for the first time in the fascicle, and reflects how Dickinson wrote poems that bring to light her emotional approach to men.

To a degree, the poem shows a relevance and pertinence to the reading of the second poem. According to Franklin, it is one of the poems signed by "Emily" and sent to Samuel Bowles (1998: 160). This, in turn, produced diverse suggestions on whether or not Dickinson is employing endearments to persuade a married man to smile for her:

> But just a single smile—
> The smallest one upon your face
> Will suit me just as well—
> The one that no one else would miss
> It shone so very small—

The conclusion that can be drawn from these lines is that the speaker wants a secret smile that cannot be noticed by others, one that "shone so very small—."

To Samuel Bowles, Dickinson was a "Queen" (L II, 393). She was also to become for him the "Queen Recluse."[29] In a letter sent to him before his departure for Europe in April 1862, she describes herself as, "The flowers waited—in the Vase—and love got peevish, watching," waiting to say goodbye. When he does not come, she herself becomes her crushing flower "Hope put out a Petal" (L 259). The letter contains an unusually great number of dashes that imply, according to Farr, sighs or outcries, and thus she gives the impression of being unsatisfied (1992: 248-249).

This is perhaps where we should pause to ponder the relationship that the poet had with the editor of *The Springfield Republican* and supporter of women's rights. Dickinson's family, to begin with, liked to point out that it was Bowles who gave Dickinson what she called a jasmine tree (To nineteenth-century

[29] See Farr (1992: 189).

gardeners, its fragrant white flowers were known as "poet's jessamine"). In July 1882 she sent one of its "priceless" flowers to Samuel's son, Samuel Jr., and said that his father's "Immortality" was "secreted in a Star" that was each blossom (L 935). To Bowles' widow, Mary Schermerhorn, Dickinson wrote that he had "led" her, that "he was himself Eden" (L 567). To Maria Whitney, friend of the poet and cousin of Mrs. Bowles who was still mourning Bowles in 1885, she confided, "I fear we shall care very little for the techniqual resurrection, when to behold the one face that to us comprised it is too much for us" (L 969, probably early 1885). Finally, to Susan, returning from Bowles' funeral, she wrote of him this passage from a letter, and the lines that follow, "The beginning of 'Always' is more dreadful than the close—for that is sustained by flickering identity:

> His Nature was Future—
> He had not yet lived—
> David's route was simple—"I shall go to him"[30]

Shortly before her first letter to Higginson, Dickinson saw her poem "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers" published by Samuel Bowles, who was in charge of *The Springfield Republican* at that time.[31]

Mr. Bowles was a married man to whom Dickinson dedicated several poems, among them, J635-Fr607 "I think the longest Hour of all," located in fascicle 26, where she describes a warm welcome that awaits him on his return from Europe in 1862. But instead of meeting him, she picked up her "little Violin" and ran upstairs.[32]

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[30] See Farr (1992: 244).

[31] After publishing "A narrow Fellow in the Grass" Dickinson stopped the publication of her poems due to editorial alterations. She writes in a complaining letter to Higginson, "Lest you meet my Snake and suppose I deceive it was robbed of me—defeated too of the third line by the punctuation. The third and fourth were one—I told you I did not print—I feared you might think me ostensible" (L 316).

[32] The following two letters imply that the guest in "I think the longest Hour of all" is Samuel Bowles. Dickinson does not walk downstairs to receive him upon his return from Europe, though she had written letters of concern for his health and she wanted to welcome him as much as anybody else in the house. Instead, she sends two letters to him, a short one of apology (L 276),

It should not be surprising that the relationship that the poet had with Bowles became an easy target for speculation. While Farr (1992: 187) and Alfred Habegger believe that the Reverend Charles Wadsworth is the most likely candidate for "Master,"[33] Sharon Leiter, supported by Sewall's arguments,[34] argues that "Master" can only have been Samuel Bowles. According to Leiter, the poet met Bowles in 1858 for the first time, and in the same year she wrote the first letter to a man she addressed "Master." She would write two more in 1861 and 1862. Leiter adds, "Although some critics have speculated that "Master" was a fantasy, the quality of the emotion expressed in these letters is strongly suggestive of a searing, genuine experience" (14). In fact, Dickinson's relationship with Bowles reflects many ideas and points of interpretation. She had sent him and his wife letters during her lifetime, and usually addressed them as "Dear Friends."[35]

Back to our poem, the last two lines of the first stanza prepare us for the second stanza where the speaker proceeds to establish sovereignty. Here is what she says:

I'm pleading at the "counter"—sir—[36]
Could you afford to sell—

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followed by a long one explaining that she remained away only so that others could spend more time with him (L 277).

[33] In his intense study of the fascicles, William Shurr also claims that the fascicles show Dickinson's love for the Rev. Charles Wadsworth; one reason why they had been kept secret and not intended to be read by others (181-194).

[34] Although he believed that Samuel Bowles was Master, Sewall believes in Wadsworth role in Emily Dickinson's life. He writes, "Meanwhile, all we can say with confidence is that she needed someone all her life with whom she can share her spiritual problems and disbeliefs honestly … And at a crucial point … she would have been especially susceptible to the kind of Christianity Wadsworth preached and to the kind of man he was (1974: 462).

[35] Dickinson expresses a gradual degeneration of faith in a letter to Mrs Bowles, something that implies more than just a simple correspondence, "The Dust like the Mosquito buzzes around my faith" (L 235).

[36] Dickinson uses "Sir" to address several important male characters in her life, and sometimes in a friendly challenging manner. Among many, there is a letter to her uncle Joel Warren Norcross that shows a distinctive power of expression. Here, she blames him for not sending her a promised letter, "War Sir—'my voice is for war!' Would you like to try a duel—or is that too quiet to suit you—at any rate I shall kill you—and you may dispose of your affairs with that end in view (…) you can take Chloroform if you like—and I will put you beyond the reach of pain in a twinkling. The last duel I fought didn't take but five minutes in all" (L 29).

Persistence is sensed here. The speaker started the poem by showing her typical modesty, saying that the smallest smile "upon your face" will suit her "just as well." But now she is "pleading at the counter" with "sir" asking if he can afford to sell that smile, and she is ready to make a deal that he cannot refuse, because the modest speaker turns out to have diamonds and precious stones. By this offer, she is ready to give it all to get that smile in return, and shows an irresistible sense of humour suggesting that a "Jew" would find her offer enticing:[37]

> I've Diamonds—on my fingers—
> You know what Diamonds are?
> I've Rubies—like the Evening Blood—
> And Topaz—like the star!
> 'Twould be "a Bargain" for a Jew!
> Say—may I have it—Sir?

She dramatically describes herself in sunset terms approaching the sunrise. Although blessed with great riches and sovereignty, the Carmine, Hyacinth, yellowish, and pale blue colours that she owns cannot satisfy her.

The next poem P6-J287-Fr259, "A Clock stopped—" takes up the issue of death and its irremediability in the broadest sense.

The poet's trope is of human being as a clock who tick-tocks to his demise.[38] Line 2, "Not the Mantel's," points up that the clock that has stopped is not one that sits on a chimneypiece, although it has "Figures" that once moved. The figures could be either a reference to the numbers on the clock face or a

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[37] Dickinson was aware of the Jewish community and their financial role and how they developed a speciality in diamond evaluation at that time in America as well as Europe, North Africa, and Mideast. In J299-Fr418 "Your Riches—taught me—Poverty," among other poems, she also mentions "Jew" in its fifth stanza, "Might I—but be the Jew—," an allusion, according to Leiter, to the common image of Jews as diamond-cutters and traders (235).

[38] Porter calls the poem "her most artful metaphorical excursion in the early period" (1966: 167).

cuckoo clock's figurines. In any case, as the clock goes through its last agony, the figures bend their backs and shoulders forward in pain, swinging loosely:

> An awe came on the Trinket!
> The Figures hunched—with pain—
> Then quivered out of Decimals—
> Into Degreeless Noon—

The lifeless corpse of line 4 is also depicted as a "Trinket," which is nonetheless rendered capable of human awe as it is faced with death. And the figures painfully tremble as the Trinket passes from lifetime, Decimals, into timelessness, Degreeless Noon.[39]

The lifeless corpse revolves in a circle on a clock's central axis, which, once it has ceased to tell the time, cannot be repaired by even the most prestigious faraway clockmakers of "Geneva." Geneva was, in that epoch, the world's best city of watchmaking, but also the home of Calvinism. To a degree, the poem renders religious implications for the first time in the fascicle; that is, the master of all clockmakers, God, may have brought the clock into being, yet even he is incapable of breathing new life into it.

With the throes of death portrayed as the central weight of the poem, the anthropomorphic clock is beyond help after crossing the final frontier, articulating the speaker's preference for earthly life; the only life she is sure of. No "Doctor's" can rouse this broken "Pendulum," and "The Shopman ['s]" endeavour to save it is regarded ineffectual. On the whole, the idea encloses the Deistic concept of the universe as clockwork and God as a clockmaker (Doctor and shopman) who does not intervene or alter the course of nature.

In line 11 Pendulum becomes snow, a picture that rhymes and, in its coolness, echoes with "cool—concernless No—." "No" here is denial, the

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[39] In her discussion on "Degreeless Noon," Wolff comments, "Noon is a 'Degreeless' hour because when both minute and hour hand point to twelve, they are superimposed: there is no angle between them; they are separated by *zero* degrees (192).

fundamental word in a poem in which denial is a clue. It is "the wildest word we consign to Language," as Dickinson says in one of her letters (L 562). Besides, "No" is an epitome of death. Linguistically, the double o in "Noon" is the same as in "cool," which Degreeless implies, as the warmth of life ends:

> Nods from the Gilded pointers—
> Nods from the Seconds slim—
> Decades of Arrogance between
> The Dial life—
> And Him—

Note how the final stanza makes the term No part of the repeated word Nods. In this case, it is death that coolly Nods through both the golden, illuminated hour hand, and the gracefully thin Seconds hand at both the Doctor's and The Shopman indicating that their efforts are futile, because the widening gulf between the "Dial life" of the clock and where it is now has become as immeasurable as the "Decades of Arrogance" that it took for granted.

In P7-J288-Fr260 "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" the speaker emphasizes her triumphal solitude.

The potency of the poem's message circles around the different overtones of the word nobody. In fact, the word has only negative connotations. But in this poem it comes to mean something totally different. On the one hand, if we break the word down into the way it would sound, it would become "no body." The idea, then, is that the speaker is a voice, one that after her death will be still heard and transported through poetry to distant readers.

While Sewall finds it simply "coy, or cute" (1974: 674), the poem has social implications and a potent satire directed to those who would publish their art for fame, and from whose superficiality the poet firmly distances herself.

The first three lines are epigrammatic. They unveil the hidden messages in the rest of the poem and correspond with the ideas that are developed in it:

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you—Nobody—Too?
Then there's a pair of us!

On the other hand, Dickinson's tone suggests that being nobody is a voluntary and pleasant experience not only for herself, but also for her audience. She addresses a fellow consciousness during her solitude when she immediately asks "Who are you?" if you are "Nobody—Too," then that makes two of us, and thus she creates a seductive dialogue with the reader urging him/her to be in league with her because, "They'd advertise us." Being advertised is a bad fate for those who value their privacy and want to remain invisible. In a variant version of the poem, however, it says, "They'd banish us," which is a fate no less undesirable. Wolff notes:

> Dickinson's poetry apotheosizes this central human paradox: the poignant, inevitable isolation of each human being—the loneliness and the yearning to be seen, acknowledged, and known—on the one hand; on the other, the gleeful satisfaction in keeping one part of the self sequestered, sacred, uniquely powerful, and utterly inviolate—the incomparable safety in retaining a secret part of the "self" that is available to no one save self (130).

Its rejection of popularity and ceremony of the high-quality joys of solitude are spoken in the voice of a childish persona, with the typical earnest way of speaking that children often have. Wolff notes, "Only the conspiratorial invitation of youth could so consistently beguile readers into answering 'yes' to the question … 'Are you—Nobody—too?' She uses this 'Everyman figure of the child' to convince readers that they are in league with the speaker against the grown-up world" (184). This is typical of Dickinson; in the fascicle's opening poem she describes herself as "Half Child." In this way, the poem leads us to think that the speaker is saying, "I'm just like you." In some respects, it conveys the impression that it is trying to strike a compromise between its moral values, solitude and the refusal to put a price tag to her poetry, and the self-centered somebodies who receive admiration for their published art. But, one may ask, what good is admiration if it comes from a "Bog?"

Another one of her earthly companions is used to convey her idea. Note how quiet the speech is in the first stanza, whereas the frog of the second stanza croaks, speaks constantly and repeats its name over and over in a noisy, self-promoting way:[40]

> How dreary—to be—Somebody!
> How public—like a Frog—
> To tell one's name—the livelong June—
> To an admiring Bog!

Morality implies choice, and Dickinson's speaker seems unable to be anything but herself. Far from making light of herself, she reinforces the first poem's message by strenghting her image by calling awareness to herself and conspiring with the reader as a fellow conspirator. Moreover, in the figure of the child there are symbols of natural feeling that easily bring to mind a sentimental response. Being blameless, a child also provides a place from which to launch a criticism to society.

Titled "The Lost Jewel" (1998: 177), the next poem P8-J245-Fr261 "I held a Jewel in my fingers—" evokes feelings of nostalgia.

The speaker admits that she has not gripped a gem tight enough and she allowed herself to fall in a deep sleep when, in order to possess this gem, sleep is not permitted. But the day was dull and the "prosy," overwhelming feeling distracted the speaker and lulled her to sleep, until, as she bewails:

> I woke—and chid my honest fingers,
> The Gem was gone—
> And now, an Amethyst remembrance

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[40] The third stanza of poem J486-Fr473 "I was the slightest in the House" depicts the poet's devotion to silence. It reads, "I never spoke—unless addressed— / And then, 'twas brief and low— / I could not bear to live—aloud— / The Racket shamed me so—." Farr sees the shame of living aloud as an assertion of "the guarded and secretive life of a persona by the noise and triviality of shared community" (1992: 52).

Is all I own—

It is another poem about the awareness of loss, but this one cherishes a memory. It is, to a degree, like the fourth one; however, the tone of this poem is not resentful or heavy-hearted. It was a treasure that was lost, but from the experience of loss she owned an "Amethyst remembrance," namely a clear crystalline purple, which is the colour of good judgement and pursuit of spiritual fulfillment.

The question can be raised: who or what is this lost jewel? Wendy Martin argues:

> Whatever this "Gem" might suggest, whether a cherished friend, or an idea for a poem, clearly it is a metaphor for something valuable, and it vanishes not because of the poet's "honest fingers," but due to the distracting, detracting forces of the day's "prosy" winds, which are the antithesis of the muses' breezes, of the breezes as inspiration. Soporific, these prosy winds seduce the poet into falling asleep, into losing her wakefulness, consciousness. If not outright thieves, they are agents, causes of the poet's impotence to protect her "Gem." Barbara Mossberg argues that this is a poem about writing—since these "honest" fingers can hold not only a "Gem" but also a pen, this is a poem about the forces that keep the poet from her own creativity (2002: 77).

Dickinson has written the poem even though the jewel was lost—a poem about the loss itself. Or, could it be that the speaker in this poem blames her fingers for not writing down another inspiration that was lost? In fact, a lost inspiration could be the case. Dickinson calls inspiration, or the antithesis of the day's "prosy" winds which Martin refers to, the "Divine" visitors elsewhere in her poetry, a "Diviner Crowd at Home" who can surprise her with their visit any time, and thus she does not need to venture "abroad," or go outside for company because then it would be discourteous of her to leave home when the divine visitors come.[41] Perhaps, the divine visitors have visited her in the day depicted in the current poem, but the day was dull and the prosy overwhelming feeling distracted her.

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[41] This idea is expressed in J674-Fr592, located in fascicle 26, which reads: "The Soul that hath a Guest / Doth seldom go abroad— / Diviner Crowd at Home—Obliterate the need— / And Courtesy forbid / A Host's departure when / Upon Himself be visiting / The Emperor of Men—."

Farr believes there is another possibility. She argues, "The speaker's is the hand that either reaches for or loses the beloved. Giving the hand in marriage is a sacramental conceit that may underlie these images of taking, holding, and keeping" (1992: 139). The beloved possibility is also plausible; we have sensed its existence up to this point in the fascicle after all. And, contextually speaking, another question emerges: could it be that the loss of the beloved that Farr refers to is the forbidden, unattainable love that poems 2 and 5 enclose? Or could it be the "Dusk *Gem*," Charles Wadsworth?[42] Both interpretations could be true. But, while plausible and intriguing, they depend on assumptions that lie outside the poem itself. This, in turn, forces us into an associative territory while probably deepening the actuality of the experience.

This unattainable mystery, however, is the outstanding merit of Dickinson's poetry, and the hidden sources of its wealth lie in what Jay Leyda calls the "omitted center" (xxi), a major characteristic that Dickinson adopts as her plan of self-preservation and the preservation of her poetry. In reference to Dickinson's intensely serious privacy, Leyda says that Dickinson uses the omitted center even in her letters, "to increase the privacy in her communication" (xxi), relying on veiled allusions that the recipient would understand immediately but would ring fairly unconvincing and increase the problems of today's reader. In her poetry, the omitted center allows her to address the topics central to her passion, the most important parts of her thinking and writing. It is a deliberately constructed device that holds Dickinson's most heartfelt concerns. In fact, it is in itself a major project that the poet perfected as an act of cognition and intent. Leyda comments: "Many of her best poems screen their kernel from a superficial

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[42] See Sewall (1974: 453) for more information. While Shurr, as mentioned previously, claims that the fascicles show Dickinson's love for the Rev. Charles Wadsworth, Farr does not rule out such a possibility. She writes, "It was the poet's sister-in-law who first spread the story that Dickinson had fallen in love with the married minister Charles Wadsworth during a two-week visit to Philadelphia in 1854 (1992: 28).

reading" (xxii). Joanne Dobson writes that Dickinson's use of this device "indicates an overpowering need to speak of something that must be omitted from the text" (123).

The other major characteristic adopted by Dickinson is the necessity to "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant." This poem reveals the essence of Dickinson's poetry. It expresses the necessity to tell the truth, but the poet knew that the truth as she saw it would astonish the contemporary reader, thus it requires a gradual revelation. The slanted Truth lies in the "omitted center"; we can find it when we search for "explanation kind," and once we have grasped that truth, it will "ease" our spirit as an explanation of the "Lightning" phenomenon comforts frightened "Children." Those who do not search for the truth slowly and do not find it "gradually," may be "blind," and thus fail to understand the point correctly.[43]

"I held a Jewel in my fingers—" may be hiding a lot from the reader, but its pleasantly stimulating and strictly minimalistic quality makes it unique by the dear "remembrance" that the speaker has been left with.

The Soul in Dickinson is conceived as the quintessential self or, as in Emerson, the inner spark attuned to the divine.[44] The next poem, P9-J244-Fr242 "it is easy to work when the soul is at play—," is a self-reflexive poem that addresses the word soul for the first time in the fascicle, and its weight rests on its deep description about the universality of pain, the pain of the soul.

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[43] J1129-Fr1263 reads, "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant— / Success in Circuit lies / Too bright for our infirm Delight / The Truth's superb surprise / As Lightning to the Children eased / With explanation kind / The Truth must dazzle gradually / Or every man be blind—."

[44] Farr (1992: 83) gives an important data about Dickinson's use of the word "Soul" in her poetry. She says, "Dickinson speaks of the *soul* or *souls* 141 times in the poems. She addresses her own soul; has funerals in her soul; tells her soul to sing when it is deserted; feels dread like a spur on her soul; finds that her soul has its own art." She adds: "Like the brain (considered 26 times in the poems) or the mind (79 times), the soul is subjected to careful study as Dickinson analyses the relationship between herself and all external powers."

The first two lines are plain sailing; the speaker works easily when she is in merriment, not so easily when in pain. Line 3 uses the pronoun him, which alludes to her soul anew. Reading the poem, we gradually grasp the close relationship between "play" and "work" for her.

Like the previous poem, this one also contains an omitted center that we can never recognize with any certitude. What we are given instead is a descriptive imagery of what it feels like to undergo such an arduous experience. A very intense and profound pain that torments the speaker's soul, which in turn has been converted into a panther crazed with pain that gives savagely fierce attacks on its own holder, tearing at the inside of the speaker's skin which is opening to shreds beneath the panther's claws, "Like a Panther in the Glove—."

A note on the previous poem's hindering forces seems to be unavoidable here. But still, because of its ambiguity, we are hindered rather than helped by it. The reason for the speaker's stress is completely omitted. However, Dickinson's outstanding merit is that she pulls these powerful images from the darkness to tell us that in spite of this devastating inner pain, she is still capable of making work out of this ferocious thing that aims to hinder her writing.

Then, in the second stanza she makes a sudden leap depicting the difference between the feelings of pain such as broken bones, surface wounds, and inner pain:

> It is simple, to ache in the Bone, or the Rind—
> But Gimblets—among the nerve—
> Mangle daintier—terribler—

Nothing can produce more terrible pain than trauma to a nerve. The stanza contrasts this pain with the pain from the "Bone" or "Rind," broken bones or wounds to the flesh, which are simple and more likely to heal. If this kind of pain

is deep itself, how much deeper must be having a "Gimblet "[45] boring a hole into the nervous system and "Mangle" the nerves. The mangling, the poet says, could be "daintier" than those simple gashes and broken bones, but of course "terribler—."

P10-J286-Fr243 "That after Horror—that 'twas us—," speaks of the terrifying possibility of passing "Into Conjecture's presence," of dying—since death can only be a "Conjecture" of the living.

Death articulates the emptiness at the heart of all human experience. The speaker, in general, seems to be taken by the idea that something horrifying lies at its heart, of which we can catch only hostility and frightful "Cordiality." The poem starts off by narrating a close shave from death using the plural "*us*" and "Our." As she crossed "the mouldering Pier—," it crumbles and collapses. A second more of delay would have made her face the terminal fall, and would have plummeted her too deep into the unfathomable depth of the ocean for any fisherman to save her:

> That after Horror—that 'twas us—
> That passed the mouldering Pier—
> Just as the Granite Crumb let go—
> Our Savior, by a Hair—
>
> A second more, had dropped too deep
> For Fisherman to plumb—
> The very profile of the Thought
> Puts Recollection numb—

The mere mention of what would have happened is enough to numb the speaker's mind. So far, stanzas 1 and 2 are telling the events of a story. But stanza 3 retells it as a concept, a thought. She says that the possibility that we might at any

[45] Gimblet is the old form of the term gimlet, which, according to the 1828 edition of Webster's dictionary, means a borer, a small instrument with a pointed screw at the end, for boring holes in wood by turning.

moment cross the final frontier instantaneously—the possibility to pass without any warning into uncertainty is terrifying, like coming face to face with something evil and malignant, which can be neither comprehended nor escaped:

> The possibility—to pass
> Without a Moment's Bell—
> Into Conjecture's presence—
> Is like a Face of Steel—
> That suddenly looks into our's
> With a metallic grin—
> The Cordiality of Death—
> Who drills his Welcome in—[46]

It is described as a face of a skull, but not the typical skull of bone, but the immortal skull of steel. All this makes for powerful dramatic effect as well as powerful description of how death, with its frightful cordiality, insists on invading our lives by drilling a way in for itself.

Though surrounded by a penumbra of elusive meanings, death is not really viewed as a state or destination, but an acknowledgment of existential dread. And, the horror of plunging into its indescribable depth has been left to the reader to judge, because it is too dark and strong to be conveyed in words.

This is the second poem in the fascicle that speak about death and thus it is time to clarify Dickinson's relation with death; from losing her dear friend, and perhaps one of her early loves, Benjamin Fraklin Newton (1821-53), to trying to understand how death functions, and thus loving life on earth.

When Robert Browning's *Dramatis Personae* was published sometime around the 28th of May 1864, Dickinson wrote to her cousins Louisa and Frances Norcross, "I noticed that Robert Browning had made another poem, and was astonished—till I remembered that I, myself, in my smaller way, sang off charnel

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[46] Franklin notes that a copy of this 8-line conclusion concludes a letter sent to Higginson early in 1863, signed "Barabbas," because, "Dickinson fancies she owes an apology": "might I be the one you tonight, forgave, 'tis a Better Honor, Mine is but just the Thieve's Request—." The word "nail," suggested as an alternate for "drills" in the packet copy is not adopted (1998: 205).

steps" (L 298). This implication of death manifests itself in the second letter sent to Higginson: "I had a terror—since September—I could tell to none—and so I sing, as the Boy does by the Burying Ground—because I am afraid" (25 April 1862, L 261). Later in the same letter she adds, "When a little Girl, I had a friend, who taught me Immortality—but venturing too near, himself—he never returned—Soon after, my Tutor, died—and for several years, my Lexicon—was my only companion—."

Critics and biographers such as Sewall and Habegger have pointed out that Benjamin Newton is the one referred to in this letter. She also described him as "The first of my own friends" (L 110), who had given her "a beautiful copy" of "Ralph Emerson's poems" (L 40). Nine months after Newton's death on 24 March 1853, Dickinson wrote to Newton's pastor, Edward Everett Hale, asking how the last hours of her friend's life were:

> I think, Sir, you were the Pastor of Mr B. F. Newton, who died sometime since in Worcester, and I often have hoped to know if his last hours were cheerful, and if he was willing to die. Had I his wife's acquaintance, I w'd not trouble you Sir, but I have never met her, and do not know where she resides, nor have I a friend in Worcester who could satisfy my inquiries. You may think my desire strange, Sir, but the Dead was dear to me, and I would love to know that he sleeps peacefully. … I was then but a child, yet I was old enough to admire the strength and grace, of an intellect far surpassing my own, and it taught me many lessons, for which I thank it humbly, now that it is gone. Mr Newton became to me a gentle, yet grave Preceptor, teaching me what to read, what authors to admire, what was most grand or beautiful in nature, and that sublimer lesson, a faith in things unseen, and in a life again, nobler, and much more blessed—Of all these things he spoke—he taught me of them all, earnestly, tenderly, and when he went from us, it was as an elder brother, loved indeed very much, and mourned, and remembered. During his life in Worcester, he often wrote to me, and I replied to his letters—I always asked for his health, and he answered so cheerfully, that while I knew he was ill, his death indeed surprised me. He often talked of God, but I do not know certainly if he was his Father in Heaven—Please Sir, to tell me if he was willing to die, and if you think him at Home, I should love so much to know certainly, that he was today in Heaven (13 January 1853, L 153).

Note the contradiction between Dickinson's references to herself as "a little Girl" in her letter to Higginson and "I was then but a child" in her letter to Hale, considering that the letter was written at the age of 23. Interestingly, as one cannot really track when exactly the girl had become a woman in the letter, it provides us with ideas about poetry, Immortality and death, and, importantly, what could be

the reason behind the birth of Dickinson's interest in poetry. From this point, one could track relevant facts that could have shaped Dickinson's personality, especially in relation to what is spiritual and artistic. Note, for instance, where she says to Hale that she had attended to Newton's lesson about "…a life again, nobler, and much more blessed." Yet, she adds, "[he] often talked of God, but I do not know certainly if he was his Father in Heaven." This implies that the tutor was not entirely convinced of the truth of the lesson he was giving. But, was this a result of a suggestion made by him to her? Or, had she noticed or sensed Newton's spiritual doubts because of her own inner spiritual conflicts and did not believe that an intellectual and open-minded person could believe in a "Father" of humanity in "Heaven"? Was the young man avoiding filling the head of young Dickinson with religious doubts? Especially because she is the daughter of the man he worked for from 1847 to late 1849?

Dickinson's early fascicles reflect interest in heaven, until her early Puritan beliefs transitioned into artistic Immortality. A letter sent to her friend Elizabeth Holland in summer 1873, 20 years after the letter to Hale, shows a mature state of disbelief: "Vinnie[47] says you're most illustrious and dwell in Paradise. I have never believed the latter to be a superhuman site" (L 391). Nine years after, in the spring of 1882, she would ask a faithful person, "Is immortality true?" (L 752a)

Death and the issue of bounderies had always held a fascination for Dickinson due to her cultural heritage. Barton Levi St. Armand ferrets out the facts of this interest and links it to "…a long tradition of meditation on 'the last things' that eventually crystallized into a specific interest in 'making a good ending,' in learning how to die" (58). As humans, we are all similar in our awareness of death; yet different in the way we deal with it. There is no doubt that St. Armand has made a perceptive account, which takes the reader to the matter of

[47] Vinnie is Lavinia's pet name.

the prearrangement of death, which is more dramatic and complicated. Newton had succeeded in reaching a sort of archetype that had certainly inspired Dickinson. He wrote to her only a week before his death, "If I live, I will go to Amherst—if I die, I certainly will" (L 457).

Dickinson's letter to Hale reveals a lot about who the true inspiration was for her; perhaps not as a lover, but certainly as the one whose departure had led her to face death, and whose soul remained around her as guidance, "a gentle, yet grave Preceptor, teaching me what to read, what authors to admire, what was most grand or beautiful in nature, and that sublimer lesson, a faith in things unseen, and in a life again, nobler, and much more blessed—" (L 153).

Had she obtained the information she was seeking from Hale about her preceptor's last hours of his life, perhaps things would have turned out differently in relation to her poetry. There is a probability that Newton's death is one of the early losses in the poet's life that made her investigate what is behind the biggest mystery in life, resulting in a familiarity which is, at times, not so positive, like when she describes the dead trapped in a terrifying borderline of uncertainty, as in J280-Fr340.[48] There are of course other times where the fact of not being dead becomes, to some extent, a cause for celebration:

> I am alive—because
> I do not own a House—
> Entitled to myself—precise—
> And fitting no one else— (J470-Fr605A)

In the last stanza of this poem she concludes by exclaiming that it is good and "infinite—to be alive!" the first life in the flesh as a body, "The Birth I had—,"

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[48] J280-Fr340 "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain" depicts a terrifying borderline between life and death experienced by a speaker whose consciousness begins to arouse when the "Mourners" "Kept treading—treading—" around her coffin. Her heart "like a Drum— / Kept beating—beating" echoing the mourners' "treading" until she begins to lose consciousness again. However, when she senses them carrying her coffin to the grave, she becomes conscious again and thus seems to be trapped in the midst of two realms: "And then I heard them lift a Box / And creak across my Soul / With those same Boots of lead, again."

and this second birth in the spirit, "And this—besides, in Thee!" With a view not different from that of Shakespeare's, Dickinson could grant immortality through her words as a poet, and, importantly, through thought and sentimentalism. Her function as a poet becomes larger and more powerful; a function that she had been granted to value life on earth, as she tells Susan in 1878: "Cherish Power—dear—Remember that it stands in the Bible between the Kingdom and the Glory, because it is wilder than either of them" (L 583).

It does no good to argue, as some do, that there is morbidness about Dickinson's life just because her poems try to fathom the biggest mystery in life. The fact that she "sang off charnel steps" simplifies just how valued earthly life was to her. Take by way of example this poem where she mulls over the marvels of earth as she leaves it:

> Doom is the House without the Door—
> 'Tis entered from the Sun—
> And then the Ladder's thrown away,
> Because Escape—is done—
>
> 'Tis varied by the Dream
> Of what they do outside—
> Where Squirrels play—and Berries dye—
> And Hemlocks—bow—to God— (J475-Fr710)

To a degree, salvation exists here, yet it is very limited. As we enter a doorway into death, she says, we may "Dream" about the life on earth that we have left behind. If dream here functions as a reminder, isn't it suggesting that there is no next life? Dickinson once told her cousin Louisa Norcross that death is a "dreamless sleep" (L 245).

In fact, as we feel that we are about to be taken on a discovery trip beyond death, we get pulled up short, and summoned to take a look back at the glorious life on earth instead. The final line of stanza 1 assures this idea, "Because Escape—is done—." Traditionally, the grave is a temporary place for those who have died until they will be awakened at the judgement day, while here "Escape"

is no longer possible, and the only thing that remains are images of the life that the speaker has had on earth:

> Where Squirrels play—and Berries dye—
> And Hemlocks—bow—to God—

There is an immense love for earth sense here. These two last lines shed light on three elements of earth playing their respective roles. A general perspective would be that the squirrels being at leisure represents the purest form of life, and berries change to a darker tint and become overly ripe. Johnson has used "die," which is the main subject of the poem, while Franklin has returned the verb to its original form, "dye." There is, to be sure, nothing in common between the two terms because they provide two different readings. Chances are that Dickinson created this ambiguity intentionally, and also she was aware of the way the word berry sounds (e.g. the fruit "buries" itself by "dyeing"). Interestingly, squirrels (especially grey ones) feed on berries, and "Hemlocks," too. But it seems plausible that she has in mind the plant with poisonous leaves and roots, which makes it inedible, and thus creates a dig at religious belief because of the plant's attitude towards God in the poem. The dashes surrounding "bow" may serve as an example of irony, as an act of unconsciousness instead of worship and prayer.

The reading of this poem recalls J324-Fr236 "Some keep the Sabbath going to Church":

> So instead of getting to Heaven, at last—
> I'm going, all along.

Anything extra than to play, to dye, and to bow would be what institutional religion opposes, and Dickinson did not want to be part of it. She cleverly uses the term bow instead of pray, to express that praying is exactly what she and the squirrels do not do.

Another poem, this time fitly immortal, serves as another example of the love of the earth:

Because I could not stop for Death—
He kindly stopped for me—
The Carriage held but just 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 Fields 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— (J712-Fr479)

The writer Yvor Winters says of this poem: "In so far as it concentrates on the life that is being left behind, it is wholly successful" (289). Although he recognizes the poem as, "a remarkably beautiful poem on the subject of the daily realization of the imminence of death—it is a poem of departure from life, an intensely conscious leave-taking" (289), he also hints at the poem's failure in achieving a view from after death. While that is not actually the focus of the poem, Winters is partly right in the sense that the poem does not show conformity to conventionally accepted religious standards; the soul does not pass into glory, and the body does not rest in the grave until the last judgement. That is not what Dickinson aims at. So, judged from what it truly achieves instead of what it could have achieved, the dying speaker here reflects upon the glory of the life that she had left behind, and the intense and dream-like scenes suggest disappointment of the state she has found herself in. Without digging so deeply into what may sound oddly ruthless, she leaves it up to the reader to take the final decision.

There is a poem written about 16 years later in 1878 that may well be taken as a concession, J1445-Fr1470a "Death is the supple Suitor," where the beliefs that have been cultivated on earth lose their meanings and values once death has approached, and the dying is instead taken to "Troth unknown." In "Because I could not stop for Death—," death has gained the "Civility" description by "His" awareness of both protocols and the sensibility of the beliefs of the dying human, which also explains the presence of a guest as prestigious as Immortality. Does this gathering put pressure on the speaker? It seems that she has not gotten to this advanced stage with a lot of expectations. In stanza 2 there is an implicit play on the idea of time. The speaker observes that death slowly drove, which serves as an idea that the dying speaker has accepted the call perfunctorily. No drive, no ambition; she is just turning up to go through the motions. This in turn helps to explain why she could not stop living to die, and only does so when she had no other choice. The dying speaker loves life and does not want to leave it. But her situation is so understandable because she must treat the well-mannered caller with the utmost courtesy. It is for these reasons that the dying speaker is coerced into giving up the two activities of her life that gave it meaning: "My labor and my leisure."

Structurally, the antithesis between movement and pause (such as in "I could not stop," "He kindly stopped," "We passed," "He passed," "We paused") control the whole poem. The symbolism of stanza 3 ("Children strove," "Fields of Gazing Grain," "Setting Sun") conjures up earthly images from the previous poem and contributes to the argument, expressing as minimalistically as possible three main elements of earth; animal, vegetable, and astronomical motions, succeeding in making a powerful view of what the dying speaker will never be part of again. All this goes to prove the motionless, mute state that overwhelms the speaker, while everything around her moves. Stanza 4 goes on to inforce this idea through "Dews" by the act of "quivering and Chill—," adding "Dews" "quiver" to "Squirrels play," "Children strove," "Berries dye." The dying speaker's outlook would be: she is gone; the "Dews" are still there. The warning is that the speaker's experience itself is fading from the world. Astonishingly, the children will

continue to strive, and the "Grain"; the wheat or any other cultivated cereal used as food will continue to grow, and the "Setting Sun" will eventually rise again indicating a new day. Life would go on as it had always gone on.

The reading of this poem would not be complete if we had not taken into consideration the visual effects that Dickinson's poetry feature so prominently, which in this poem picture a moment of serious contemplation. Note the separation between the poem's two central lines, which is actually a page break in the original manuscript that creates a white space; a moment of contemplation, as though the mind goes blank as a result of thirst for comprehension:

> We passed the Setting Sun—
> Or rather—He passed Us—

—Though incapable of movement, effort and speech, the dying speaker is able to contemplate and reflect upon the "pass [ing]" and also narrates the experience. The visual effect may create a judgement in mind but it is of crucial importance in relation to the development of our understanding of the poem; it is a moment of acknowledging the reality, existence, validity, and legality of the speaker's new state of life—death is a blank state. She seems to have thought of eternity in this respect as timelessness. And that is what she talks about at the end. She has left time and now centuries have gone by in what for her is moment.

A final example from one of Dickinson's most famous poems makes an extra special contribution to the current study, showing her acknowledging the probability of celestial manifestation but mantaining her own outlook on the superiority of earthly life:

> I heard a Fly buzz—when I died—
> The Stillness in the Room
> Was like the Stillness in the Air—
> Between the Heaves of Storm—
>
> The Eyes around—had wrung them dry—
> And Breaths were gathering firm
> For that last Onset—when the King
> Be witnessed—in the Room—

I willed my Keepsakes—Signed away
What portion of me be
Assignable—and then it was
There interposed a Fly—

With Blue—uncertain—stumbling Buzz—
Between the light—and me—
And then the Windows failed—and then
I could not see to see— (J465-Fr591a)

This poem investigates the nature of consciousness while speculating on an enigma: What lies beyond death? At least that is how it seems. One of the reasons for the universal praise of this poem is the force that arises from the cultural tension created between the actual experience of the dying woman and the social expectations of death conveyed by the rituals. In the nineteenth-century, the culture of mourning was intended to be a panacea for collective spiritual anxieties. The writer Ann Douglas, in her extensive discussion on the nineteenth-century mourning culture, describes ornate rituals that were produced to preserve and commemorate the social identity of the deceased (200-207). David Porter, on the other hand, says that it is one of Dickinson's "aftermath" poems (1981: 10-11), while it is a gothic poem for Joan Kirkby (87, 102). The criticism that this poem has attracted is undoubtedly abundant, St. Armand writes that in Dickinson's era,

> …deathbed behavior was taken as one of the barometers by which one could measure the rise or fall of the individual soul, […] If such behavior was characterized by calm acceptance and Christian composure, the chances were good that the soul could be sure of its election and that it was destined to join the Saints; if the dying person railed against death and abjured a hope of heaven, eternal hellfire and brimstone seemed equally imminent (52).

St. Armand compares the poem to a passage from *The Death-Bed* by the English poet Thomas Hood (1799-1845), which, according to him, contains "imagery of tempestuous struggle" (58):

We watched her breathing thro' the night,
Her breathing soft and low,
As in her heart the wave of life
Kept heaving to and fro.

In the current poem the speaker seems calm and prepared, as shown in lines 9, 10, and 11, unlike the bystanders who seem more perturbed than her:

> The Eyes around—had wrung them dry—
> And Breaths were gathering firm

This seems to say that the dying speaker is not worried about what will happen to her. And, since Dickinson was inclined to a belief in the immortality of poetry rather than heaven and afterlife, the dying speaker here seems to be unconcerned about heaven, rather than being confident that she will be part of it. This in turn summons us to ponder over the general belief that was held in Dickinson's time and is still alive today. This belief is mostly centered around the manifestation of the light as death approaches; the light of the spirit, according to Judith Farr (1992: 310), or, as in the poem, the moment "when the King / Be witnessed—in the Room—." In this case, the light that the dying speaker has failed to meet at the end of the poem and the King are references to Christ. While some may think that the poem denies or tries to ridicule religious belief, Helen Vendler says of it: "Mortality, in the person of the monumentalized and actual Fly, possesses the grandeur of Truth defeating Illusion" (268).

That the "Fly" has suddenly replaced the hoped-for King cannot be gainsaid. But I would argue that the poem has a much smarter purpose than to attack religious belief; which is to repudiate the King as the speaker's only saviour. Consider the difference between this poem and the following one by Isaac Watts (1674-1748):

> Jesus sought me when a stranger,
> Wand'ring from the fold of God;
> He, to rescue me from danger,
> Interpos'd with precious blood.[49]

[49] See Worcester's "The Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs of Rev. Isaac Watts."

Christ in Watts' poem champions the rights of the human being, and Dickinson's poem does not deny this point in particular. It seems, however, that it does abruptly pull the rug from under Christ and a housefly appears instead. So, Christ fails to appear. Note that the speaker in the last line "could not see to see—" the "light" because the fly has intervened, not because the celestial "light" was not there. Though ambiguous, it shows that the poem is a smart piece of art with philosophy, sentimentalism, thought, and most of all preference for earthly life that take priority over any spiritual possibilities.

Taking a view of the whole poem I would like to shed light on two points that support my idea. The first comes in the fact that "light" is not capitalized, and this muses on Dickinson's evident partiality for earthly life. Note that the non-capitalized word stands alone among many capitalized words that depicts common and regular things and actions of earthly life within the poem, which in accordance with the rules of grammar, none of these words should be capitalized: "a Fly," "the Stillness in the Room," "the Stillness in the Air—," "the Heaves of Storm—," "The Eyes around," "Breaths," "that last Onset," "the King," "the Room—," "my Keepsakes—," "Signed away," "Blue—uncertain—stumbling Buzz—," "the Windows failed." It is obvious that Dickinson has separated the non capitalized word wittingly. In the speaker's last moment on earth, these are the things that really matter. Nonetheless, as regards the capitalization of "King," which the reader may think that it should not be capitalized, it succesfully lives up to the expectations of the bystanders' "Eyes," not the speaker's.

The second point is the nature of the image of "a Fly," which can fairly be the poem's keyword. Naturally and conventionally, "a Fly" is a word that evokes unpleasant ideas such as decadence and deterioration, but here is the lowest of earthly things that Dickinson could employ to substitute the "King" and thus create a turnaround. To Dickinson, one of the smallest and most insignificant creatures of earth here serves as a coup, as an instance of succesfully achieving something difficult.

The “Fly,” also, represents the medium in which all the poem’s elements commingle, which is the power of language itself. It makes the poem an intricate, highly artificial rhetorical exercise, even though its subject matter is supposedly Death. Its appearance is the conceit that enlivens and invigorates the poem. The Fly’s obstructiveness is literally witnessed in the poem, as the King is the one who was expected to appear in the Room. So, the power of language takes over, and makes the reader take pleasure in what has happened and what the dying woman has experienced over anything else. This poem is by no means iconoclastic, yet it has pushed the boundaries with every detail it has to make the reader ponder. Dickinson’s speaker does not deny Christ’s existence but only his importance to her as her only saviour, because earthly life comes first and over any abstract concept. It stands to reason that if Dickinson wanted to attack or assertively reject cherished beliefs and institutions or established values and practices she would have employed another method. She would, for instance, have used “*the* Fly” instead of “*a* Fly,” which would stand for Beelzebub, a name for the devil, the lord of the flies, the King’s rival, who would of course have made evil overshadow. This would be a real lampoon, a burlesque of her society’s religious belief.

Of course, the poem is more serious than that. If your eyes can be riveted on an insignificant creature from earth instead of the one who comes to champion you through the Last Jugdement and towards eternal bliss, then you demonstrate your qualities to find meaning and value on earth: “To be human is more than to be divine, for when Christ was divine, he was uncontented till he had been human” (sent to Higginson in 1877, L 519).

The assessment of the only world of which we could be certain is important in order for us to grow as humans:

> Who has not found the heaven below,
> Will fail of it above.
> God’s residence is next to mine,
> His furniture is love. (J1544-Fr1609)

The topic of death that was barely mentioned so far in the fascicle has become a disquieting, brooding space in its own right. And this absence of acquaintance with it that the speaker has to confront involves desire, a familiar object up to this point in the fascicle, and the main ingredient in the next poem.

Written about 1861, P11-J240-Fr262, "Ah, Moon—and Star!"[50] shows the love the speaker craves.

The moon and star had just broken the horizon on a sleepless night. And the speaker, standing at her window, gets engaged with them in a deep conversation. She says that if they were the furthest from her, she would leap out in space, having borrowed the Lark's sleek plume, and making use of the agile "Silver Boot—" of the mountainous "Chamois," and the "stirrup" of the nimble "Antelope—," and be with them "Tonight!" Nothing would stop her, neither the expanse over her head with its atmosphere and clouds nor the length of her arm from her elbow to the extremity of her middle finger:

> Do you think I'd stop
> For a Firmament—
> Or a Cubit—or so?

But there is someone who is farther than them, farther than firmament:

> But, Moon, and Star,
> Though you're very far—
> There is one—farther than you—
> He—is more than a firmament—from Me—
> So I can never go!

It is difficult not to feel the ambition of the poem and how it achieves something so superbly authentic that exemplifies the love message enclosed in poems 2 and 5, together with the cult of nostalgia of poem 8.

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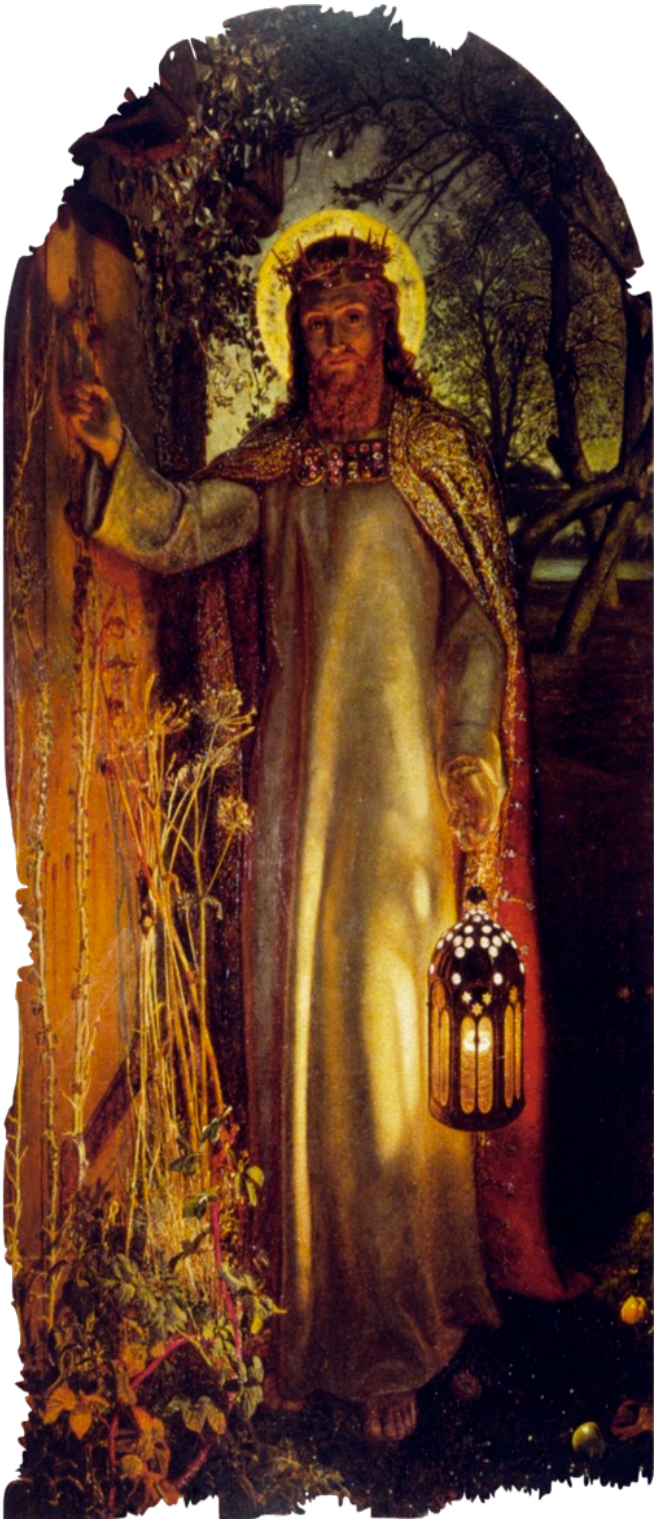
[50] A version of the same poem exists in fascicle 14.

Unlike the distant lover, Christ is at the speaker's door in the next poem, P12-J317-Fr263 "Just so—Christ—raps—."[51]

At least this is what it seems at first, because Christ's divinity here is used to give intensity to her expectancy. Dickinson is setting up a comparison between the way Christ knocks at the door of the unbeliever (or the half-believer) and the way she is knocking at the heart of the distant lover. Her persistence is like that of Christ, who politely starts at the "Bell," but when there is no answer, he moves to the "Knocker." When there is still no answer, he stands on his "Divinest Tiptoe" to narrow his eyes in through the peephole to "spy the hiding soul."

One has to do no more than glimpse William Holman Hunt's painting *The Light of the World* (1851-3) to conceive the poem's idea in the mind. The painting represents Christ knocking on an overgrown and long un-opened door.

[51] Dickinson declares in a letter her love for Christ, and says that she hears him saying, "Daughter give me thine heart" (L 10). This letter was sent to Abiah Root at an early age, in January 1846. It was one of her first confessions to her struggle with religion and she comments that she almost went through the conversion to become a Christian. She says, "I hope at sometime the heavenly gates will be opened to receive me and The angels will consent to call me sister. I am continually putting off becoming a christian." She concludes the letter, "Although I am not a christian still I feel deeply the importance of attending to the subject before it is too late" (L 10). It is worth noting that we can know Dickinson's feelings and deep thoughts through her writing style. We can observe the lack of capitalization for the word "christian" in her letter while she capitalizes "Christ." One could assume that Dickinson uses this method intentionally to express her inner religious conflicts.



The Light of the World by William Holman Hunt (1851-3)

In fact, whether Dickinson knew the painting or not, appreciating both the poem and painting together opens new avenues to explore, especially the state of the door (old, long un-opened, no handle from the outside) gives ideas that represent Dickinson's obstinate determination to leave religion behind.[52]

John Ruskin (1819-1900), an English art critic in the Victorian era, had written about the painting in 1854:

> On the left-hand side of the picture is seen the door of the human soul. It is fast barred; its bars and nails are rusty; it is knitted and bound to its stanchions by creeping tendrils of ivy, showing that it has never been opened. Christ approaches it in the night-time, in His everlasting offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. He wears the white robe, representing the power of the Spirit upon Him; the jeweled robe and breastplate representing the sacerdotal investiture; the rayed crown of gold, interwoven with the crown of thorns, but bearing soft leaves for the healing of the nations. He bears with Him a two fold light: first, the light of conscience, which displays past sin, and afterwards the light of peace, the hope of salvation.[53]

Note the way Dickinson widens the narrative focus so as to gaze on her own "hiding soul" with what she seems to consider the perturbable eyes of the diviners (through the peephole). In a way, she splits herself in two and contemplates the imperfections of her soul as though she were Christ. Attempting to gain access to her soul, if Christ were at her door to save her from damnation, he cannot succeed without her consent.

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[52] Wolff says, "The rich irony of Emily Dickinson's position was that although she could not relinquish reason and accept the reassurance of some 'birth' after death, neither could she shake her tenacious belief in the existence of the God who had become man only to die on the cross. The strength of this belief impelled her to confront the dark implications of that execution in the ancient past" (263).

This is the "combative relationship with God" the writer Patrick J. Keane refers to in Dickinson's engagement with the divine. Keane writes, "Given her Christian heritage, that engagement involved both the Father and the Son: the first in the form of the distant, often capricious, even cruel God of her Calvinist legacy; the second, in the more cherished, incarnate form of the crucified Jesus—suffering, potentially salvific, yet at times himself as remote and unresponsive as the Father" (2).

However, elsewhere in her poetry, in J698-Fr727 "Life—is what we make it—," Jesus Christ is depicted as a compelling figure worthy of trust and admiration, who became acquainted with death as the "Tender Pioneer" and who gave us his own "endorsement" that we will pass through death out of harm's way to heaven.

[53] See Farr (1992: 267).

Again, the suggestion of persistence, as far as it goes, seems to make perfect sense. At some point, however, Christ does finally give up "Chilled—or weary—." And that is the difference between her and Christ. She would not become weary, because, for her, there is "ample time," and will wait as long as it takes for the loved one to answer.

P13-J246-Fr264 "Forever at His side to walk—" is a poem of unfulfilled yearning in which Dickinson speaks of a love that she does not have, and almost certainly will never have.

The poem represents a continuity with the previous one's last line "knocking—low / At thee." Here, though, her love takes an eternal dimension; a binding marriage that counts on an afterlife reunion, because the speaker thinks that even after a lifetime together, they will still not know each other perfectly. Additionally, it would be a pleasure for her to be hand in hand with "that beloved Heart" when they meet the "Rapt" of the dead and both become eye-witnesses, "Without the Lexicon," to the mysteries which had puzzled them on earth:

> All life—to know each other—
> Whom we can never learn—
> And bye and bye—a Change—
> Called Heaven—
> Rapt Neighborhoods of Men—
> Just finding out—what puzzled us—
> Without the lexicon!

After crossing the final frontier, and after mankind is transported to the realm of Heaven, all doubts will vanish, and the disappointingly limited lexicon, the poet's "only companion" for "several years" (L 261), will no longer be needed. The lexicon here is sarcastically used as a synecdoche for limited

understanding, as Jed Deppman puts it, "to indicate what humans most want but most lack: a reference book for the mysteries of life, death, and heaven" (120).[54]

This ethereal, otherwordly setting, which Dickinson explores often with consternation as in poems 4, 6 and 10, is here depicted as merely a setting for Neighborhoods of Men, rapt possibly in wonderment, finally capable of discovering the nature of eternity. Moreover, the speaker conveys the impression that she would not mind this transition as long as her beloved stays by her side.

If this hypothesis is true, the poem then puts on view a relationship that even goes beyond the opinions of the poet herself, because it suffers from an internal contradiction. On one hand, it holds that their marriage should mean companionship: neither he nor she shall hold power over the other; they "walk" in tandem. On the other hand, it denies that she should be independent of him, because she will be "The smaller of the two!" and her "Brain" will be "of His Brain"; her "Blood of His Blood." These descriptions, however, argue an unavoidably subordinate role, which seems far more servile than might be expected from the woman who sacrificed marriage for her artistic immortality.[55]

Then again, it could be a rather tender declaration of love. Indeed, the poem shows what could be a life of commitment, or devotion that becomes "Two lives" in "One Being" as they solemnly promise each other to stick together through thick and thin:

> Forever of His fate to taste—
> If grief—the largest part—
> If joy—to put my piece away
> For that beloved Heart—

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[54] Deppman points out that "The term 'lexicon' appears in three poems, and taken together they form a clear and significant pattern: dictionaries are not sources of wisdom or inspirations for creativity; they are disappointingly limited tools that can answer only easy questions" (120).

[55] Dickinson uses the same language of subordination at the beginning of the third Master letter, "Daisy bends her smaller life to his, it's meeker everyday—who only asks—a task—something to do for love of it—some little way she cannot guess to make that master glad" (L 248).

These lines show a loyal character worthy of admiration that describes her relationship as food. The speaker is willing to taste her partner's fate as though sharing a long-lasting meal. If grief is served up, she will take "the largest part"; but in times of joy, she will give her piece to "that beloved Heart."

The last stanza assumes that in spite of our efforts to try to understand others, we never truly know them. But then, "bye and bye," sooner or later, the inevitable death of poems 6 and 10 comes, and with it comes a "Change— / Called Heaven—." So, the lost Heaven in poem 4 reappears as a symbol of hope and reunion, where she finally will know her husband perfectly.

Finally, in reference to the marriage theme, it is worthy of note that Dickinson throughout her poetry states her refusal of inexorable conventions such as marriage, which is one of her many sacrifices. Therefore, we should not be concerned that poems like "Forever at His side to walk—" seem far more servile than might be expected. In fact, it could be rather a sycophantic strategy in order to gain advantage. Instead, we should keep in mind her recognition of faith as "nimble" near the end of her life when she said, "We both believe, and disbelieve hundred times an Hour, which keeps Believing nimble" (L 728).[56] Also, her illusiveness described by Harold Bloom as the "major ingredient of her artistry." He adds that she dons, "an unparalleled variety of masks behind which the core self lay as an ever-present but always invisible manipulator. Even in letters to confidants […] Dickinson was quick to hide behind personae and to point up the totally fictive nature of other poetic poses" (130).

After three poems about love, we encounter P14-J221-Fr265 "It can't be 'Summer'!" a puzzle nature poem written about 1861.

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[56] Patrick J. Keane's *Emily Dickinson's Approving God* provides an ample argument based on this quotation by Dickinson.

Sent to Kate Scott Anthon along with "three clover heads & some bright autumn leaves,"[57] the first line conveys the impression that it is asking a question: if "It can't be 'Summer'," as summer has already "got through," then what season could it be?

For clarification, the speaker adds, "It's early—yet—for 'Spring'!" nor can it be winter because winter will have to come and go before summer. Moreover, as in poem 3, there has to be, "that long town of White" falling on the ground (snow) to believe that winter came, "Before the Blackbirds" return to her, which are, like the third poem's robins, one of the first songbirds that fly back to tell us that spring is on its way:

> It can't be "Dying"!
> It's too Rouge—
> The Dead shall go in White—

These lines are arguably more ambiguous than they appear and determine most of what happens in the poem. The underlying reality is that Dickinson is speaking of the day's end. Or she is speaking about the autumn (or Indian summer) and, because the days are getting shorter, the sunset comes and ends her questioning. Again, as in poem 3, she typically includes the seasons to speak about life: the spring of human's youth, the summer of our coming-of-age, the autumn of our passage into our winter days where we get ready for demise.

Certainly, it cannot be winter in view of the fact that the sky is still "too Rouge," while the "Dead," as the winter snow, are wan and ashen. Winter is typically described as the village where the dead dress in white, and the line "So sunset shuts my question down" puts an end to the day. The close of day, with its

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[57] See Franklin's *Variorum* (1998: 159).

"Cuffs of Chrysolite," is particularly yellow, or golden,[58] and it visualizes the atmosphere region with its rouge nucleus that dies away to yellow at the rim.

The answer is autumnal in its colours; and while the poem's simplicity is commendable in its way, it is nevertheless another metaphorical one projecting the inability to know anything beyond death.

The next poem P15-J247-Fr266, "What would I give to see his face?" is an offshoot of poem 5 where the speaker is willing to swap diamonds for a smile, but even so there are subtle distinctions; this poem is stylishly long, and devoted to form.

As the drop of water of the second poem is willing to lose its identity in the beloved's sea, the speaker here is willing to barter for what seems to be the thing that she most desires, "to see his face." After a moment of thinking sensed by the repetition of the phrase "I'd give—I'd give," the speaker has no doubts that she would give her "life—," although she thinks that it "is not enough." Subsequently, she "stop [s] just a minute" to think, and extravagantly offers to give her "biggest Bobolink." "That makes two," offers. But, delighting in the extravagant, the infatuated speaker has more to offer. She is willing to give June, and she transcends to the Indian Ocean to bring "her" "Roses a day from Zinzebar—."[59] The pronoun her in line 8 could be the clue in spite of its ambiguity; it is almost certainly a reference back to "June," to whom the speaker would give the "Roses." As she carries on with her negotiation, the speaker offers bell-shaped colourful Lily tubes with receptables like wells into the bargain. Only a powerful imaginative mind could insert the stems of flowers in a receptable as

[58] In Greek, Chrysolite means a precious stone of a golden colour: *khrusos 'gold,' and lithos 'stone.'*

[59] Zinzebar is a variant spelling of the Zanzibar Strait; a 120 km long and 30-40 km wide channel that separates Unguja (also known as Zanzibar) from Mainland Tanzania.

big and deep as wells—sink them perpendicularily to such a depth as to reach a supply of water.

The speaker still travels away in her imagination. She also has "Bees—by the furlong— / Straits of Blue," which could also be a reference to the Strait of Zanzibar with its blue water through which a fleet of butterflies sail and mark with spots the oval leaves of Pulmonaria.

Everything the speaker offers is entirely seized and enriched by an extraordinary act of imagination. From line 15 on, she conveys the impression that she is still at the fifth poem's counter, continuining with the negotiation:

> Then I have "shares" in Primrose "Banks"—
> Daffodil Dowries—spicy "Stocks"—
> Dominions—broad as Dew—
> Bags of Doubloons—adventurous Bees
> Brought me—from firmamental seas—
> And Purple—from Peru—

She has spring lands of Primrose[60] alongside the Straits of Blue. And, in keeping the method of exchange, her marital dowry is to be the bulbous Daffodil in addition to fragrant, aromatic "Stocks," which will be the support of the branches of this hypothetical marriage upon which her sovereign will be of great immensity and, in the cool nights, it will reign like the dawn's "Dew."

Along with all these botanical glossaries she also has sacks of Doubloons[61] brought to her by adventurous Bees from celestial seas of the upper regions as well as the "Purple" from "Peru."[62] This could be a reference to October month in Peru, where the faithful wears purple to celebrate Christ.

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[60] Shakespeare coined the term "Primrose" for bright, showy, or flowery, as the "Primrose path," in Hamlet, 1602. He also used the "Primrose way" later in Macbeth.

[61] A Spanish and Portuguese coin, being double the value of the pistole.

[62] Purple is the most frequently used colour by Dickinson in her poetry; it appears fifty-four times in fifty-four poems.

The speaker, as in the fifth poem, teasingly asks whether or not the deal is finally closed. And she reminds the seller that he might lose everything because of stubborness, exactly as happened to Shakespeare's Shylock in *Merchant of Venice*:[63]

> Now—have I bought it—
> "Shylock"? Say!
> Sign me the bond!
> "I vow to pay
> To Her—who pledges this—
> One Hour—of her sovereign's face"!
> Extatic Contract!
> Niggard Grace!
> My Kingdom's worth of Bliss!

Confidently, the mercantile negotiator wants to sign the contract, and the line, "vow [s] to pay / To Her—," refers to the person who signs it. That is, the person whom the speaker eagerly wants to see would agree to give "One Hour" of his/her time in exchange for all of the aforesaid merchandise. She will keep her side of the bargain. On top of that, as security for the fulfillment of the contract, she will secure by a pledge. Namely, she will make effective use of all her means to obtain "One Hour—of her sovereign's face" from a parsimonuous person. This eloquent pleading ends with a solemn promise of unchangeable fidelity as an attempt to end her state of expectancy.

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[63] In *Emily Dickinson and the Religious Imagination*, Linda Freedman says that, "The reference to Shylock's demand for a 'pound of flesh' makes a physical giving of self central to the economy of the gift in this poem." She adds, "Dickinson, like Emerson, anticipated the twentieth-century debate over the economy of giving. Where Emerson begins his essay, 'Gifts,' with an economic metaphor—'it is said that the world is in a state of bankruptcy, that the world owes the world more than the world can pay, and ought to go into chancery, and be sold'—Dickinson begins "What would I give to see his face?" by weighning gains and losses. Moreover, Dickinson, like Emerson, moves quickly to an excess of giving and finally, through a Shakespearean reference, to a giving of self, echoing Emerson's thought that, 'The only gift is a portion of thyself. Thou must bleed for me.'" For more, see Freedman (136-137).

P16-J1737-Fr267, "Rearrange a 'Wife's' affection!"[64] strikes a note of unending love.

With a remarkable number of exclamation marks, the poem discloses the same declaration of the never-ending, moored commitment recorded in P13 "Forever at His side to walk—," but here, however, less sanguine and embedded in pain.

From the point of view of an unfaltering wife, the speaker's continued commitment seems to have been questioned. She subsequently pictures the kind of conversion she would have to submit to before her "'Wife's' affection" could be changed:

> When they dislocate my Brain!
> Amputate my freckled Bosom!
> Make me bearded like a man!

—only then could her loyalty be altered. This extremity demonstrates the outstanding "Constancy" which poems 1, 3, 13 and the previous one show. In the second stanza, the speaker goes on to command both her spirit and flesh to blush with pride for "Seven years of troth"—of vow and belief. Sharon Leiter suggests, "Seven years is the biblical time span of indentured labor required to 'earn' the beloved" (165).

From the fascicle's mood so far one can say that the speaker is not satisfied after seven years of troth, however she has kept her end of the fifteenth poem's solemn promise of unchangeable fidelity. Stanza 3 pays tribute to her spirit and body, "unacknowledged clay." Her love, she declares, is crammed into a "socket" and has never made an exit out of her heart. This implies that the love is ensnared in her; it has "never leaped its socket." Her "Trust" is imbedded, deeply implanted in dismal pain. In addition, her Constancy, her loyalty and unshaken

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[64] This is one of Emily Dickinson's poems for which no original manuscripts exist, only copies made by Todd.

determination is terminated, brought to the end and honored in spite of her anguish, an idea that corresponds with her general sense of renunciation, which includes redemption through suffering and submits yet masks an illusionary alleviation, which is open to view:

> Burden—borne so far triumphant—
> None suspect me of the crown,
> For I wear the 'Thorns' till Sunset—
> Then my Diadem put on.

There is a significant degree of meaning suggested by the poem's symbolism. It is only at sunset, the time of death, that the speaker can commence to shoulder her triumphant place as a crowned wife, her redemption through suffering. And her "bandaged" "Secret," which is related to the white dress the poet wore from the early 1860s, is shielded, unseen by others,[65] like the love that she is keeping secret in spite of the unrelieved anguish. It is a state that she has a feeling for, and she is summoned to maintain, rejecting any nuptial engagements in the temporal life, until at the sunset of death where her agonizing thorns will then be transformed into the triumph of a "Diadem," a crown, in her beloved's presence.

Like the twelfth poem's Christ, she undergoes the agony of "Thorns,"[66] which will nonetheless experience a transition, making its way from a suffering state to one of might. Thus, the poet's constancy to an afterlife reunion is what the poem secretly celebrates, since this troth contrasts with the literal sense of earthly spousal status, which the speaker, needless to say, does not have—a pivotal renunciation in order to maintain her pledge.

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[65] In a letter to her parents, Todd describes Emily Dickinson "she dresses wholly in white." See Sewall (1974: 216-217).

[66] Sewall notes that the image of thorns comes, "from the imitation of Christ" (1974: 692). The metaphor, then, could be considered a passing reference to the crown of "Thorns" placed on Christ's forehead.

In P17-J248-Fr268, “Why—do they shut Me out of Heaven,” the speaker shows a weakness for heaven, which is projected as a metaphor for something strongly desired.

Unlike the glimpse of heaven of poem 4, the speaker here meditates on her exclusion from it. If she found heaven alluring, she was also petrified by the fact that the angels and the “Gentleman / In the ‘White Robe’—” left her behind, out of the place she most wants to be. Here we sense a longing for a desired state the speaker has been excluded from, and in spite of the religious connotations implied by the mention of religious figures, in this case God and the angels, they could also be metaphors for persons involved in a certain mundane experience that she is shut out of. In any case, Dickinson portrays a world in which reason is collapsing by asking why. Nonetheless, in spite of this apparent state of oblivion, she does not seem to be losing her grip. Instead, she ends the poem by accusing God and the angels of being less generous than she would be in their position.

The poem begins with two questions: the first expresses a lack of understanding by asking why, and the second instantly affecting the manifest guiltlessness of the first, “Did I sing—too loud?” Singing is a metaphor for poetry. So, the speaker seems to be asking if being a poet and daring to write about “strange things—bold things” (L 35) is enough to get her shut out of heaven. In line 3, she tries to change the unexpected judgement she has received. She wants to correct her mistake by submitting that she will try to conduct herself well to win approval, be it mundane or divine. She tries to make amends when pledging to “say a little “Minor” / Timid as a Bird!” and thus she conveys the impression that she is finally aware of the blunder she had made.

In stanza 2 she pleads for one more chance. This at once intimates her readiness to ask for pardon for her mistake:

> Would’nt the Angels try me—
> Just—once—more—
> Just—see—if I troubled them—

After all her attempts to justify herself, she urges, “don’t—shut the door!” In stanza 3 she imagines herself in the position of the “Gentleman / In the ‘White Robe,’” who, with his key, is the only one that can unlock the gate of heaven. Like in the twelfth poem, the speaker splits herself in two and sees the situation with the eyes of the divine. However, in this case she reflects on how she would act if she were in the Gentleman’s place. From the poem’s tone, it is safe to assume that the speaker would have acted differently.

Such a poem, pointed beyond itself, towards the need for answers, the willing to acknowledge or simply a fear of exclusion. It is an open-ended, self-contained poem, and sharply demarcated from everyday life.

Banished from heaven, Dickinson’s speaker in the next poem P18-J249-Fr269, “Wild Nights—Wild Nights!” sails to another condition and, exulting in the view, she wishes to anchor her mind where she most wants to be lest it, as a ship tossed by the “Futile” “Winds” and waves, loses its identity.

There is, again, a deep desire to be with someone. Packed with underpinnings, it first overwhelms with its erotic eye-catching images, which suggest sexual desire. Then, it teases the reader’s awareness. In actual fact, the poem is a lyrical celebration that contains highly revealing messages that, again, uses heaven as a metaphor for fulfillment. Contextually, it could be an immediate reaction to the previous poem’s disappointment; accordingly, the poem by no means generates a feeling of doom and gloom. Moreover, it makes one think for a moment that the real “Eden” the speaker wishes for is the “port” of the one she desires:

> Wild Nights—Wild Nights!
> Were I with thee
> Wild Nights should be
> Our luxury!
>
> Futile—the Wind—
> To a Heart in port—

Done with the Compass—
Done with the Chart!

Rowing in Eden—
Ah, the Sea!
Might I but moor—Tonight—
In Thee!

If we consider that "Thee" in the last line is the same as in line 2, then the last line firmly resolves which "Heart" we are dealing with and where it aspires to "moor."[67] After rowing away from the celestial waters towards the wild sea, and since to moor in the sea is not logically possible, because ships naturally moor at "port," what the speaker is saying is that she would be safe from the storms at sea if she could moor in the port of the person she loves. This is the kind of moorage she wishes for, and the sea's unleashed nature like the waves and the wind whould not be dangerous "To a Heart in port." Subsequently, she will renounce the use of the compass and the chart because they would no longer be required.

Authentic living flows only from the speaker's readiness to row in the beloved's Eden with all its bliss, because it is their "Luxury," which can imply lust and lasciviousness if we take the etymology of this word into consideration, the authentic triumph where her eternal happiness prevails.

By turning her thoughts inwards, the speaker in P19-J250-Fr270, "I shall keep singing!" pours her heart out more fully in writing, and assures that only by

[67] Franklin comments that Higginson, while selecting poems for the volume, "evidently felt some reservation about including this one, for he wrote Mrs. Todd on 21 April 1891 (AB, 127): 'One poem only I dread a little to print—that wonderful "Wild Nights,"—lest the malignant read into it more than that virgin recluse ever dreamed of putting there. Has Miss Lavinia any shrinking about it? You'll understand & pardon my solicitude. Yet what a loss to omit it! Indeed it is not to be omitted'" (1998: 180).

writing her poems and keeping them private will she give sincerity and strong moral principles to them and thus enter eternity.[68]

In this poetic vision she finds her archetype and strongly declares her sense of innermost right as a woman poet. Moreover, she says that her poetry hitherto is just morning, it is just the "seed of Noon," the seed of the "fuller tune" of her poetic fullfilment, the mature completion of the fascicles that she will achieve some day.

The harbinger of spring, "Robin," reappears here, but this time in the form of the poet herself. She compares herself to other poets' birds who pass her "On their way to" other regions of the earth with brighter colours, "Yellower Climes." Despite being passed and overshadowed by poets of her era, she has a "Redbreast" too, and she has her own unique "Rhymes." She predicts that it will be late when she takes her "place in summer—," in those regions with brighter colours. But, she adds, "I shall bring a fuller tune—," and thus she divulges her faith that future appreciation of her poems will be more significant than any early fame would have been.[69]

She keeps a song inside of her as a desire of her poetic pursuit, and this song will remain eternally heard, as her voice in poem 7. She also assures her partiality for the nocturnal period of poetic inspiration by saying that she finds the

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[68] As a matter of fact, this poetic vision the poem discloses is not new. At the age of twenty, on April 1850, Dickinson shows an intellectual independence through a letter sent to her friend Jane Humphrey. The letter says, "I have dared to do strange things—bold things, and have asked no advice from any … I do not think I am wrong … I could make you tremble for me, and be very much afraid, and wonder how things would end … life has had an aim … I hope belief is not wicked" (L 35). The letter, written at an early age, indicates a poetic vision; creates a vision of a world through a poet's eye, an eye that sees things in a new way.

Sewall says of Dickinson's vision, "She had found a way, through the language of figure and metaphor, to protect herself and to work around and ultimately transcend all that was frustrating her emerging view of life" (1974: 396).

[69] By the mid-nineteenth century, publishing had become big business. Wolff confirms that by mid century writers "were compelled to sell themselves" by giving public readings and travelling to "promote sales" (241). Dickinson was clear about her resistance to publication and she urges artists not to sell their art through the self-reflexive poem J709-Fr788 "Publication—is the Auction."

"Vespers" of the evening service "sweeter" than the morning "Matins" service.[70] There is a resonance in the evening music. Its intensity symbolizes the mature completeness at the day's end, and the speaker is convinced that her poems, with their depth and complexity, will be the "Vespers" to the less mature "Matins" of other poets.[71]

In P20-J251-Fr271, "Over the fence—," the speaker ends the fascicle expressing that notwithstanding her poetic ambitions as a woman, doubt has a way of getting under her skin.

The poem is sedimented with half-legible meanings and symbolism. Its terminology is that of an eager female whose desire is to climb a fence to reach Strawberries, but it seems that something averts her, fences her out with the risk that "God would certainly scold." The speaker's lamentation is that boys are allowed to climb and take the strawberries while females are not. What the poem means, then, is those purposes of life that are allowed to males but forbidden to females. But what remains enigmatic is the character of these forbidden purposes, here depicted as strawberries.

On the one hand, the fact that God might scold her leads to the belief that these berries portray forbidden fruit that also might leave a stain for life. This, in turn, opens the possibility that sexuality could be meant. Premarital sex was more inappropriate for females than for males, not to mention Dickinson had lived

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[70] Dickinson "depicts herself living most enjoyably and creatively at night or just before sunrise." See Farr (1992: 52).

[71] On her comments about J508-Fr353 "I'm ceded—I've stopped being Their's—," Leiter (110) recognizes that Dickinson wrote this poem at the beginning of her years of "flood creativity," when she was coming into her full powers as a poet. Her emancipation is not only from religious language, but also from all "languages" and fixed "worldviews" that might constrain the truth of her creative vision. She celebrates her enhanced sense of selhood in a number of other "poet-poems" of this period, including "I shall keep singing…." (1861, Fr270); "Put up my lute!" (1862, Fr324); "One life of so much consequence!" (1841, Fr248); "On a Columnar Self—" (1863, Fr740); "The Soul Selects her own Society—" (1862, Fr409); and "Mine—by the Right of the White Election!" (1862, Fr411)

single all her life. On the other hand, the poem could be suggesting that it is not the Berries but the speaker's climbing (a vocation or profession) that is the prohibited purpose. In this reading, we might rationally meditate on whether the desired object is to establish a literary recognition for herself as a woman poet.[72] A letter to Abiah Root at the age of 18, in May 1848, in which Dickinson expresses some kind of resentment regarding her father's partisan treatment, sheds light on this thorny subject: "Woman's tears are of little avail […] Austin was victorious, and poor, defeated I was led off in triumph" (L 23). Dickinson's father was a religious man who worked hard to take care of his family. The writer Albert Gelpi says that Dickinson considered her father as "almost, the incarnation of the Messiah whom she was defying more and more in her heart," and whom she "continued to resist in small but deliberate ways" (13). Gelpi describes Dickinson's life, "in its feminine way, distinctly and passionately Byronic." He continues by adding that Dickinson shows the rebellion of, "the Calvinist mind turning against itself and its maker" (40-1). In another letter to Abiah, Dickinson shows an obvious confusion, "I have come from 'to and fro, and walking up, and down' the same place that Satan hailed from, when God asked him where he'd been" (L 36). Gelpi argues that there is "something of the unsatisfied, unsatisfiable restlessness" in the poet's life (42).

Higginson had surely affected the poet's thinking by his support of women's rights and their position in society. In his essay "Ought Women to Learn the Alphabet", which appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* in February 1859, he

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[72] Elsewhere in her poetry, in J360-Fr640: "Death sets a Thing significant," Dickinson establishes a literary recognition for herself as a woman poet. She says that women who are "Perished Creatures" in that era leave no enduring art to the world than "little Workmanships / In Crayon, or in Wool." Another example is a letter to Sue in early June 1852. Here, Dickinson describes her worries as a woman in her era: "How dull our lives must seem to the bride, and the plighted maiden… but to the *wife,* Susie, sometimes the *wife* forgotten, our lives perhaps seem dearer than all others in the world; you have seen flowers at morning, *satisfied* with the dew, and those same sweet flowers at noon with their heads bowed in anguish before the mighty sun… they know that the man of noon, is *mightier* than the morning and their life is henceforth to him. Oh, Susie, it is dangerous, and it is all too dear, these simple trusting spirits, and the spirits mightier, which we cannot resist!" (L 93, early June 1852)

emphasized the need for equal education asking, "how many mute, inglorious Minervas may have perished unenlightened?" He continues,

> What sort of a philosophy is that which says, "John is a fool; Jane is a genius; nevertheless, John, being a man, shall learn, lead, make laws, make money; Jane, being a woman, shall be ignorant, dependent, disfranchised, underpaid" (1859: 144-5).

This is just one of Higginson's twenty-two essays that had appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* and which Dickinson had certainly read before approaching him in April 1862. In his essays, Higginson expressed his opinions on topics including nature, religion, and women's rights; issues that feature prominently in Dickinson's poetry.

Frustrated by these limitations, she yearns for full expression of the voice that she is developing on the sly, as in J167-Fr178:

> To learn the Transport by the Pain—
> As Blind Men learn the sun!

Her feeling of great worry continues,

> To die of thirst—suspecting
> That Brooks in Meadows run!"

As she writes, she says that she comes closer to a world of self-fulfilment, a life of a poet. She goes on describing her objective a "foreign shore," and the air she starts to breathe comes from the realm of poetry:

> Haunted by native lands, the while—
> And blue—beloved air!

The reader of "Over the fence—," then, is left with the freedom to come to a decision between these and other emblematic readings of the strawberries. The only certainty we are left with is the confident belief that she "could climb," if she "tried." She has no doubts that "Berries are nice." But encumbered by the womanly apron, she is to be denied the strawberries if she were to try to climb and grab them. Averted by the preoccupation that her apron might get stained, the speaker in line 8 says that if God were a boy, he would not scruple to climb seeing

that, as a male, he wears no restraining apron, which is an idea that serves as an exemplification of the speaker's sense of the eye of the diviner as judging and restraining, as blameworthy for her being shut out of heaven, as depicted in the seventeenth poem.

Conclusion

Poems 1, 3, and 7, have shown that Dickinson is confident in her identity. On balance, 8 poems of love (including poems 4 and 8 about loss; and poems 9 and 17 about pain, desire, and exclusion) suggest that she had been pining for a love she could not attain. Humility, loss, death, pain, religion, desire, and poetic pursuit also have a strong presence in the fascicle.

Through her speakers, she injects customary ecstasies and pathos into the poems. At times the wild abandon is tearing at the inside of her skin like a panther's claws, but the memories of the past are cherished because they are all she owns (P8), and she bargains with all that she owns for a smile from the beloved one (P5), and for a glimpse of his face, too (P15). In conclusion, her insistence is compared to that of Christ, who would not turn his back on believers; hers, though, is more enduring.

Nonetheles, as I have mentioned earlier, the next fascicle is the Peripeteia where the love starts to vanish, and her reverie states itself in a form of ideal thought, sequestering Dickinson from material living standards to a grasp of a more fullfilled identity. This is evident in the way she gets engaged with the unknown through the terrifying idea of death (P6-P10), and the farrago of determination and doubt about her poetic pursuit, as in the last 2 poems. It is also evident in the way she uses heaven to depict her desired states. At times, Eden is where the lover is, the only place where she wants to moor (P18), but she finds herself fenced out of it P17, and its awareness flickers briefly in her eyes (P4).

Chapter 3 – Fascicle 12: "One Year ago" (J296-Fr301)

No better way to start fascicle 12 than with a statement that tries to define what seems to be indefinable, P1-J214-Fr207, "I taste a liquor never brewed—."[73]

Situated in the natural world (references to "Air," "Dew," "summer days," "inns of Molten Blue," "Bee," "Butterflies"), the alcohol being consumed is pure natural and has not been through any manufactoring process—that is, distilled, fermented etc.:

> From Tankards scooped in Pearl—
> Not all the Frankfort Berries
> Yield such an Alcohol!

By mentioning Frankfort Berries, Dickinson states an ingredient from which the liquor has not been made. Rather, it is heavenly, for it effervesces foam depicted as pearls, like those of heaven's pearly gates. Such a Romantic inspiration directs the reader's attention to an apt comparison, namely between the *Spirits* of alcohol and the *Spirit* of nature.

The poem then stretches credulity to the utmost with fantasy and extravagance. She is "Inebriate of Air," and "Debauchee of Dew," drunk on nature's liquor and staggering "thro endless summer days—." The scene consists of flowers depicted as inns, where the bee and butterflies gather and drink. But when these inns close and turn their customers out, the speaker will still continue drinking from nature until she is very drunk that she "Reel [s]" through the streets.

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[73] Titled "The May Wine," the poem had appeared in the "Original Poetry" column in the *Springfield Republican* on May 4, 1861. Franklin states that, "the editors wanted a rhyme and they produced a version that could never, by any stretch of imagination, have been hers: 'I taste a liquor never brewed, / From tankards scooped in pearl; / Not Frankfort berries yield the sense / Such a delirious whirl'" (1998: xxvi).

Bowles, the editor of the *Republican*, and his partner Dr. J. G. Holland, were strongly persuading Emily Dickinson to let them publish some of her poems. But, "they reserved the right to correct rhymes and alter figures of speech." According to Franklin, at the time she wrote Higginson she does not seem to be trying to avoid publishing. On the contrary, she seems to be inquiring how one can publish and at the same time preserve the integrity of one's art" (xxvi).

When "Landlords" turn the drunken Bee
Out of the Foxglove's door—
When Butterflies—renounce their "drams"—
I shall but drink the more!

But the height of fantasy is in what the last stanza says, depicting a speaker who, in her drunkenness, causes so much commotion that she wakes up the dwellers in heaven, who in turn rush to their windows to look at her and wave their hats to celebrate her:

Till Seraphs swing their snowy Hats—
And Saints—to windows run—
To see the little Tippler
From Manzanilla come![74]

This seemingly spiritual approval seems to have been given to her for being a lover of nature who breathes its air and drinks from its dew—remarks that denote purity and quality. But note that to "Debauch" is the opposite of spirituality, an apt, humourous play with the contrast. Furthermore, terms such as "Inebriate" and "Debauchee" take the poem away from any religious allusion. In fact, Dickinson is here parodying religion, creating a sort of light-hearted heresy, which celebrates the spiritual dimension of nature.

Away from religion, we are forced instead into an associative territory, namely the possibility that the speaker's drunkenness on summer is a metaphor for her being intoxicated by the realisation of her poetic genius. This perspective could be underpinned if line 12, "I shall but drink the more!" a confident decision to continue to write her poems indefinitely. If this hypothesis is true, then this is closely connected with the last poem of the previous fascicle.

Perhaps she is no longer affected by the prohibited love and "I shall but drink the more!" is a decision to move on. Both ideas encourage the hypothesis

[74] Manzanilla is a name of a brand of sherry: a pale, very dry Spanish one. However, Franklin suggests that it could also be a reference to Manzanillo, an important commercial city on the southern coast of Cuba, with the export of rum (1998: 150).

that the speaker's intoxication is actually her power. Furthermore, both the disorganized sense implied by "Reeling" and the minimal status given by "little Tipler" are employed to grasp the reader's attention and thus produce the contrary effect. Besides, they create an important balance with the self-confidence that the poem wonderfully celebrates.

Enraptured by nature's beauty and love of earth, Dickinson introduces us to P2-J161-Fr208, "A feather from the Whippowil," a nature riddle poem with a mixture of the natural and divine similar to that in the previous one:

> A feather from the Whippowil
> That everlasting—sings!
> Whose galleries—are Sunrise—
> Whose Opera—the Springs—
> Whose Emerald Nest the Ages spin
> Of mellow—murmuring thread—
> Whose Beryl Egg, what School Boys hunt
> In "Recess"—Overhead!

The poem was sent to Bowles along with a sprig of white pine (Bianchi, *Life and Letters*, 266).[75] It is thus essential to link the close resemblance between the bird's feather the poem starts with and the sprig of pine sent with the poem, which is enclosed to be sure the recipient deciphers the riddle.[76]

On this view, the hints that the poem offers are a feather from the bird: in this case a Native American nightjar with a distinctive call,[77] an "Emerald Nest," and a "Beryl Egg." But what do all these elements have in common? The images

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[75] See Bianchi (266).

[76] When Dickinson sent riddle poems to her correspondents, she "sometimes enclosed a concrete object—a cocoon, pine needle, and some apples—as an 'answer' to the riddle. While she doubtless enjoyed the intellectual play of these exercises, the fundamental notion of a riddle went deep into her nature, to her sense of existence as the greatest riddle of all." See Leiter (129).

[77] Although not specifically mentioned, it is perhaps the same bird that will be used later in P14, whose early morning "Music stirs the Axe" with which an execution will take place. This will be discussed in P14.

are surely metaphorical. But what do they imply or symbolize? The feather of the bird, to begin with, is the piece of bark from the pine. Naturally, a tree is much more everlasting than a bird. The "Emerald Nest" would be the green foliage of the tree. Finally, the "Beryl Egg" symbolizes the pinecones, which "School Boys" often "hunt [ed]" for during their "Recess" in school.

However, this is the "Recess—Overhead," that is, in heaven. Dickinson had shown on several occasions her artistic view of pine trees. These words, by way of example, were sent to her brother Austin on 26 June 1853: "We all went down this morning and the trees look beautifully. Everyone is growing, and when the west wind blows, the pines lift their light leaves and make sweet music" (L 129). Another example can be found in a letter written in the winter of 1859: "My garden is a little knoll with faces under it, and only the pines sing tunes, now the birds are absent" (L 212).

The height of the pine trees, as the current poem describes, gives them gallery seats at "Sunrise"—as art "galleries," or the highest balconies in a theatre, or "Opera." And, when the "west wind blows," as stated in the letter to Austin, the pine trees sing the everlasting music of nature, which is heard in the ornamental path through the trees at sunrise, with rays of light lighting the forest under the tree arch.

The next poem, P3-J181-Fr209 "I lost a World—the other day!" introduces the idea of loss to advise the reader not to take anything in this world for granted.

By the use of an exclamation mark in the first line, the reader senses a sudden remark expressing surprise, strong emotion, or pain. And of course, the seeming dominance of the lost world the poem encloses is of interest and intrigue. By the usage of this ungraspable term which the speaker has lost, and in spite of its descriptions given in lines 3-4, Dickinson leaves many blanks to the readers' own judgement, proposing another way to see, from a slant way, for she only tells us half-truth. Also, by introducing this state of loss, which prevailed in the

previous fascicle, the poem opens new avenues to explore rather than offering a stable interpretation.

The second line establishes a direct dialogue with the reader, asking "Has anybody found?" And then, she goes on giving a detailed description of the lost world, as though she were a mother asking passersby for help to find her lost boy, who would be identified by his Saturnian features:

> You'll know it by the Row of Stars
> Around it's forehead bound.

There is an idea that suggests itself in the form of a world which itself is lost in the outer space, indicating a deep interest in the secrets of the universe, which is something not necessary for "A Rich man—" to concern himself with, because his involvement in wordly preocupations consequently makes him "not notice it—." And sir, in this case, could well be a reference to the creator who should be responsible for his creation, and whose obligation is to "find it" again for her. This reading of the poem could send the reader into orbit, and in spite of all the ambiguity the usage of the term world leaves the reader's mind with, lines 6-7 are nevertheless an important conclusion of great value about the speaker's modest personality. She is the opposite of the rich man whose world is lost in a sense, she does not have a selfish desire for wealth and power, because she has developed a modest character with a keen-sighted "Eye" that cares more for value and high thinking than wealth, or "Ducats," and this is the moral point the poem encloses, the maxim which provides the power to name the value of life on earth. This has made Dickinson develop a Romantic sense that allows her to value those things that most people never even notice.

In this reading, Dickinson believes that the world is not spontaneously on anybody's side. This idea is firmly supported by the next poem P4-J182-Fr210, "If I should'nt be alive," where the speaker emphasizes with conviction that when the springtime bird comes, she is not at all assured that she will be present by then—she is aware of her mortality.

Confronting the prospect of her own death, the speaker conveys the impression that she will resign phlegmatically from the world. As far as that goes, her meanings and values remain rooted in nature. She makes an appeal to the reader to feed the robins in her honour when she is gone:

> When the Robins come,
> Give the one in Red Cravat,
> A Memorial crumb.

Red cravat shows an inventive verbal humour describing the well-known red breast of the bird. And the Memorial crumb serves to contrast the needs of the rich man in the previous poem by reminding us of the small needs that birds in general have, which is nonetheless described as monumental.

In stanza 2, we sense a decisive drift into the time when the speaker will be already dead. In this way, the poem foresees other well-known death poems in which Dickinson's speaker is dying or speaking from beyond death, as in J465-Fr591 "I heard a Fly buzz—when I died," among others. The stanza begins with an echo of the poem's first line; and, again, establishing a dialogue with the reader:

> If I could'nt thank you,
> Being fast asleep,
> You'll know I'm trying
> With my Granite lip!

While this reading intimates a state of consciousness after death, the speaker's "Being fast asleep" puts together an idea of alleviation with sorrow at the loss of all emotions, leaving a salient, upsetting disturbance effect for the culminating last two lines. If she is trying to speak and show gratitude through death, her granite lip hinders her. Her endeavour then shows her psyche at war with death—defiant against the seizure of her voice, which suggests the power of poetry to speak to the world after the poet herself has died.

Written in 1860, P5-J183-Fr211 "I heard an Organ talk, sometimes—," offers a testimony to the power of sacred music.

Music is, at its quintessence, the sound of psyche, the highest order and the most universal nature. Dickinson, as an accomplished pianist and composer of melodies,[78] professes that the pipe organ she heard at the church's corridors produced an awe-inspiring reaction in her that made her hold her breath. She heard it talk, but declares to comprehend "no word it said—," and not to know "what was done" to her:

> And understood no word it said—
> Yet held my breath, the while—
> And risen up—and gone away,
> A more Bernardine Girl—

Bernardine is, according to the order of St. Bernard, an order of monks who wore white robes. But, is the speaker saying that the sacred Organ has made her become more holy? Does "risen up" imply that she has been uplifted and brought nearer to God? Hearing the majestic Organ reverberating in the atriums of a "Cathedral" is likely to inspire spiritual awe and a state of contemplation. The impact of the music, then, may conceivably have left Dickinson's speaker with a reverent silence. On this view, the question also touches on the issue of how much of a believer Dickinson is, or was at the time she composed this poem. In her poems and letters she walks on that thin line between belief and disbelief. At the time she wrote this poem, she was not throughly convinced of her family's religion, which believes in God and eternal life. In 1862 she would write J324-Fr236 "Some keep the Sabbath going to Church—," where she states that she quit going to church altogether.

The current poem can be compared to P10-J258-Fr320 in fascicle 13 written about a year later in 1861, "There's a certain Slant of light," where the pipe Organ and its impact upon the speaker is also incorporated, yet with an opposite response, because it describes the oppresive effect it can have on the

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[78] See Leiter (95). Also, the writer Vivian R. Pollak writes that Jay Leyda quotes Kate Scott Anthon recalling that Dickinson played "weird and beautiful melodies, all from her own inspiration" (207).

speaker as well as the abuse that, "the Heft / Of Cathedral tunes—" can produce within her, leaving her with a sense of "Heavenly Hurt" within, "Where the meanings, are—."[79] It can also be compared to "I taste a liquor never brewed—," in that music here has a similar effect to that of nature there.

P6-J184-Fr212 "A transport one cannot contain," speaks of the possibly dangerous state of poetic inspiration that can be a kind of delirious "Rapture."

What the speaker in stanza 1 says is that the transport of inspiration that arrests the whole mind fills her life so that it is not containable, but it is still an intense emotion. But the crux of the poem is in line 3, precisely the ambiguous phrase "God forbid." Though having a different view on the meaning of transport in this poem, the writer William E. Cain makes a noteworthy observation on the phrase "God forbid": "The irony with which the poem undercuts the reader's assumption and its own aspiration is sharpened on the double edge of line three: 'God forbid' may be a report or an entreaty or both" (98).

The crux can be resolved by a consideration of what could be that that cannot be contained if the "lid" were indeed lifted. What this implies is the prolificacy of a poet who is bursting inside with passion and intellect. It could be that she is modest, and thus God forbid can be considered an entreaty. But a second interpretation is that she is simply saying God forbids her to share her creativity. But, why would God hinder the speaker's creativity? Or is God an allusion to some arbiter, or arbiters (Bowles or Higginson) at whom the speaker sneers for having blocked the publication of her poetry?

While Dickinson's poetry did not see the light of day during her lifetime, her poetic production continued, "May yet, a transport be—." But she had had to keep the lid on, so presumably she had lost interest in publishing at some point of her life. Stanza 2 feels sorry about this particular point:

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[79] This poem will be fully discussed later in fascicle 13.

A Diagram—of Rapture!
A sixpence at a Show—
With Holy Ghosts in Cages!
The *Universe* would go!

If we could see that tremendous force of transport, it would be like "A Diagram—of Rapture!" that everyone in this world would pay their sixpense to see this particular "Show." Thematically, the poem is linked with the previous and the first one in the fascicle, all dealing with states of rapture or transport.

The next epigram is Dickinson's critique of those who put religious belief in advance of science.

'Faith' is a fine invention
When Gentlemen can see—
But Microscopes are prudent
In an Emergency. (P7-J185-Fr202)[80]

The thorny question naturally arises: is Dickinson dismissing faith as unworthy of consideration? Maybe. If religion stands opposed to science, this would be a natural response from an intellectual. But she dismisses it as an invention (as also the quotation marks suggest), which means something created or discovered which was not previously known.

The poem criticizes the gentlemen, an allusion to theologians or priests, who resort to religion whenever they had an issue or something in question. Note that what the "Gentlemen can," actually hints at what they cannot, their inability to "*see*" beyond their conventional religious faith, and the italicization of "*see*" is intended to stress that what they "can *see*" is beyond the reach of logical proof, or

[80] This poem is also included in fascicle 10 (number 9). Additionally, the poem was included in a letter to Bowles about 1860. The content of the letter reflects what seems to be a religious dialogue in progress: "You spoke of the 'East.' I have thought about it this winter. Don't you think you and I should be shrewder, to take the *Mountain Road*?
That *Bareheaded Life*—under the grass—worries one like a Wasp" (L 220).

as Leiter puts it, "Is meant in the revelatory sense—to see spiritually, to see God's Truth" (76).

What the poem is suggesting is that religious faith and scientific technology are at war, and it is wise to count on science when there is something important at stake, not religion.

P8-J293-Fr292, "I got so I could hear his name—" is a memory of Dickinson's parting from her lover, the peripeteia where the love in the previous fascicle starts to vanish.

So, here we are brought again to the legend of Emily Dickinson's love. But this time we are told how the lovers had already renounced each other, and how she is left with a pride that masks her heartache.[81]

The speaker here manifests that she went through the pain of loss all by herself, leaving her in a state of benumbing anguish that yields ground to angst from stanza 4 until the end. She starts by saying that she finally "could hear" the beloved's name,

> Without—Tremendous gain—
> That Stop-sensation—on my Soul—
> And Thunder—in the Room—

The fact that she no longer suffers a "gain" when she "hear [s] his name" adds something to her normal state, the effects described in lines 3 and 4. That is, a pain in the soul, as a shock, or paralysis, which impact is like a thunder every time his name is being mentioned. Stanza 2 reveals another turning point, but also a thirst for romance from the past:

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[81] J322-Fr325 "There came a Day—at Summer's full—," which will be discussed later in fascicle 13, is a similar poem, yet somehow more optimistic. Here, the lovers renounce their earthly love for the promise of an afterlife reunion.

I got so I could walk across
That Angle in the floor,
Where he turned so, and I turned—how—
And all our Sinew tore—

In times gone by, she used to get overwhelmed by a strong physical frailty every time she walks into that room and turned to that corner where their romantic meetings took place and their muscles get drained of all energy. But she overcame that, too. In stanza 3 she addresses what it used to be another source of anguish, "the Box— / In which his letters grew." This, in turn, indicates a frequent correspondence. But she overcame that, too. She "could stir" the letters which number had increased and made her feel like "Staples—driven through" her body. The staples, shackles or fettles, is a term that serves to make manifest a restriction of which she is finally at liberty. Such a striking description is reminiscent of the "Gimblet" employed in the ninth poem of the previous fascicle, "it is easy to work when the soul is at play—."

Then, from the fourth stanza on, the poem becomes spiritually integrated with both the previous poem and P5. It draws on the speaker's disappointment about the non-successful role of faith to confort her. She dimly calls to mind that there *may* be a divine being that "they call […] 'God'," who is supposed to ease our extremity when formula or other cures "had failed." She calls to mind all those postures of suplication to whom she took her "Business." But, that only increased her doubts in a divine power that may, or may not, be in heaven, behind the cloud:

My Business, with the Cloud,
If any Power behind it, be,
Not subject to Despair—
It care, in some remoter way,
For so minute affair
As Misery—
Itself, too great, for interrupting—more—

As we observe, the poem allows for this criticism of God, at the same time as it by some means counters it. Line 23 applies to the power behind the cloud, God, who, as Dickinson stresses, would not be "subject to Despair" as human beings are. For

the fact is that if it criticizes God for not caring, or being absent, it also says that he may "care, in some remoter way" for what it bitterly says is, "so minute affair / As Misery—."

As love starts to vanish, Dickinson turns her thoughts inward. P9-J263-Fr293 meditates for the first time in both fascicles on the delicate boundary between mortality and immortality.

> A single Screw of Flesh
> Is all that pins the Soul
> That stands for Deity, to Mine,
> Upon my side the Vail—

This stanza addresses two ideas. Firstly, that her body, as distinguished from the soul, "Is all that pins" the Deity's soul to hers. This strong attachment represented by pins is separated by a vail, which is a figurative expression used to hint at the boundary between mortal life and the most holy place, which can only be entered through death. The second idea is based on the term "stands for," which strengthens the notion that the mortal's soul signifies the divine's.

Stanza 2 certainly gives an account of an experience:

> Once witnessed of the Gauze—
> It's name is put away
> As far from mine, as if no plight
> Had printed yesterday,

Gauze and vail hold the same meaning. The thorny question naturally arises: what does witnessed of the Gauze mean? And what is the name that is "put away" as a result of the experience? An answer to these questions can only be based on a tentative interpretation. If we read plight in lines 7-8 in the sense of adversity, then it could be an allusion to the lost love, and thus the idea would tie in with the previous poem's. In this sense, Dickinson is saying that when her soul was in adversity, she caught a glimpse of the divine soul through the vail or gauze

attempting to smuggle her soul into eternity. She had been saved, or rescued, and consequently had put the divine soul's name away:

> In tender—solemn Alphabet,
> My eyes just turned to see,
> When it was smuggled by my sight
> Into Eternity—

Nevertheless, a secondary meaning of plight is pledge. If this is the case, then it is strongly suggestive of love, and this would fit in with "Had printed yesterday," that is, be engraved in stone, permanently existing in the lovers' hearts, "In tender—solemn Alphabet." For her "Peril," which reinforces the idea of adversity, God has granted the speaker three gifts in stanza 4: "More Hands—to hold—," resilience symbolized by plates of armour to protect her "Nerve," and a "striding—Giant—Love." This love, as stanza 5 says, is "greater than [what] the Gods can show." The subject of the verb "let go" is "Clay." That is, humans will not let go of their keepsakes (the memories of lost love) for all of the wonderful things that heaven, or heavens, might offer.

P10-J264-Fr294 "A Weight with Needles on the pounds," dimly pictures the extent to which Dickinson is burdened with anguish.

In her poems, Dickinson often invites the reader to picture a landscape, a scene, or an event, to live the poem and thus to make the understanding of it easier (such as natural scenes, sunrises, sunsets, cathedral corridors). This poem is no exception. But there is a sort of downbeat state about it that takes the reader's imagination to a chamber in which a devilish, mad torture takes place. The torture tool, depicted as weight, has needles that penetrate the sufferer's flesh. Additionally, the masses of needles calmly press harder to make sure that every inch of the skin is lacerated, in case of resistance:

> To push, and pierce, besides—
> That if the Flesh resist the Heft—
> The puncture—Coolly tries—

That not a pore be overlooked

By procceeding from the torment of Heft to the torment of puncture, the devilish torturer does not fail to notice a minute opening on the victim's skin, "not a pore be overlooked."

The closing lines of the third Master letter dated as 1862, the same year as the current poem, contains terms (thimble, stabs) that suggest a strong connection: "I've got a cough as big as a thimble—but I don't care for that—I've got a Tomahawk in my side but that don't hurt me much. [if you] Her master stabs her more—" (L 248).

The term manifold in the penultimate line is one way of referring to the diverse kinds of anguish, which are as many as the names of all living created species.

Although the source of the pain is totally omitted in the current poem, its location within the fascicle suggests a strong connectivity with the lost love whose "letters grew," "As Staples—driven through" in P8.

So the expectation of love of the previous fascicle has surely ended, and the next poem, P11-J217-Fr295 "Father—I bring thee—not myself—," is another testimony to the heavy burden that the speaker has been left with.[82]

The speaker here gets engaged in a direct dialogue with God, referred to as "Father," and in the other version, "Savior" would refer to Christ. She introduces

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[82] There is another version of this poem. As Franklin points out, "the first two lines of the fascicle poem substitute the first five lines of the other version" (1998: 155).

The other version of the poem reads: "Savior! I've no one else to tell— / And so I trouble *thee.* / I am the one forgot thee so— / Dost thou remember me? / Nor, for myself, I came so far— / That were the little load— / I brought thee the imperial Heart / I had not strength to hold— / The Heart I carried in my own— / Till mine too heavy grew— / Yet—strangiest—*heavier* since it went— / Is it too large for *you*?"

The difference between the two versions is that the speaker here introduces herself in a more detailed way. Also, "Dost thou remember me?" suggests that "Savior" could have forgotten the speaker; perhaps, as the line "I came so far" suggests, because she herself has distanced herself from him.

herself derisively. She is the one who is trivial before God's eyes, "little load," the one that has distanced herself from him because of her faith doubts. Although expressing awe, she did not come to God offering herself to him:

> I bring thee the departed Heart
> I had not strength to hold—
>
> The heart I cherished in my own
> Till mine—too heavy grew—
> Yet—strangest—heavier—since it went—
> Is it too large for you?

—Instead, she is turning to God asking him to take away "the departed Heart" that she "cherished" and has grown too big in her. In this reading, the speaker's lost love that has been cultivated so far through the poems is the first idea that occurs to the reader. And it is the most logically possible. This description of the speaker's heart is reminiscent of the heart described in Dickinson's second letter to Master, where she writes: "God built the heart in me—Bye and bye it outgrew me—and like the little mother—with the big child—I got tired holding him" (L 233).

In this view, we sense an intimacy with which a woman carries a child. Perhaps, this metaphorical dimension is what has made writers such as William Shurr claim the existence of a clandestine pregnancy (181).

So, by bringing her heart to God, the speaker brings the depths of her life to him and is hoping to be able to alleviate her pain by giving it to him. But has God (who had granted her three gifts in P9) responded? Apparently yes, but it was not enough:

> Yet—strangest—heavier—since it went—
> Is it too large for you?

She has forgotten how to live without heartache, because "strangest," her lonely heart becomes even heavier than it was before. So, with God unable to relieve her burden, the speaker has no one to turn to, and has to live with a pain that even God find it too immense to bear.

The next poem offers a transitional point between the overwhelming distress given so far in the fascicle, and the nature Dickinson looked to for inspiration and to feed her insatiable needs. Only a keen eye like hers could capture a fanciful display of colour from a garden:

> Where Ships of Purple—gently toss—
> On Seas of Daffodil—
> Fantastic Sailors—mingle—
> And then—the Wharf is still! (P12-J265-Fr296)

Purple has been employed twice in the previous fascicle. In P8, the colour is used to depict good judgement and pursuit of spiritual fullfilment. In P15, it is used in a spiritual form depicted as purple October of "Peru."[83] In the current poem it is used to picture flowers in a sensational view of a garden scene.

In *The Gardens of Emily Dickinson* by Farr and Carter there is a passage that reads:

> There were many flowers Dickinson grew and wrote about that are or can be purplish: heliotrope, clematis, crocuses, iris, phlox, nasturtiums, hyacinths, tulips … to call the flower in J1558-Fr1588, "Of Death I try to think like this" purple without naming it may be descriptive enough for Emily Dickinson (2004: 211).

This can also be applied to the current poem, with flowers whirled in eddies of wind, on a landscape covered by the golden cup-shaped daffodils, which is a flower "dear to Dickinson" (2004: 192). This picture is then enriched by the lively image of bees described as "Fantastic Sailors," who are among the flowers, until,

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[83] Among many examples, J776-Fr875, "The Color of a Queen, is this," exceptionally portrays purple as a royal colour, and says that it is seen together with "Amber" at "setting"; together with "Beryl" at "Noon." And, when the night comes, when the "Auroran widths / Fling suddenly on men—," violet is kept by the "Witchcraft" of "nature" as a "Rank—for Iodine—," which is a blue-black substance found in seawater.

The poem is one of the three poems in the fascicles to which Dickinson gave a title. The two other poems are J36-Fr45, "I counted till they dance so," with title "Snow Flakes"; the other one is J161-Fr208, "A feather from the Whippowill," the second poem in the fascicle under discussion.

the horizon becomes tranquil, "still." All this, in a word, speaks of one of the essential aspects of Dickinson's poetry, which is the inevitable awareness of the passage of time when contemplating a natural scene. The silence the poem ends with tries to perceive what would happen after passing from motion to motionless—from life to death.

P13-J266-Fr297, "This—is the land—the Sunset washes—," uses the day's end to offer another perspective on the stillness the previous poem ended with.

The poem builds upon the previous one. It grasps the reader's attention by the use of "This—is" in the opening line, and "These—are" twice in lines 2 and 4. Then it contemplates the golden light generated by the sunset, which in turn washes the surface of the land. Then, we are given a creative description of how the sky is being vaulted by the "Horizon [s]," becoming "the Banks of the Yellow Sea." To fully appreciate the "Yellow Sea—" and the golden sunset images, it is necessary to shed light on a pun enclosed in the poem, precisely to "Orioles" in the last line. Suitably, the Oriole is a songbird known for brilliant yellow feathers, but the noun simultaneously points to the Latin for golden, *aureolus*, and the circle of light depicted in art around the head of a person represented as holy, aureoles. All three terms represent a radiant gold sunset, the long nimbus mass on the "Horizons—."

And, for the first time, the origin of sunset and its destination are freely regarded as "Mystery":

> Where it rose—or whither it rushes—
> These—are the Western Mystery!

The exclamation mark stresses the mysterious character of the phenomenom. The fading of light, however, is attributed to the end of things; the obscurity that represents the limit of mortals' knowledge:

Night after Night
Her Purple traffic
Strews the landing—with Opal Bales—
Merchantmen—poise opon Horizons—
Dip—and vanish like Orioles!

The second stanza does not intend to fathom the mystery that the first stanza ends with. Instead, it gives us a reminiscent description of the "Ships of Purple" in the previous poem. This sunset phenomenon, the speaker holds, is continuous, "Night after Night," it follows some sublime natural system with a steady rhythm of time and sky—that is, of life and death. Then, at the day's end, the Orioles, the bird and the golden radiance above water, spread the skyline with colourful clouds, like rainbows. And, on their way towards the view's limit, the iridescent, vessels—like "Bales" hover the "Horizons—" bathe in the "Yellow Sea" until they "vanish."

Ultimately, we are given a vivid description of sunset with a view that only reaches the perceivable, nothing beyond the mortals' perception. Even so, this limited view captures a good deal of intention by summoning the reader to glare straight through existence into the abyss that lies beneath, and does so because of its limitations rather than despite them.

P14-J294-Fr298, "The Doomed—regard the Sunrise" is a poem that treasures earthly life.

The philosophical concern that the poem discloses is that those who are destined to death value the sunrise with a different kind of "Delight,"

Because—when next it burns abroad
They doubt to witness it—

Line 3 refers to the next "Sunrise" that the doomed doubts to witness, and thus their way of viewing life changes completely. Stanza 2 goes on saying that, unlike in his normal days, "The Man—to die—tomorrow" pays attention to the morning

birdsong, which is here a harbinger of death, fraught with danger and announcing that the end is approaching. Furthermore, the second stanza adds a sort of cruelty over and above what might be expected, portraying a birdsong that incites the executioner's "Axe," which vehemently appeals for the beheading of the damned:[84]

> The Man—to die—tomorrow—
> Harks for the Meadow Bird—
> Because it's Music stirs the Axe
> That clamors for his head—

The final stanza is about the value of life, it expresses how "Joyful" those are to whom the sunrise is the birth of a new day inflamed with love of life, those for whom the "Medow Bird" is nothing but "Elegy." That is, she is repeating the opening idea of the more intense delight of the man who is facing imminent death.

Dickinson's thinking and desires are often cloistered in some religious motifs, which may at first seem the acme of Dickinson's poetry, yet "would not make Dickinson a 'religious poet.'"[85] While religious symbolism succeeds in adding power to her language, Dickinson's correspondents were probably able to decipher any innuendos she may enclose, as in the case of Bowles, to whom the next poem was sent along with a letter on December 1861. Let us see what the next poem, P15-J225-197, "Jesus! thy Crucifix," has to offer.

As in P7-J185-Fr202 "'Faith' is a fine invention," the last paragraph of the letter sent to Bowles and the poem attached to it also reflect what seems to be a religious dialogue in progress. They run as follows: "Dear Mr Bowles—We told

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[84] Dickinson's use of birds in her poetry usually carries significances of harmlessness, cheerfulness, and carefreeness. Here, however, the "Meadow Bird" is portrayed as a portent of death. This, in turn, suggests the existence of connectivity between this imagery depicted in this poem and the "Whippowill" of the second poem, because whippoorwills are generally symbols of imminent troubles and disasters.

[85] See Keane (95).

you we did not learn to pray—but then our freckled bosom bears it's friends—in its own way—to a simpler sky—and many's the time we leave their pain with the 'Virgin Mary.'"

> Jesus! thy Crucifix
> Enable thee to guess
> The smaller size—
>
> Jesus! thy second face
> Mind thee—in Paradise—
> Of Our's. (Bianchi, Life and Letters, 383)

The poem is a witness to how short yet concise Dickinson's poems can be. The parallel structure of the first two lines of both stanzas forms a prayer. As we observe, the pain the speaker is subjected to so far in the fascicle has been transmuted in this poem. Here, we are provided with a picture in which the speaker looks upon a "Crucifix" and gets engaged in a conversation with the form embodied on it; in this case Jesus. By the belittlement of her own suffering described as smaller size, the speaker gives greater significance to the suffering of Jesus through the Crucifixion. As Keane argues, it provides her with a sort of comfort to know that, "Through the suffering of Jesus, God was aware of the human condition; that her own pain and 'renunciation' had the 'Flavors of that old Crucifixion'" J527-Fr404 (95).

Keane's apt argument continues, but appears to contradict the belittlement of the speaker's own suffering in the current poem: "As the 'Queen' or 'Empress of Calvary' (J348-Fr347), Dickinson sometimes insists that the one 'recorded' crucifixion is not unique, 'There's newer—nearer Crucifixion / Than That'" (J553-Fr670) (95). Does Dickinson imply by this that her own suffering is also worth attention? Certainly. Robert Weisbuch seems to support this claim, arguing that Dickinson finds Christ's crucifixion, "Unique only in that it was made historically public," whereas "'newer—nearer Crucifixion' [is] most worthy of attention" (1975: 80-81). Yet in attempting to reflect this mundane pain so dispassionately, the poem also detaches itself from it. The speaker goes beyond the aspect of "Crucifix." She conjures up the "second face" and "Paradise" in

stanza 2, by which we are deliberately, offered a rebirth idea once again, an afterlife reunion with the beloved. She hopes Jesus will grant her the kind of happiness associated with the resurrection, that her face will also change as his did. This, in turn, encloses grounds for optimism while assuming the actuality of a life of pain. If the poem signals a belief in paradise after death, it also makes attempt to evoke the sympathy of Jesus for mortals, because the agony he had been through during the crucifix should "Mind"[86] him of the faces of "Our's," and thus enable him to guess the smaller pain of humans.

P16-J267-Fr299, "Did we disobey Him?" recalls P8, yet here indicating that the loved one has not been forgotten at all.

> Charged us to forget Him—
> But we could'nt learn!

Note that the only reason that makes the speaker try to forget "Him" is that she has been asked to do so. But in stanza 2 the speaker makes a statement that emphasizes how much the loved one means to her. Is it an attempt to gain his love again?

> Were Himself—such a Dunce—
> What would we—do?
> Love the dull lad—best—
> Oh, would'nt you?

The idea here could not be clearer. The speaker creates a direct dialogue with the reader by saying that if the roles were reversed and she asked the loved one to forget her, she would love him all the more if he could not do it. This strong urge means that she hopes he will love her for not forgetting him.

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[86] The term "Mind" has been cut to achieve a concise form for the poem. It has been used instead of "remind." Additionally, "Crucifix" is used rather than "crucifixion." The same could be applied to "The smaller size," which is a shorter way of saying "the smaller size of our pain." This concision gives the poem a prayer character.

In this sense, she has been asked to move on, and her meditation grows bigger in the next poem where Dickinson identifies herself with noble sufferers and brave martyrs in P17-J295-Fr300, "Unto like Story—Trouble has enticed me—."

As books usually do, the poem starts as though it were about to give an account of a wretched experience. But then it manages to divert the reader's attention to a confession from which we realize that she has been allured by something that prevents peace of mind, "Trouble has enticed me—." In fact, it is not the speaker's experience that is about to be recounted, and in which she seems to be absorbed, but a tale in which "Brothers and Sisters" had been condemned to death because of their beliefs.

The mere mention of "Scaffold" and "Dungeon" in line 5 captures the hostility and ill treatment with which some people had been treated in the past because of religious beliefs. But this group of people the poet is drawn yet encouraged by had silenced any "Shame." In spite of their victimization, and indignity of persecution, they "preferred the Glory." They "fell," but did so bravely, because they chanted their belief while facing up to death smiling:

> And their young will
> Bent to the Scaffold, or in Dungeons—chanted—
> Till God's full time—
> When they let go the ignominy—smiling—
> And shame went still—

The second stanza, then, tells us that after their execution, their noble souls have been regarded as martyrs, and thus rewarded with "Crests," which implies high status, emblems of nobility. And, in spite of the grief in the speaker's mind, these people who were "rejected—in the lower country—," on earth, leads her, because such a rejection has been replaced by "honors there," which implies heaven as an opposite to here on earth.

As line 13 holds, the speaker has "grown bold—" by the everlasting remembrance of these proud spirits. The moral of their story has provided her with courage that makes her feel that she is willing to take determined, war-like "Step (s)" to the cornets towards her own "Crucifixion," as though it were a patriotic ceremony, or the sounding of the horn that announces the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead—a reading that matches with the crucifixion of Jesus to which the previous poem is partly dedicated.

The poem is at root an optimistic form, for which love failure and enduring agony are necessary conditions that we may have to pass through in order to achieve our goals, our self-fullfilment. In Dickinson's case, it could well be her poetic pursuit, which she wished for and could attain. She had to pass through her own crucifixion. A familiar act she has written about several times, perhaps most remarkably where she gives herself the "Title" "Empress of Calvary" in J348-Fr347, in which she says that the suffering of all people could never equal hers.

However, the tone of "Unto like Story—" is a prouder one. It recalls a poem located in fascicle 26, precisely J468-Fr602 "The Manner of it's Death," where the love for the principles of one's own reputation is the main theme. In that poem, we are told that when we can no longer choose to live, "When Certain it must die—," "There yet remains a Love" for our principles and reputation, and thus we should have the "privilege to choose" the way to die, like "Major Andre's Way."[87] Both poems have the manner of dying in common, which saves one's dignity. In a sense, the reader in both poems comes to realize that they build up to a climactic realization of the extent of the kind of life that poetry, with wondrous convenience, has chosen for Dickinson. In one sense, Dickinson identifies herself

[87] Major John André was an English officer who was condemned to death for being a spy during the War of Independence in America in October 1780. He asked to be shot as a soldier rather than be hunged as a spy, but they had him hunged in the end.

with the brave martyrs, and the "Major," because she had already made her decision over her death by retiring from a world she was "rejected" from, as necessary to her vocation of poet.

The last stanza of "Unto like Story—" develops the speaker's admiration for the "kinsmen." They were modest like her. They bravely "marched" in a "Revolution" in which they believed adamant and steady. They held their weak hands and lifted them "in witness—" when they had no words to say:

> Feet, small as mine—have marched in Revolution
> Firm to the Drum—
> Hands—not so stout—hoisted them—in witness—
> When Speech went numb—
> Let me not shame their sublime reportments—
> Drilled bright—
> Beckoning—Etruscan invitation—
> Toward Light—

Galvanized by them, these last four lines show a speaker vowing not to shame their venerable conduct that lustrously coax towards a celestial gleaming, an "Etruscan invitation,"[88] which is a reference to death.[89]

By walking towards her "Crucifixion," egocentricity gets removed, and this makes it possible for her to achieve a pure identity; an invitation to think again of the "true nature of renunciation" that Derrick refers to, as mentioned earlier: "It does not simply mean to sacrifice the pleasures and satisfactions of the world. It means to go beyond them, for a greater satisfaction of which only the highest sensibilities are capable" (1983: 60).

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[88] In a letter to her cousin Eugenia Hall Hunt on her wedding day, Dickinson points out what she thinks of marriage. She uses the term "Etruscan" in a mysterious way that invites contemplation. She asks, "Will the sweet Cousin who is about to make the Etruscan Experiment, accept a smile which will last a Life, if ripened in the Sun? (L 1021)

Etruscan pertains to Etruria (now Tuscany, Italy); a civilization preceded and influenced the Roman culture, and continued through much of its era.

[89] St. Armand proposes that "Etruscan invitation" is a reference to death. He adds that it is, "a clean, well-lighted place for the soul to dwell in, an 'Alabaster Chamber' where the spirit of the deceased could be safely housed and reverenced" (44-45).

With this achievement, a glimpse into eternity can be attained, and poetry gains an immortal character. This glorious attainment, in effect, is what the next poem P18-J296-Fr301, "One Year ago—jots what"? "spell [s]" out in a private, confessional tone.

The poem starts by immersing the reader in thoughts from the past; a strong recollection that has happened "One Year ago—":

> God—spell the word! I—cant—
> Was't Grace? Not that—
> Was't Glory? That—will do—
> Spell slower—Glory—

This poem sounds like a musical piece. God here is asked to pronounce the word aloud, letter by letter, because the speaker "cant" due to the strong emotion. In line 3, the speaker asks if the keyword were grace, which suggests reconciliation to God, or divine salvation, or something given to her by him. And then she thinks further and decides the right word is glory. Then she asks God to spell it, and thus gives him another chance.

The spondees that the first four lines end with slow down the rhythm of the stanza's reading until it gets to its slowest in the fifth line, where the reader is summoned to focus, "Spell slower—Glory—." Additionally, we may add that the stop-start sense given by the first four lines suggests estrangement. One can only speculate, of course, about the nature of this glorious "anniversary" as an experience related to the poet's lost love. While maintaining a ceremonious rhythm, and replacing spondees with iambs, the speaker in stanza 2 reflects on the experience and what it means to her. But unlike previous occasions where she seems to count on an afterlife reunion, resurrection here becomes far-fetched:

> In doubtful meal, if it be possible
> Their Banquet's real—

She is wondering whether the ritual of Communion, "Their Banquet's," is true or false. If it is true, only then they "shall" be face to face, "feed opon each other's

faces," because, as the stanza hints, they will not see each other in this lifetime, at least not as lovers.

Stanza 3 looks back in time to an unrepeatable experience depicted as "Wine" (Communion Wine). Perhaps, with an intention to bring back to mind the intoxication of the fascicle's first poem, articulating that she tasted it deeply and had to be drunk fully, but was "careless—then—," a phrase that carries a deep significance, expressing a regret at losing her lover. At that time, as she bemoans, she was not sure what she was going through, and asks her lover, "Did you?" She "did not know the Wine / Came once a World," because she was young and unexperienced, as will be stated later in stanzas 4-5. Then she goes on wishing he had told her, and perhaps then she would not have to suffer this much:

> This Thirst would blister—easier—now—
> You said it hurt you—most—
> Mine was an Acorn's Breast—
> And could not know how fondness grew
> In Shaggier Vest—

Line 17 implies the suffering of the beloved. Or not. As it happens, we sense that he was to blame for her situation, because if he had told her the true nature of what they had, she would heal faster from her suffering, her thirst would be "easier—now—."

The next line says no; that her suffering was deeper. The use of the metaphor "Acorn's Breast—" develops this lugubrious theme with its dense visuality. It evokes a picture of the "Acorn," or oak nut, whose single kernel is enclosed in a solid shell, and carried in a cupule. The nut seems like a breast that shelters the seed. In this case, it is the speaker's own breast which is described in its firmness and youth. She speaks in a direct manner to Sir, telling him that if he had "looked in" past the shell against which a mature woman and poet starts to grow, he would have seen "A Giant" not just an "Acorn—then—." In this reading, it does not really seem that what had happened really hurt him most, as Sir claims.

Because it seemed impossible for her to measure the fondness in his "Shaggier Vest," which is an image opposite to the speaker's smooth breast.

Stanza 4 underpins the moment when they parted. The tone of unease and strain becomes steadily more pronounced in the fourth stanza due to the speaker's growing frustration. The concise transition "So—" the stanza starts with invites the reader to slow down after the accumulation of events that the two previous stanzas have provided:

> So—Twelve months ago—
> We breathed—
> Then dropped the Air—
> Which bore it best?
> Was this—the patientest—
> Because it was a Child—you know—
> And could not value—Air?

By the dropping of "Air," the speaker has more to say about her regret. She says that perhaps because she was a child, he thought that she would have enough time to forget and be able to handle the loss—that she seemed the patientest to him, and "could not value—Air?"

Like the first stanza, the last one also uses short questions. The speaker says that she has grown more mature; she is no longer a child:

> If to be "Elder"—mean most pain—
> I'm old enough, today, I'm certain—then—
> As old as thee—how soon?
> One—Birthday more—or Ten?
> Let me—choose!
> Ah, Sir, None!

By this she reassures her disagreement that his pain is deeper than hers. She has aged the last twelve months, and now is old enough and does not need more years to become as old emotionally as he claims to be. This poem and "There Came a Day at Summer's full" In F13 are a testimony to Dickinson's parting from her lover, and both create an important connectivity between the two fascicles.

P19-J297-Fr302 “It’s like the Light—,” is a wordplay puzzle poem that requires deep thinking.

The poem offers hints of something, all of which is extracted from nature: “Light,” “Bee,” “Woods,” “Breeze,” and “morning.” Stanza 1 reads:

> It’s like the Light—
> A fashionless Delight—
> It’s like the Bee—
> A dateless—Melody—

This ineffable thing is not glamorous. And does not need to be so, because its pervasiveness constitutes its essence. On the other hand, its melody is everlasting, like that of the bee.

Delight means fullfilling pleasure, and this along with the everlasting melody hint at intellectual enlightenment. Also:

> It’s like the Woods—
> Private—Like the Breeze—
> Phraseless—yet it stirs
> The proudest Trees—

Here we start to perceive the centrality of woods, another wonder of earth that offers a place this silent and undetected thing prevades. We know that in spite of its “Phraseless” character, it has the ability to evoke the emotions of the proudest trees. Phraseless means wordless; but in its ambiguous old use, can also mean sporadic and unpredictable.[90] Like stanza 1, this one also hints at artistic inspiration.

If the effect of this source on the “Proudest Trees” is very deep, how much deeper must be on the speaker. This is precisely what the last stanza spells out:

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[90] According to Webster’s 1844 dictionary, phraseless has the following secondary meanings: amorphous; formless; unstructured; intermittent; sporadic; fitful; unpredictable; variable; irregular in rhythm.

It's like the Morning—
Best—when it's done—
And the Everlasting Clocks—
Chime—Noon!

The morning here could be the moment of inspiration that puts an end to darkness; the moment when the light prevades and the bee sings its melody. In spite of its resplendency, its best is when it culminates at noon, the highest point of the speaker's enlightenment. Dickinson has a lot of inspiration to draw on, and she would develop this idea in the next poem.

P20-J298-Fr303, "Alone, I cannot be," is an apologia poem with a sensibility that builds on the previous one, and in which we are informed about the lifestyle which poetry has selected for Dickinson.

By the time she wrote this poem in 1862, Dickinson had officially entered upon her years of seclusion.[91] Her decision to walk towards her "Crucifixion," as P17 holds, and to set herself free from wordly pleasures, pushed her to move to a limited society that her soul had the privilege to select, as stated in the well-known poem J303-Fr409 "The Soul Selects her own Society—," and then "shut the Door" on a society that threatens to "Obliterate" the self rather than fullfil it, as stated in J674-Fr592 "The Soul that hath a Guest." The verb "Obliterate" means destroy utterly, wipe out; it strongly states the seriousness of the poet's decision to embark on a new poetic journey, away from any distractions. This withdrawal enabled her to solely concentrate on building an eternal poetic space. Such a decision, as Joanne Dobson claims, costed her very much: "While isolation may well have been her particular necessary condition for creation, we must not forget

[91] 1862 is the year traditionally recognized as her "annus mirabilis," based on Johnson's dating. However, Franklin sets the date of "annus mirabilis" at 1863 (1998: 25). The indubitable truth is that the year 1862 can also be categorized as "annus mirabilis," with a non-stop inspiration that gave birth to a total of 226 poems (Fr272 to 498).

that her fear and seclusion cost her dearly in personal pain and limited the range of her experience" (48).

While Dobson's interpretation can be true in the sense that human beings are supposed to interact with society and remain in its circle, this does not apply to those of the "highest sensibilities" Derrick refers to. And it definitely does not apply to Dickinson who, strictly speaking, had considered social activities, such as religious practice, or the inexorable conventions such as marriage, as destructive elements that threaten to wipe out one's identity and slow down creativity.[92] In such circumstances, the fear, seclusion, personal pain, and limited experience that Dobson refers to are necessary in order to build an eternal poetic recognition as a woman poet. But Dickinson was not a misanthropist. She maintained contact with the outside world through extensive letter writing and the reading of current journals and newspapers.[93]

The impeccable manner of those of the highest sensibilities, then, is what "Alone, I cannot be" boastingly celebrates, with a speaker pointing up her poetic genius, hosting a never-ending poetic inspiration depicted as hosts, which is not a casual and random visitor, but a great multitude—a description that asserts the flood creativity during the time she wrote this poem:

Alone, I cannot be—

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[92] An examination of this point made by Sewall supports this argument. He says, "All the far-fetched and imaginative reasons for Emily having become a recluse, a white-draped and spectacular household ghost, are as unnecessary as they are false. It was merely a normal blossoming of her own untouched spirit. The revelations of the hundreds of her letters show this exactly, to those who can read between the lines and feel the trend of her inner movement. As long ago as while she was studying at Mount Holyoke Seminary, in writing of some school gayety which she did not attend, she says "Almost all the girls went; and I enjoyed the solitude finely" (1974: 288).

[93] The following advice appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*, January 1860, by the author of "Our Artists in Italy": "The foremost purpose of an artist should be to claim and take possesion of self […] Genius is exquisitely fastidious, and the man whom it posseses must live its life, or no life […] He must be lifted away and isolated from wordly surroundings […] from the pressure of all human relations […] He must be alone." We cannot assure for certain whether or not Dickinson had read this article as Farr suggests, because it was her custom to read the *Atlantic Monthly* (1992: 24), but it certainly gives us a glimpse of how Dickinson's life was.

The Hosts—do visit me—
Recordless Company—
Who baffle Key—

At first sight, the term "hosts" adds an aura of divinity, but lines 3 and 4 capture the reader by an otherwordly, mysterious vision. The fact that the hosts are unattested and undocumented renders a perfectly mysterious character of these entities who are regarded as the speaker's society, "Company." Additionally, this assembly has no shape. They are immaterial, like the previous poem's "Light." They are also disembodied, like the speaker herself in J288-Fr260 "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" a fact we realize by their ability to gain access to the speaker's soul without having a "Key."

Stanza 2 describes the visitors by what they are not, producing a negative definition:

They have no Robes, nor Names—
No Almanacs, nor Climes—
But general Homes
Like Gnomes—

These lines dispel any doubts about the intangible characteristics of the visitors. They wear no robes[94] nor can be identified by names. Line 6 states that they are not related or linked to time and place. They do not need a calendar of days, weeks, and months, with the times of the rising sun and moon. And they are not related to any specific clime, to any region of the world. However, where they come from in lines 7 and 8 render an enigmatic idea, which can be interpreted in different ways. In Dickinson's lexicon, gnomes are mythical creatures who lived in simple homes made of earth and they are related to the inner world. In this way,

[94] In an attempt to treat the fascicles' poems as delicatedly interlaced filaments, we might believe that some terms serve as an exercise, an invitation to recall their existence within other poems, which in turn provide us with hidden ideas. If we look at the term "Robes" from a divine perspective, as a symbol of God, or a saint, as the "Gentleman / In the 'White Robe'" in P17 in the previous fascicle by way of example, Dickinson could be excluding any divine possibility that could be attached to the character of her visitors, letting the reader approach a real, coherent reading of her poems by excluding what might be irrelevant.

it could be implying that they are the guardians of Dickinson's poetic treasures, which are hoarded, and which recognition was denied while she lived.

Remarkably, Dickinson gave the name gnome to herself as a poet when she signed letters to Higginson: "He [Higginson] had probably at one time or another called her verse or letters 'gnomic.'"[95]

Gnomic, in its modern meaning, is enigmatic. And this is what Higginson refers to by categorizing the poet's writing as gnomic, which, as set forth above, may be one of the main reasons why he advised her not to publish. But it has another meaning: expressed in or of the nature of short, pithy maxims or aphorisms. And this is certainly what Farr refers to where she says that Dickinson's poetic abilities were gnomic (1992: 348).

The final stanza provides us with further information regarding the nature of the speaker's visitors, with the term "Couriers" as the key word, which can only be appreciated by its old meaning in the poet's lexicon:

> Their Coming, may be known
> By Couriers within—
> Their going—is not—
> For they're never gone—

We are told in the opening stanza that the speaker's visitors do not ask for permission to enter. Here we are given a description of how deep this source of creativity can delve into her. "Their" arrival is "known," yet their leaving "is not," because they never actually leave. This, in turn, expresses a causality that is not really logical: how could they come when "they're (actually) never gone?"

Related thematically to the mystical experience and artistic inspiration in J674-Fr592, "The Soul that hath a Guest," located in fascicle 26, "Alone, I cannot be" spells out an essential aspect of Dickinson's life, represented in an

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[95] See sewall (1974: 561).

acknowledgment that she can only have inspiration when she separates herself from society. She does not need to venture "abroad," or go outside for company, because she has a "Diviner Crowd at Home," as she states in "The Soul that a Guest."

After this defence of her conduct regarding her isolated lifestyle, the speaker goes on to meditate on her losses and gains in P21-J273-Fr330, "He put the Belt around my life—."

The structure of the poem, which contains two eight-line stanzas, is the first of its kind in both fascicles, producing an effect, as Farr proposes, "of effortful scenario, time passing, and ironic emphasis" (1992: 32). The first four lines show a conspicuous act of domination by the man she loved, represented by the pronoun "He":

> He put the Belt around my life—
> I heard the Buckle snap—
> And turned away, imperial,
> My lifetime folding up—

One of the first images that come to mind after reading these lines is that of a dog and its owner, with a collar "snap [ped]" to a leash. But, instead of giving a gesture of encouragement to the dog as dog-owners often do, "He" turns "away, imperial." This can only indicate how controlled the speaker's life is. "He" turned away after folding up her life, "as a Duke would" fold "A Kingdom's Title Deed."

The next two lines reveal a speaker who takes the consequences:

> Henceforth—a Dedicated sort—
> A Member of the Cloud—

Since the day of separation given in earlier poems, and after the sacrifices that she had to endure on earth, she has been rewarded, and divinely summoned to commit herself as "A Member of the Cloud—," a "sequestred artist."[96]

She meditates on what she has become, "a Dedicated sort—," who has gained a distinct and independent existence, becoming a busy being whose life has significantly changed with respect to social relationships which have become restricted, as stanza 2 details:

> Yet not too far to come at call—
> And do the little Toils
> That make the Circuit of the Rest—
> And deal occasional smiles
> To lives that stoop to notice mine—
> And kindly ask it in—
> Whose invitation, know you not
> For Whom I must decline?

As we observe, the stanza takes a different, private path approaching the routines of the speaker's daily life. The ninth line says that although she now belongs to the cloud, she is not too far when she is called for household chores by the "Rest," which imply family members. Besides, we are also told about the politeness in her behaviour towards others who notice her existence, those who exemplify humility to her. Ultimately, the poem ends with an assertion of the speaker's turning her back on those who "kindly ask [her] in," politely refusing any social approach, which in turn brings to our thoughts Dickinson's words to Higginson on their first meeting: "Forgive me if I am frightened; I never see strangers & hardly know what I say."[97]

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[96] For more information, see Farr (1992: 31).

[97] See Sewall for more details (1974: 564).

P22-J274-Fr331, "The only ghost I ever saw" recounts a portentously "Appaling Day" with a Gothic twist.

In order to understand this poem, the reader must first see what sort of subject matter it is dealing with. Is the well dressed and quiet ghost the speaker has encountered meaningless in itself, or simply mysterious from our viewpoint? Is it the thing itself that is awry, or slanted, as Dickinson likes to express herself, or our way of seeing it? Is there a horrific intention in the poem, or is it just a case of our vague vision? Does it really make sense to ponder what the ghost may represent, or who might be? This ghost manifestation Dickinson portrays is undoubtedly redolent of her supernatural inclinations. This in turn raises a question that touches on the issue of how superstitious she is. The following letter and poem sent from Dickinson to Susan upon the death of young Gilbert in early October of 1883[98] employs the words of a sibyl, with apparent supernatural inclinations: "Without a speculation, our little Ajax spans the whole—" (L 886). The following lines are incorporated in the letter (J1564-Fr1624):

> Pass to thy Rendezvous of Light,
> Pangless except for us—
> Who slowly ford the Mystery
> Which thou hast leaped across!

Praised by Sewall as "perhaps the finest she ever wrote anybody" (1974: 204), the poem holds that Dickinson's nephew had a meeting with the light; that his passage into immortality was painless, and he has "leaped" to the other side where mystery dwells. It is true that Dickinson's primary intention was to ease Susan and Austin's state upon the death of their child, yet the content of the letter discloses an idea, which is that one can only grasp the mystery of death by dying, a painless and quiet process, like her encounter with the ghost, which preceded the letter by twenty-two years.

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[98] Gilbert Dickinson, the poet's nephew and son of Austin and Susan, died of typhoid fever On 5 October 1883. See Farr (1992: 97).

As far as that goes, one could argue that the respectful, shy ghost could be an allusion to death. Poems like J712-Fr479 "Because I could not stop for Death—" depict death as a kind, gallant suitor. Significantly, a main part of the point of such wit the poem offers is to give the reader a momentary edge over a barren existence, a glimpse upon that dark, underground side of our existence that our minds constantly try to dismiss as mere superstitious, under the excuse of what we might call the fallibility of the human mind.

We might start the reading of the poem by saying that the only ghost in the opening line suggests uniqueness. It is the only ghost the speaker has ever seen. This, in turn, implies that her viewpoint is not necessarily everybody's. Then, throughout the poem, we are offered descriptive images about the looks and manners of this occult entity. Perhaps, the most remarkable part is that he was dressed in Mechlin, which suggests elegance. The background of this garment is regarded as far superior to Brussels lace or bobbin lace, which is a lace made by hand with thread wound on bobbins. The fact that "He had no sandal on his foot," "And stepped like flakes of snow," suggests both that he was barefoot, agile, and white like snow, as a typical ghost should be. Stanza 2 goes on to describe his manner:

> His Mien, was soundless, like the Bird—
> But rapid—like the Roe—
> His fashions, quaint, Mosaic—
> Or haply, Mistletoe—

He silently floats like a bird, rapid like a small Eurasian deer. And his fashions are mosaic; his dress is multi-coloured. Also, the fact that it is quaint suggests that it is patterned in a Moorish, perhaps prophetic look, like that of Moses.

> His conversation—seldom—
> His laughter, like the Breeze
> That dies away in Dimples
> Among the pensive Trees—

A conversation has taken place; yet the stanza does not specify what the nature of it was. He is non-threatening, a fact we realize because of his laughter, which

pervades the forest through the sober trees and makes the storms die away in his dimples, yielding ground to a blow of breeze.

As suits a proper ghost, he does not overstay, for she admits their "interview—was transient—." And the fact that he was shy with her creates a seemingly pleasant experience, which nonetheless she wants to put behind her:

> And God forbid I look behind—
> Since that appaling Day!

The crux of the poem lies in the contradiction that the final line offers, which does not at all fit the tone of the poem. If the ghost was attractive, pleasant, and shy, why was she at the same time appalled? It is obvious that Dickinson wants the reader to think, and trying to grasp her meaning is one of the great tasks her poetry offers. The lack of context leaves more than one possible reading and the poet gives no final standard or specification for the right interpretation. It seems like Dickinson is saying that there is more than just one truth. Because of this intrinsic vagueness some poems take the form of riddles. In this kind of poems Dickinson does not offer clues to the question "what is?"

As the fascicle presses forward, it simultaneously drifts backward into the unrequited love that the poems have never really abandoned. P23-J275-Fr332, "Doubt me! My Dim Companion!" is closely connected to earlier love poems, but above all it is pertinent to the reading of J1737-Fr267, "Rearrange a 'Wife's' affection!" in the previous fascicle, where the speaker's commitment seems to have been questioned by a dubious husband.

Both the exclamation marks that punctuate the opening line and the impassioned, abrupt remark, "God," in the second escalate the emotion sensed within the poem, and establish a strong tone of immediacy directed to her "Dim Companion," whose false accusation to her of withholding herself had made him descend from a "Cavalier," a knightly gentleman as generally interpreted, to

"Caviler," a doubter and faultfinder, which is a brilliant pun on the etymology of the word:

> Doubt me! My Dim Companion!
> Why, God, would be content
> With but a fraction of the Life—
> Poured thee, without a stint—
> The whole of me—forever—
> What more the Woman can,
> Say quick, that I may dower thee
> With last Delight I own!

As we observe, "God" follows "Why," and is set apart by commas, creating, apart from the abrupt remark just mentioned, a sensation that the poem is about to set an astonishing statement. It says, "God, would be content" if the speaker gave to him "a fraction" of what she gives her "Dim Companion." Lines 4 and 5 show how much the speaker has already given. She "Poured" herself into him wholly, "without a stint." She goes on asking what a woman could else do, what else could she grant him to be satisfied, when he already owns all of her.

The second stanza shows that the speaker's companion had already owned her spirit, her heart and soul, "before—" he owned all of her body, "all of Dust I knew—." This, in turn, could be considered an actuality if we take into consideration the seductive implications in P18, an idea which the poem rapidly, secretively develops when it says that all these delights are no longer in the beloved's possesion:

> What Opulence the more
> Had I—a freckled Maiden,
> Whose farthest of Degree,
> Was—that she might—
> Some distant Heaven,
> Dwell timidly, with thee!

Another possibility is that he has to own her spirit in order to earn her body. This reading is plausible if we consider what this stanza offers. She has no more resources to offer, since she is only a "freckled Maiden" whose desire is that "she might" timidly get united with him in "Some distant Heaven," which is regarded

as an undefinable, far off place. This extravagant indication subtly contradicts with her actual indignation, which she pours out more fully in the last stanza where she summons her companion to dissect her into pieces in order to examine her commitment, as "Sift," "Strain," and "Winnow" imply. If he strains and insists on having a scintilla of doubt, his doubts will "Drop, like a Tapestry, away," and burn in the "Fire's Eyes."

While considering it a last resort for the speaker to prove her fidelity, she must have been fully aware that seeing her dissected is totally different from seeing her as a whole woman. To a degree, this idea proposes vagueness of vision suggested by "Dim" in the opening line and "Some distant Heaven" in line 16. The speaker makes a connection between what she has to offer, to which she adroitly opposes her own, inspired by her ability to "dower." This action is open to argument, because the expression "I may dower thee" indicates both consent and postponed probability. This, in turn, takes us back to reconsider "last Delight" as a gift that probably has not been given yet, and which remains postponed between the condition of owning her "Spirit" first and the consent to "dower."

In this way, the speaker is not reticent by any means. There is an implication that her "Companion" can only own the "whole" of her by not having her; instead, he should "hallow" her as though holy, revere her "snow," her integrity and virginity, as discussed in the opening poem of the previous fascicle, as a necessary condition to preserve it "Intact, in Everlasting flake—" for him. This, in turn, reminds us of the speaker's partiality for the life of solitude discussed so far on many occasions. Also, by her distance, she wants to be esteemed, and wants "Men" to "Compromise" in their attitude towards her as in J283-Fr254 "A Mien to move a Queen" in the previous fascicle, where she says that her smallness wards "Men" off from revering her nobleness, and being "distant," while hindering chances for fondness, impedes disdain.

The next poem, P24-J276-Fr333 "Many a phrase has the English language—" is one of Dickinson's more straightforward and haunting poems that remember the lover with fondness.

The first two lines state that there is one "phrase" from the "English language" that had an impact on the speaker. Then, she goes on giving natural images to make comparisons with the effect of this "one" "phrase" on her:

> Low as the laughter of the Cricket,
> Loud, as the Thunder's Tongue—
>
> Murmuring, like old Caspian Choirs,
> When the Tide's a' lull—
> Saying itself in new inflection—
> Like a whippowill—
>
> Breaking in bright Orthography
> On my simple sleep—
> Thundering its Prospective—

The phrase is as consistent and serene as the chirping of the "Cricket,"[99] yet its effect is as deep as the impact of a "Thunder's Tongue" on the ground. It also whispers, and does so as the world's largest body of inland when it is at its quietest, when its waves gently move back and forth.

It is like hearing a "Whippowill," whose twittering says its own name in a new tone of voice, "Breaking" through the speaker's dreams, bringing a prediction to her.

It is the phrase "I love you" that "stir (s)" her and make her "weep."

> Not for the Sorrow, done me—
> But the push of Joy—
> Say it again, Saxon!
> Hush—only to me!

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[99] Other poems in which the cricket appears are: J1115-Fr1142 "The murmuring of Bees has ceased"; J1271-Fr1313 "September's Baccalaureate"; J1276-Fr1312 "'Twas later when the summer went"; J1635-Fr1670 "The Jay his Castanet has struck"; J1775-V.1 of Franklin Fr895 "Further in Summer than the Birds."

Dated 25 April 1862, P25-J321-Fr334, "Of all the sounds despatched abroad," is one of the three poems Dickinson enclosed with her second letter to Higginson.[100] The two other poems are J322-Fr325, "There came a Day—at Summer's full—"[101] and J86-Fr98 "South Winds jostle them—." Remarkably, Dickinson introduces herself in her letter as an inexperienced person asking, "Could you tell me how to grow—or is it unconveyed—like Melody—or Witchcraft?" (L 261) The content of the letter and poems, though, shows the contrary of an inexperienced person; a woman who not only had been familiarized with the mysteries of both "Melody" and "Witchcraft," but who also had already grown significantly, unusually on her own.

"Of all the sounds despatched abroad" is a striking tribute to the "Melody" of the "Wind," which has the ability to hide within us "inner than the Bone" for "the Whole of [our] Days." The speaker says that above all the sounds of the chanting of the world, no other can thrill her as that "old" music transmitted by the "Wind" in the "Boughs." The fact that it is transmitted out of air makes it "phraseless," "working like a Hand" combing the sky as though it were a head of hair. But then the fingers shudder the trees' leaves, causing them to fall as though they were musical birds' crests that are possesed by a power beyond that of the Gods, and which "Permitted" the speaker to rank herself as the Gods in the priviledge of experiencing this mystical moment.

In a concise narration, the first stanza hints at a possible sublimity represented first by Gods—maybe the Gods of nature, because the term holds a Greek rather than a monotheistic connotation—and second by the usage of the word "Charge," which is identifed in Dickinson's Lexicon in two ways appropriate to the context within which it is located. The first is "excitement; thrill; stir of energy within." The second involves "commision; enjoinment." The

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[100] A second copy of the poem, signed "Emily—," was sent to Susan about the same time with one alteration: fashion] pattern. See Franklin (1998: 246-247).

[101] This poem will be discussed in the next fascicle.

twofold demands that charge offers a reflection of the speaker's devotion to poetry. It is a physical excitement as a result of the deep sensation that the wind brought to the speaker. Or, it could be a mandate, charging her with a special commission as a poet.

The long second stanza starts by saying that the wind's music is our divine grant, "Inheritance," which we cannot "Earn" no matter how assiduous, telented, or competent we may be; accordingly, it cannot be taken away from us by burglary, by way of example, because this sacrosanct and inviolable "Gain" is more "inner than the Bone—," as stated in line 14. In this way, Dickinson distinguishes between what could be taken from us, "gotten" "of fingers—," and what cannot, because it resides hidden within us, like a golden treasure "for the whole of Days." This reading, then, conveys the impression that the speaker "measure [s]" the gains and losses enclosed so far in the poems.

The other idea enclosed within the stanza is the use of the inner bone to refer to the soul and how it becomes enlivened by the wind. The quintessence of these lines is that this "fleshless Chant" produced by the wind exerts influence not only on the living; it may provoke the ashes of the dead, who "arise and play" "in the Urn":

> In some odd fashion of it's own,
> Some quainter Holiday,
>
> When Winds go round and round in Bands—
> And thrum upon the door,
> And Birds take places, overhead,
> To bear them Orchestra.

These lines depict nature modeling itself on the wind who harped divinely among the birds and upon the speaker's door, representing a typification to be imitated by each other natural element, stressing that the fashion of this "phraseless Melody" is so deeply established, deep-rooted within us that it continues to reproduce itself in our physical dust even after our mortal bodies deteriorate. And the whole scene is depicted as a theatre stage where dancing and singing takes place, as though an attractively old-fashioned festival.

The last stanza starts with a prayer for the outcast who has never recognized the full worth of the "Wind":

> I crave Him Grace of Summer Boughs,
> If such an Outcast be—
> Who never heard that fleshless Chant—
> Rise—solemn—on the Tree,
> As if some Caravan of Sound
> Off Deserts, in the Sky,
> Had parted Rank,
> Then knit, and swept—
> In Seamless Company—

As we observe, the speaker begs for the "Grace of Summer Boughs" to be granted for anyone who has not heard the "Chant" of the "Wind," and thus no longer be an "Outcast" to this mystical experience. The outcast here is anyone who has not heard this soundless music. She is changing the terms and calling the normal members of society outcasts from her special condition.

Ultimately, from line 28 until the end, the poem offers an image purported to represent the reverse sequence of the upward movement of the wind towards the sky, and then dropping down "in the Boughs" of the tree depicted in the beginning of the poem. This time the wind "Rise (s)—solemn—on the Tree," into the sky, ending by a historical image of Arab traders or pilgrims travelling together across a desert. Their caravan is nonetheless "of Sound" and the deserts is an aerial one. On its way up through the trees, it orderly positions itself, joins into a group as though interlaced fibers, and finally glides away, producing a vivid depiction that may well be representing the soul in the ultimate stage on the journey toward eternity.

Before we read the last two poems of the fascicle we shall address a confused publishing history they both have been subject to due to their original location on one sheet. Franklin convincingly points out, "They clearly express quite different ideas about the motive and quality of 'smiles.'" In this way, he states that they are two different poems. And as a restorer and publisher

familiarized with Dickinson's original manuscripts, Franklin believes that because Mrs. Bianchi "ommitted the first four lines" of the poem "A happy lip—breaks sudden—" in "compiling *Unpublished Poems*," it appears "as a third (and final) stanza of "Her smile was shaped like other smiles." "In *Ancestors' Brocades* (1945), 393, all eight lines are published, and there appear as the third and fourth stanzas of 'Her smile was shaped like other smiles.' In the packet sheet, however, the two poems are clearly separated by a horizontal line, ED's invariable method of indicating the end of one poem and the beginning of another when two poems are copied, as these are, onto one sheet" (1998: 281-282).

The fact of the matter is that both poems are so interlaced that they seem as one, although they are able to articulate two different ideas about smiles. There is, by and large, sufficiently clear evidence that provides us with a sense of coherence that can only be appreciated within a fascicle context. Moreover, they show a stoic quality perhaps to the extent that can be considered a compensation of solitude gained through the experiencing of anguish demonstrated thus far in both fascicles.

In P26-J514-Fr335, "Her smile was shaped like other smiles—," to begin with, the smile is the speaker's, one that is nonetheless embedded in pain.

The poem starts as though telling a story; it is a normal smile that has "Dimples," which are symbols of expression formed without conscious thought. What the first two lines hint at is how we often have the ability to detect sorrow and suffering behind an ordinary smile, especially on the faces of those familiar to us. These pleased and amused facial expressions cannot be forced because their genuineness would be detected. This short yet incisive exposition that the two opening lines offer demonstrates to what extent Dickinson's poems are able to reach their peak immediately.

The next 6 lines develop this idea, and do that by using a dismayingly shocking image of a bird being shot. The speaker does not tell the reason of her

pain, but she does mention by means of gesture that she is unhappy, showing a sense of stoic, perhaps ascetic quality. This, in turn, can be sensed by the use of the strong term "Convulsive." Both the impression we are perceiving by reading the poem and the depiction of the injured bird bring to our thoughts the following well-known letter to Master: "If you saw a bullet hit a Bird—and he told you he was'nt shot—you might weep at his courtesy, but you would certainly doubt his word" (L 233). The idea expressed in this letter is developed in the current poem by manifesting a speaker who masks her internal pain by her external form, which in turn gives her an unflappable, indomitable character. Her apparently ordinary smile is set side by side with a bird who:

> Did hoist herself, to sing,
> Then recollect a Ball, she got—
> And hold upon the Twig,
> Convulsive, while the Music crashed—
> Like Beads—among the Bog—

These lines give a powerful, detailed account of what we might experience if we saw a bird singing peacefully before being shot. The bullet, or "Ball," has caused extensive damage. The "Twig" the bird was peerching on has become a broken-off branch on which "she" vigorously held up trembling in agony while watching her "Music" scatter into pieces on mud.

Looking at these lines from another angle, they could be manifesting exactly what the speaker has been purporting to renounce all along. Namely, a solitary bird warbling through its agony with no listeners (literary recognition) could be considered a suitable representation of Dickinson's artistic endeavour. And, the bullet that she has been shot with could be the major obstacle to achieving her poetic goals: editorial alterations. In fact, regardless of her success as a poet during her lifetime, it indeed requires an intuitive mind as well as an acute linguistic ability to touch the abstract sources of physical manifestations, as the depicting of her seemingly ordinary smile as hanging by a thread, as the targeted bird holding on to its twig with a bullet aimed at it.

The last poem brings the curtain down on a series of disappointments and attempts to move on revealed throughout the fascicle, insisting on ending with a sad mood even when what it is projecting is a smile as the subject matter. With a self-contained, unflappable manner, it successfully achieves an artistic unity not only with the penultimate poem but also with the sense of loss and yearning we have sensed throughout the fascicle.

P27-J353-Fr335, "A happy lip—breaks sudden—" contrasts the genuine smile with the one in the previous poem. A true happy smile springs spontaneously from pleasure and amusement. Its "sudden" appearance reaches its fullness immediatelly, right from the heart:

> It does'nt state you how
> It contemplated—smiling—
> Just consummated—now—

It does not give explanations, or justify. It does not hesitate; it just reaches its fulness spontaneously. If Dickinson meant this poem to be anything, it must have been what it literally is—namely a speaker who repressess her innermost feelings behind a smile. She uses the conjuction "But" to bitterly state that her actual smile is different from the one she has been describing:

> But this one, wears it's merriment
> So patient—like a pain—
> Fresh gilded—to elude the eyes
> Unqualified, to scan—

The message here could not be clearer. It must have been a result of the unhappiness that we have become familiar with that led her to hide behind a mask of happiness, bravely, uncomplainingly. She covers her "pain," or wound, with a coating of gold, like the yellow golden abdomen of the bee, which provides not only protection through hiding from external life, but also a distinguishing emblem of supremacy. This coating of gold is thus an adornment, one that differs the self from others. It makes the hidden reality denied to the "Unqualified" others, whose "eyes" become eluded by its iluminated appearance. To the speaker,

learning to live with such pain has its gains: the privilege to choose those with the ability "to scan" it, and having every right to hide it.

Conclusion

It is obvious how the complexion of the poetry in fascicle 12 has changed; the number of poems has increased, and they are more complex. Generally, they deal with more subjects, and at times they do so even within a single poem.

Dickinson in fascicle 12 is much more integrated (directly) with nature in 5 poems, strenuously trying to shape her own spiritual identity (P5, P7, P15), and more dedicated to her poetic pursuit (P1, P6, P17, P19, P20). The reason is given from P8 to P11: 4 consecutive poems of serious emotional decline in consequence of her parting from her lover.

After the lovers' apocalypse she tries to move on, and she tells us why (P16), and she turns her thoughts to nature, passage of time, life and death, mystery of sunset, the value of life, and heaven (P12, P13, P14, P15). She is determined about her poetic pursuit, and she acquires an identity that makes her renunciation of the outside world easier.

Her existence is wounded by an occurrence that had taken place a "Year ago," which scars will continue to make their presence felt throughout her poems. She is mightily aware of it. She will never get over it. It will never entirely heal.

At one level, then, the "Doubt" of her "Companion" (P23) is the interpreted allegory that assures the hidden meaning of the unrequited love sensed throughout the fascicle. Consequently, she will be more integrated with nature in fascicle 13, mainly through a sequence of six poems.

So she gains, in fact, an autonomous character. Nevertheless, in almost every sense, fascicle 12 represents the speaker's attempts to move on, and her own poems seem as though they rebel against her.

The construction of reality somehow succeeds. It is wonderfully adorned by a harmonious relationship between divinity and nature, struggling to get out of the bleak and barren land in which her unattainable love left her. At many times, it does this by centering on a natural meditation on what is apparent, which consequently becomes deeply involved with the unattainable.

We are also informed about the lover's madcap schemes by which she is affected. Showing a woman poet who challenges, and at times conveys angry impressions, but also who trusts to those whom she can see and feel, and whose control over her environment is outstanding. And here the role of Dickinson's language and impressive love of earth becomes clearer, which closely relates to her world, and summons us to the very heart of reason by exploiting all her rich faculties.

Chapter 4 ── Fascicle 13: "If I'm lost—now—"

Like the drunken speaker who disturbs the dwellers in heaven in the previous' fascicle opening poem, the speaker in P1-J289-Fr311, "I know some lonely Houses off the Road," expresses an exercise in her fancy.

With its mixture of suspect character in moral terms and delightfully high spirits, the poem displays powers of mind in which the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the reader in the best-chosen language, depicting, at first anyway, a speaker as though plotting a mean, scheming burglary on a house "off the Road" inhabited by an "old Couple."

Surely, Dickinson would not go so far as to break in. The improbability that she has a lust for such an experience is what makes one think of the poem as one not to "expect any particular point" from, as claimed by William J. Buckingham, who says that the "interest" of the poem "lies in its impossibility" (112).

While this could be true in the sense that the poem is by no means a true-to-life story, it deserves much more than attaching the term impossibility to it, because it hauntingly succeeds in reaching a high degree of imagination. Besides, the reader of this poem is treated to a simple humourous fable that is as meaningful to children as it is to grown-ups.

The poem has, to begin with, the quality of being magnificently commonplace. Not just inapposite, but successfully, remorselessly so. The statement it starts with shows a speaker familiar with her neighborhood. The "Houses" she lays her eye on are on unpaved "Road [s]," away from public areas. One of them is so ideal that "A Robber" would be attracted by its,

> Wooden barred,
> And Windows hanging low,
> Inviting to—
> A Portico,

The speaker then says that two "Robber [s]" can better perform this task, where "One—hand the Tools—" and "The other peep— / To make sure All's Asleep—." She seems not only familiar with the old couple who would not notice the intruders, but also with the home interior as described in stanza 2: the "Kitchen" looks "orderly," and a "pair of Spectacles" is lying open on a shelf. An "Almanac" is open too, and aware of what is happening, like the "Clock" on the "Wall [s]," which could be stuffed with a cloth to prevent talking. Neither the "Mice" nor the untalkative "Walls" would "tell" what has happened.

In the middle of the silent scene the excitement increases when the door "Mat" flinches and causes "The Moon" to come downstairs "To see who's there," implying that the night's end is approaching:

> There's plunder—where—
> Tankard, or Spoon—
> Earring—or Stone—
> A Watch—Some Ancient Brooch
> To match the Grandmama—
> Staid sleeping—there—

As we observe, in spite of the successful robbery, the loot does not sound exceptionally worthy—it is not surprising that the couple's house is an easy target. Even their rooster, who is supposed to crow at dawn, oversleeps until "The Sun" hits the "third Sycamore." But then it would be too late, because the robbers would already have made their escape as faraway as the "Echoes" of the "Trains" sound in the distance. Then, waking up from their sleep, the old couple wonders what has "left the door ajar," ingenuously supposing it was the "Sunrise." They are simple, and it is unlikely that they would miss the "plunder" or understand how the clock was bound and gagged by the robbers.

The next poem, P2-J252-Fr312 "I can wade Grief—," brings back the sorrow of the two previous fascicles to the reader's mind at an early stage of the fascicle, but does so as something the speaker has learned to live with.

The poem commends sorrow as a potion that gives strength to body and mind, whereas it criticizes "Joy" as a bringer of weakness. Grief here is an obstacle, a blockage that she cannot move easily through. The fact that it has "Stranded" the speaker's "feet" in "Pools," makes her in a sense isolated and away from the sea, the place that the drop of water desires to be part of and she can never reach in J284-Fr255 "The Drop, that wrestles in the Sea—," and the "Eden" she wants to row through in J249-Fr269, "Wild Nights—Wild Nights!" She is unable to proceed, trapped in a sort of subordination, anchored by the hanging "Weights" of "Discipline." But this is something that the speaker has become "used to." It is not the real problem. In fact, it is joy whose "least push" intoxicates her and blurs her judgement; portrayed as an unexpected event in a life that normally wades through "Whole Pools" of grief.

In spite of their positive meanings, "Balm" and "Joy" are associated in this poem with an unknown (and to some extent, undesired) instability. Throughout both previous fascicles an intense emotion has been stretched to the utmost; accordingly, she becomes familiar with unhappiness, and feels perilously unsteady in the proximity of joy, which creeps to her feet before she starts to lose her equilibrium, as a sort of earth tremor that "Breaks up" and makes her stumble, as though "drunken." She is indignant at being observed and mocked by each "Pebble," and she defends herself against their "smile" declaring it was the "New Liquor" of joy that has affected her. This, in turn, portrays a different figure from the "little Tippler" of "I taste a liquor never brewed—," whose drunkeness is voluntary.

This asserts the rarity of joy in the speaker's life and the strength she gained through pain. In an attempt to explain how joy has the ability to weaken individuals, Dickinson provides an example of what would happen if you "Give Balm—to Giants—," that is, if you give them comfort and sympathy. She goes on saying that they would lose power and consequently their stoic stance crambles; they would get reduced to mere "Men—." But in difficult times they measure up

to the situation, even if the burden is as unbearable to "Carry" as the weight of "Himmaleh," which is a variant spelling of the Himalayas.

What was offered in fascicle 11 was a serious expectancy that has not turned out well in fascicle 12. The next poem is one of the very rare (direct) poems in the fascicle about the speaker's prohibited love, P3-J253-Fr313, "You see I cannot see—your lifetime—."

William Shurr says that this poem and "There came a Day—at Summer's full—," which is in the same fascicle and will be discussed later, are the beginning of a new phase in Dickinson's emotional life through the fascicles; that both poems express "a crippling sense of her aloneness, the result of the separation that took place immediately after their private marriage ceremony" (73). Here, she is no longer the wife or the ambitious drop of sea; however, the poem offers a concise account of the speaker's unquestionable devotion, yet she can only "guess" how often she is thought of by her lover:

> How many times it ache for me—today—Confess—
> How many times for my far sake
> The brave eyes film—
> But I guess guessing hurts—
> Mine—get so dim!

She is somehow confident (or not?) that the person she misses "ache [s]" for missing her too. She can imagine his eyes "film [ing]" with tears until they "get so dim," as hers. Her confidence, however, remains a mere "guess." She then says that the reason why she has to guess is because of her inability to mentally picture the lover's face.

So, betrayed by her own memory, she says that the face she yearns for, or "covets," has become too vague in her mind, almost forgotten, as though her own imagination hinders her sight, its "timidness enfold [ing]" the image of her beloved's face so that its seen uncertainly, as though "translated" out of mortality.

This is why “guessing hurts” after a period of time, because the image of her beloved inescapably dims, supressed, inhibited within the mind. Unattainable even to the imagination, his face comes together with his desired strength to coalesce into something that she timidly imagines herself embracing, forming an erotic fantasy and “Haunting the Heart.” The absence of her missing lover, then, is “Teazing the want” which only his presence can take away.

This desire to possess that the poem ends with prepares the ground for further implications in the next well-known definition poem, P4-J254-Fr314, “‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers—.”

As typical in Dickinson’s poetry, here we are given a definition of a concept with a material image. Considering hope a universal, emotional, complex part of our human constitution, it is here analyzed deeply and mainly to conceptualize the speaker’s connection with it.

The embodiment of hope given in the opening line is intentionally left incomplete: a “thing with feathers.” Although suggestive of a bird, it is meant to describe an ephemeral experience “That perches in the soul” but does not necessarily reside there. It “sings the tune without the words—” suggests the underlying emotions that precede poetry and inspire it, which is only a melody where reasonable, logical meaning have no function. Ultimately, it “never stops—at all—” intimates not that hope saves, but that itself is an everlasting, freestanding power in the macrocosm.

Stanza 2 takes up this topic in the broadest sense with “the thing with feathers—” officially becoming a fearless “little Bird” whose tune of hope is heard “sweetest” in the wind, “in the Gale” of human desolation, giving a promise that the storm soon will come to an end, as having a glimpse of sunshine in the midst of a storm. This borders on the common wisdom that hope springs eternal in the human breast:

And sweetest—in the Gale—is heard—

And sore must be the storm—
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm—

While the reading of line 5 implies a sort of optimism and good news, the rest of the stanza talks about the adversities that try to confound the hope song of the bird by silencing it. This can cause damage not only to the bird, but also to those "so many" who are "kept" "warm" by the serenity of the bird of hope.

In fact, having hope is partly a way of achieving reconciliation with the self, lest it soar off altogether into a hopeless state. On the whole, the speaker has her encounter with hope, one skilfully orchestrated with the bird's, who by the end of the poem has been transformed from a conundrum into a symbol of hope who gracefully asks for no "Crumb" in return; no need of reciprocity.

Contextually, having hope gives us a great deal of information about the speaker's current state. Her lost love and bitter reality could well give birth to a resurgence of hope in a new start. The last stanza is determined to grant us an assurance that hope exists eternally within us in our moments of isolation as human beings. It is not limited to a group of people, but universal:

I've heard it in the chillest land—
And on the strangest Sea—

This hopeful impression that the poem gives, along with the speaker's familiarity with grief in the second poem, suggests the beginning of the new phase that Shurr refers to. This is the first time Dickinson explores hope fully in the fascicles under discussion. Throughout her poetry, though, she enquires into the subtle distinction of hope as a filament in the complex structure of humans. At times, it is associated with fear, as in J1181-Fr594 located in fascicle 26, "When I hoped—I feard—." In a later poem, she achieves another fine definition of hope, giving it a never-ending characteristic akin to the one in the current poem. Writen in 1877, J1392-Fr1424 "Hope is a strange invention—" declares that hope also is,

A Patent of the Heart—

In unremitting action
Yet never wearing out—

Of this electric Adjunct
Not anything is known
But it's unique momentum
Embellish all we own—

"Not anything is known" implies a mysterious uniqueness that requires pondering. It is never-ending, yet a cunning "invention" of the "Heart." It is an "electric Adjunct," an additional, auxiliary element that constitutes the quality of the complex fabric of our emotions as humans. This positive description ends with the use of the term "Embellish," which means to decorate, to beautify—to make us better.

This makes the reader surrender imaginatively to the depths of hope. Much of the same can be said about another hope poem dated in 1873, J1283-Fr1282 "Could Hope inspect her Basis." With an astute imagination, this poem helps to explain the gap between hope and, to say it outright, satisfaction, which is implied by "Prosperity," the only "asassin" capable of effectively eliminating hope. Strictly speaking, once a desired thing is attained, it becomes less important, worthless, and hope becomes ineffective.

But, what about wishing for something that will never happen? This idea had been given a good formulation in another mature poem from 1879, J1547-Fr1493 "Hope is a subtle Glutton," which gives, at first anyway, an opposite idea of the generous little bird in the current poem. At first, we sense a gluttonuous definition of hope, but as we read the rest of the poem we realize that it is implying abstinence. It is in the second stanza where we find what hope restrains itself from:

His is the Halcyon Table—
That never seats but One—
And whatsoever is consummed
The same amount remain—

As we observe, the unchanging character of hope's "Hancyon Table" is a price that has to be paid in terms of solitude and unfulfillment. This implies that hope, as stated earlier, stands alone and unique in our existence—recognized, but invented. Feeding itself abundantly and eternally, but never achieving its goals, its object of its wish.

The next poem P5-J255-Fr315, "To die—takes just a little while—" speaks of the mourning rituals in Dickinson's era.

The poem shows an intimate familiarity with death and the issue of boundaries, proposing that, again, it "takes just a little time" and "it does'nt hurt":

> It's only fainter—by degrees—
> And then—it's out of sight—

As life approaches death, it gradually fades out until it is completely invisible. These lines mull over what seems to be the peaceful process of dying, as though the deceased were lulled gently into endless slumber. The horrific death of P10 in fascicle 11 here becomes painless and rapid. It is the natural end and not subject to fear.

Then, people put on a "darker Ribbon" and a "Crape" "for a Day" to reflect upon the deaths of their ones. Nonetheless, when "the pretty sunshine comes," grief is put by.

The uneasy silence that stanza 1 ends with, transports the dying person far off, "absent," in a mystic state isolated from human understanding. Yet, granting a standpoint from which the reader can stare straight at the dying process:

> That but for love of us—
> Had gone to sleep—that soundest time—
> Without the weariness—

These lines offer an emotional idea from the viewpoint of the dead, namely that death would be more peaceful without the mourning rituals. The only thing that

holds back the dying is a care for those who are sad to see them go: "but for love of us." In this sense, the poem is urging people to let the dear ones go to sleep "Without the weariness—," such as laying out the dead body, wearing black, and arranging funerary ceremonies.[102]

It is little wonder that death features prominently in Dickinson's poetry. By the time she wrote this poem, about 1861, she had experienced deaths of intimates as her mentors Leonard Humphrey and Benjamin Franklin Newton, and her close friend Sofia Holland. The pressures of these emotional happenings, and the threat of mortality and question of immortality had made her well acquainted with death at an early age.

The title of this Chapter is dedicated to the next poem, P6-J256-Fr316, "If I'm lost—now—," which laments lost moments of joy lived in the past, indicating a speaker who has not forgotten her love, an idea strongly suggestive that the love has come to an end. This poem, together with P3-J253-F313 "You see I cannot see—your lifetime—," and P14-J261-F324 "Put up my lute!" and specially P15-J322-F325 "There came a Day—at Summer's full—," strongly form the basis of the argument of this Chapter; together show that the love that was present in fascicles 11 and 12 has now ended.

The speaker's consolation is the "transport" obtained from the experience, the inspiration that produces the poem. She may be "lost—now," but there remains an unforgetable memory when, "those Jasper Gates / Blazed open" and the angels brushed by her. Rather than contemplating her relationship with God as these lines may at first seem to describe,[103] this divine encounter is figured in

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[102] In the nineteenth century, the culture of mourning was intended to be a panacea for collective spiritual anxieties. The writer Ann Douglas, in her extensive discussion on the nineteenth century mourning culture, describes ornate rituals that were produced to preserve and commemorate the social identity of the deceased (200-207).

[103] By the time she wrote this poem, to be sure, Dickinson had not considered religion her salvation for a long time. As early as 28 March 1846 she tells Abiah Root that she cannot bring

terms of her lost love, in which the speaker is unkindly chosen, "found," and then abandoned, "banished."

One of the writers who share the same opinion about the presence of the speaker's unrequited love in this poem is Barton Levi St. Armand, who thinks that Dickinson in this poem uses self-abnegation to justify herself to the man she loved, who is, as St. Armand claims, the mysterious Master in Dickinson's letters. Interestingly, he adds that Dickinson "perversely chose a soul-hero who was in many ways even more tyrannical and remote, more demanding and imperious" than God (92-93).

The idea of rhetoric of revivalism is exceptionally suitable if we take into consideration that Dickinson had already rid herself of organized religion long ago. Though rejected, she, as often does, uses this carefully constructed technique to fill the gap left by the man she loved. She wants, at least, to believe that at one time the angels made the heavenly doors of love "Blazed open" for her, "Almost as if they cared."

Utter abandonment prevails over the memories that the speaker says "Shall" be her "transport":

> I'm banished—now—you know it—
> How foreign that can be—
> You'll know—Sir—when the Savior's face
> Turn so—away from you—

"I'm banished" may or may not be a concrete proof, but it surely is an indication of the state that the speaker has been left in after losing her love, and this is obvious in the manner she speaks to "Sir." The poem's end is both vendictive and personalized, as a result of rejection, urging sir not to be smug, for when his turn to go up to the "Jasper Gates" comes, he will be cold-shouldered by the "Savior."

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herself to believe, as do those around her (L 1:31). About two years later, on 16 May 1848, she tells Root again of her "regret" at not having become a Christian (L 1:67).

In order to wrap up my ideas it is important to say at this point that this is the lost love on which my arguments are based—it is here where it starts to vanish. Although I believe that the arrangement of the fascicles was an aleatory organization, this poem tries to send a message to the readers not only by its implications and hidden story, but also by the way it is situated within the fascicle. It is followed by a poem that speaks about desire and loss, a poem that demands an exercise of mind. But what is more interesting is the sequence of five poems, from 8 to 13, that deals profoundly with the end of the day and the passing of light. Sharon Cameron has observed the connectivity between these poems and Dickinson's lost love. On the whole, the fascicle reflects Dickinson's emotional history through these poems. This is very important because my arguments are based on this.

Written in 1861, P7-J257-Fr317 "Delight is as the flight—" is a poem arranged as three stanzas of 9, 9, and 8 lines, and which says that the transitory "Delight" of life is like "flight," which is the duration of time it takes for it to part.

In her book *Reading in Time*, Cristanne Miller sheds light on the way Dickinson deals with desire in this poem: it "is often more powerful than posession, and joy is precious because it is ephemeral" (132). Contextually, the speaker seems to be coping with her break-up with a new way of viewing life. Loss for Dickinson has become a poetic gain from which her loss poems have sprung. To her, delight cannot be delight unless it includes some need, some unease. Naturally, human beings want the unattainable, and what can be attained, quickly becomes uninteresting. It does not "last" because it "is as the flight," and the magic of it is scarcely extricable from the frightened awareness of its fleeting character.

The more valued and treasured the delight, the more transitory it is—what the schools of the Philosophers would call a "Ratio," the duration over distance. The speaker takes the rainbow by way of illustration:

A Skein
Flung colored, after Rain,
Would suit as bright,
Except that flight
Were Aliment—

It is as though colourful threads or wool have been gathered and "flung" in the "Skies" after the rain has stopped. The view is delightful while it lasts, but it is the rainbow's evanescent nature that makes it precious, an unavoidable, necessary condition for the nourishment of humans, implied by "Aliment."

This could be summed up in a couple of questions: how far do we go in life before our time is over? Or, before we reach a stage of mental or emotional development? As she maturely reflects upon the ephemeral nature of life, the speaker here recalls her childish enthusiasm for it when she believed that rainbows colouring the skies is the "common way," and considered the "empty Skies" uncommon, "Eccentrity." With her "childish Firmament" struck by the ethereal beauty of the "Bent Stripe," she then would innocently ask "the East" if the rainbow would last. So, in an attempt to dispel her innocent doubt, she asks the distant and unaccesible east, which is, as Miller puts it, "the perfect figure of desire, but also of states of inspiration and knowledge that cannot be taken for granted or possessed (132).

As she becomes mature, Dickinson's awareness of the passage of time grows; the magic of rainbows, "Lives," and "Butterflies," becomes intensified by the "fright / That they will cheat the sight—" before moving, with all their richness, to "latitudes far on." And then,

Some sudden morn—
Our portion—in the fashion—
Done—

This intimates the end of pain; the resurrection yearned for as life ends.

The next five poems, from 8 to 13, constitute a significant sequence that deals profoundly with the end of the day and the passing of light. This sequence attempts to "naturalize loss," loss of love, as Sharon Cameron proposes (101).

Preceded by a poem that deals with the transitory nature of delight, and followed by three poems that deal with strength in P13, loss and distance in P14, and above all, a love that has become past in P15, makes such a grouping, or sequence, form the apogee of the lost love theme in the fascicle.

Written in the same year, P8-J219-Fr318, "She sweeps with many-colored Brooms—"[104] is another poem that offers a colourful description of sunset, and ends, again, with a view that only reaches the perceivable, nothing beyond mortals' perception, like poems 12 and 13 in the previous fascicle.

The sunset here is a scatterbrained housewife who is sweeping away the brightness. We know that the apron-clad housewife lacks concentration by the fact that she "leaves the Shreds behind—." The speaker, then, wittily scolds her for her untidy, neglectful act and asks her to "Come back, and dust the Pond!"

So far, stanza 1 seems as though it is telling a domestic anecdote. It is in the next two stanzas where the domestic tool "Broom" becomes a cosmic power that mythically, "softly" transforms the sweeped dust into stars:

> You dropped a Purple Ravelling in—
> You dropped an Amber thread—
> And now you've littered all the East
> With Duds of Emerald!

Dickinson uses puns to move from the homely indoors to a celestial evening sky. Like the "Brooms," "Ravelling" and "thread" have the same meaning of ordinary domestic objects, which have been transformed into triumphant images of sunset,

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[104] The variant of this poem presumably sent to Sue and signed "Emily," was written a year later about 1862. The variant third stanza reads: "And still She plies Her spotted thrift / And still the scene prevails / Till Dusk obstructs the Diligence— / Or Contemplation fails." See Franklin (1998: 258).

for it “Purple Ravelling” is a scattered sunset cloud, and “Amber thread” is the smudged yellow disk of the moon on the horizon at sunset. This is what the brooms have left behind in the pond’s reflective surface when the sunset sweeped the light from the sky. As the stars emerge bejewelling the evening, referred to as “Duds of Emerald,” another ordinary domestic object, they too become part of the delightful mess that the neglectful housewife has caused.

With her colourful brooms, the housewife in the last stanza busily procceeds sweeping the light and the colourful cloud, the “Aprons” still “fly,” until the speaker “come [s] away”; the vision fails, as the rays of light and cloud patterns “fade softly into stars.”

These sights are in a sense reminiscent of those from “It can’t be ‘Summer!’” in fascicle 11, where the “sunset shuts [her] question down,” putting an end to the day, projecting the inability to know anything beyond death, while asserting the love of earth and the wonders that it can produce.

These wonders are pictured at best in the second poem of this sequence, where the night has already fallen. The speaker in the next poem, P9-J290-Fr319 “Of Bronze—and Blaze—” goes beyond grace while contemplating the night sky.

Sharon Leiter says that there are three elements/realizations in this poem: “the grandeur of the northern lights (nature’s immortality), the poet’s myriad splendors (her poetry’s immortality), and the ‘Island in dishonored grass’ (her personal, physical mortality). None of the three predominates. The subtlety and brilliance of the poem lies in the way Dickinson keeps these realities in motion around one another, letting each other reflect upon and modify the impact of the others” (154).

“The North” in the second line is a reference to the Northern Lights, or the Aurora Borealis, a natural electrical phenomenon characterized by the appearance of streamers of reddish or greenish lights in the sky. Its wavy

luminous pattern captivates the speaker who, from line 3 through 7, considers it to be unconcerned, self-sufficient, competent, and content with what it has:

> So adequate—it forms—
> So preconcerted with itself
> So distant—to alarms—
> An Unconcern so sovreign
> To Universe, or me—

The fact that the aurora is distant makes it immune to harm, or "alarms," and thus makes the point of the speaker graspable. She is moved and inpired by it. She looks up to it as a model she aspires to be like. This brings to mind the speaker's statement in the opening poem of fascicle 11, "A Mien to move a Queen," where she says that she is "Too distant—to endear—" herself to others who neither "fear" her nor have warmth for her. With this superlative, seductive beguilement, and total independence given to the phenomenon, Dickinson then reveals what sort of effect it has upon her:

> Infects my simple spirit
> With Taints of Majesty—
> Till I take vaster attitudes—
> And strut upon my stem—
> Disdaining Men, and Oxygen,
> For Arrogance of them—

With this deep influence, the speaker's "simple spirit" becomes imbued with splendour and exalted status, and line 10, "Till I take vaster attitudes," suggests her will to let her self transcend into the cosmic. Then she goes on and identifies herself with a flower; a flower that nonetheless swaggers. This sense of arrogance, confirmed by the stanza's final line, is accompanied by a total integration with nature; she is transcending her human limitations and becoming one with nature, that is, assuming a wider consciousness. Note that the flower-speaker's arrogance goes hand in hand with the act of "Disdaining Men, and Oxygen." In the poems' context, stating her independence from "Men" is undoubtedly praiseworthy, but disdaining oxygen would have disastrous consequences for a flower. But she is certainly aware of that and thus makes one think of how perfect and complete a flower would be if it could be independent from oxygen.

In this sense, to be totally independent is what the speaker aspires to, and this can only be achieved by delivering her poetry into eternity, an idea that stanza 2 gracefully pictures by introducing her poems as "Splendors," which, she boasts, "are Menagerie—." The validity of this claim is of course dependent on the nature of the term menagerie, which can be an adjective referring to the variety of Dickinson's poems, while also could be argued that it is an indication of the hoarded, lively wild character of them, since menagerie, as a noun, is a collection of wild performing animals. In this sense, her poems are also on "Show" for others to see and enjoy.

If the reader considers the poem in context, he or she will become aware of the unflappable character that it has. It is one of the very rare poems that talk with pride and self-satisfaction about its speaker's achievements and abilities. She integrates with nature, and consequently her splendors become nature's splendors, and nature's splendors are "Competeless,"[105] therefore her poems are nonpareil. This is the formula she strives for in order for her poems to be read and appreciated long after she is gone, "Will entertain the Centuries," that is, from Eternity.

Since her poems have indeed been delivered to distant readers through eternity, they gain the same eternal characteristics given to the Northern Lights in the poem, unlike her, whose mortality is concisely, immensely portrayed in the last three lines:

> When I, am long ago,
> An Island in dishonored Grass—
> Whom none but Daisies, know.

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[105] Leiter proposes, "In Competeless, a neologism formed by adding the suffix "less" to an existing verb, Dickinson follows her frequent practice of turning a verb into an adjective by adding a suffix. One of the mechanisms by which her language attains its distinctive strangeness, the neologism is a form of compression of meaning" (154).

She is essentially aware of the fact that some day she will become far off, "distant," abandoned. However immensily low-spirited or "dishonored" this may sound, she is realistic in contrasting the splendors she has come into contact with in the poem with those of her poems, because in order for them to bloom lively wild, she has to pass through death's door, whose location only the humble "Daisies" will be aware of.[106]

The third poem that constitutes this sequence is written in 1861, P10-J258-Fr320 "There's a certain Slant of light," which casts light upon nature as a shadowy, oppresive weight charged with the menace of death's universal existence.

Paula Bennet notes that the poem's extraordinary popularity "lies in our familiarity with the experience Dickinson describes. Not only has the poet captured the oddness of winter light (its thin, estranging quality), but she has also caught the depressed or sorrowful state of mind which this light biochemically induces" (117). Bennet continues: "the evasiveness of "There's a certain Slant of light"—its multiple ambiguities and its refusal to reach a firm conclusion—is typical of Dickinson's psychological poems and the source of much of their difficulty (as well as their fascination) (118). In her close study of the fascicles, Sharon Cameron observes an important connectivity between this poem and P15-J322-Fr325, "There came a Day—at Summer's full—," which is the key for the speaker's parting from her lover and the love theme on which the discussion of these three fascicles is based. Cameron says, "the fascicle, considered as a whole, could be said to ground, by specifying, the source of the despair in 'There's a certain slant of light.' For with reference to 'There came a Day—at Summer's full—,' the source of the despair is the loss of a lover which in earlier poems is

[106] Dickinson frequently identified herself with the smallness, tenderness, and vulnerability of Daisies.

displaced onto multiple disappearances of natural phenomena" (101). These multiple disappearances of natural phenomena are depicted in these five poems that constitute the sequence that is currently discussed, from P8 to P13, including P17-J291-F327 "How the old Mountains drip with Sunset," which will be discussed later.

So, Dickinson transforms light (a picture firmly implanted in the human mind as a symbol of optimism and bliss) into the "Seal Despair," which is here a stamp that the light imprints on the speaker's spirit as a result of her lost love.

Typically, the poem begins by giving a concise, yet special illustration to the angle of light—by the use of a comma in the opening line—in order to emphasize that it can only be conceived on "Winter Afternoons—." So, we are given the time, and the place can be visualized by placing the speaker viewing a ray of light slanting through her room's window.

But in line 3 comes the unexpected, because the traditionally positive light here oppresses, and does so "like the Heft / Of Cathedral Tunes—," putting one in mind of transcendental "Tunes" reverberating through great empty corridors. The church's music in J183-Fr211 "I've heard an Organ talk" in fascicle 12 filled the speaker with awe, and here it generates an oppressive atmosphere. Both poems are closely interlaced because awe can include a feeling of oppression. Bennet says, "The world becomes a partner in the poet's depression. The depression becomes the lens through which the world is seen—and, through which its "meanings" (whatever they might be) are understood" (118), while Sharon Cameron sees the poem as a reply, saying that, "the natural perspective is not the person's perspective and never can be" (115).

But the question naturally arises: If divinity is implied (although Dickinson uses religious terminology to add strength), could the poem be considered iconoclastic? The mere mention of what is generally known as the principal church of a diocese is an indication of the dominant presence of the Puritan tradition that marked the upbringing of Dickinson. The poem then could

be classified as one of Dickinson's intermediate poems. In this sense, then, light becomes a trope for change. And, the numerous old meanings of "Heft,"[107] such as burden, weighty load, heavy encumbrance, to name just a few, can only indicate haunting memory, a heavy hangover from Dickinson's former religion.

Dickinson also exposes the reader to the dialectic between distant, external nature (reference to "Sent us of the Air" and "When it comes") and the inner self ("internal difference"), stating that the impact the former exerts over the latter burdens the human psyche, "Where the Meanings, are—," with pain and awe—like messages or reminders, with nature playing the role of an emissary. Note the sort of impact it has on the speaker's consciousness:

> Heavenly Hurt, it gives us—
> We can find no scar,
> But internal difference,

The interpretation of these lines is dependent on how the reader sees "Heavenly," which in this case can refer to either the region of the sun in the sky, from which the light is sent, or the abode of God. If the latter hypothesis is true, then it is heaven that "gives us" this "Hurt." But, is this implying that it is God who hurts her? Or is it her need to know what lies beyond death that hurts her? These lines, typically, raise more questions than they answer. The only certainty the reader is left with is that "no scar" can be found, either physical or emotional, suggesting, perhaps, a sudden silence, an existing that comes to an end, leaving the reader questioning whether existence has any significance at all.

> None may teach it—Any—
> 'Tis the Seal Despair—
> An imperial affliction
> Sent us of the Air—
>
> When it comes, the Landscape listens—

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[107] Farr proposes that, "Dickinson's onomatopoeic provincialism "Heft," for which Mrs. Todd substituted the neutral "weight," conveys the difficulty of lifting up the heart, of believing in what cathedrals stand for" (1992: 264). St. Armand, on the other hand, recognizes through the poem Dickinson's "negative crisis conversion to unbelief" (239).

Shadows—hold their breath—
When it goes, 'tis like the Distance
On the look of Death—

These lines epitomize the crux of the poem. There is no way for this spiritual melancholy to be explained. The sentiment is oppressive in its very nature. This, in turn, creates deep despair that is exceptional, beyond the norm. Subsequently, when this experience comes, which it could well be a memory from the past, it is not only nature that seems to stop, but also the whole of existence comes to a halt. And "When it goes," it is as though nothing has happened, as a glance at death.

What the poem is slantly saying is that change, or transformation, or moving on, is an appalling process. It is saying that the recognition of change in the natural world is a sign (Seal) of inevitable death, which fills us with despair.

So, the speaker's vision stops; the familiar eloquent silence that most of Dickinson's poems end with. As it undergoes its "imperial affliction," the psyche becomes no stranger to its own suffering, whose origin is as intangible as "Air." The awareness of mortality is formed by elusiveness of which human beings are hardly conscious.

The fourth poem of loss is P11-J228-Fr321 "Blazing in Gold—and,"[108] another rich pageant of sunset that assures the transient nature of things.

[108] The publication of this poem requires a special attention. Under the title "Sunset," this poem was published in *The Springfield Republican* on March 30 1864. See Leiter (60). There are two copies of this poem; one sent to Higginson as a single eight-line stanza, postmarked 9 June 1866, and another one (the one under discussion) written some five years earlier, about 1861. There is, according to Franklin, another lost copy sent to Susan (1998: 163-164). Franklin detects the three variants in the copy to Higginson: her] it's, otters] kitchen, and her] it's. Additionally, he says that Dickinson in line 3 crossed out "in" and subtituted "to."

As regards the copy sent to Susan, Franklin says that it is lost, but it was transcribed in a letter sent to Mrs. Tood by Dickinson's cousin Perez D. Cowan, dated 9 June 1891. He transcribed the poem "from memory as one that had been given him by Susan Dickinson when he was an Amherst undergraduate (1862-1866). See (1998: 164) for the copy of the poem and the variants

Light in this poem is flaming, golden, which vanishes slowly in "Purple" blaze in lines 1 and 2. But the image changes rapidly in line 3, transforming into "Leopards," whose sudden movement, depicted as though leaping, implies the passage of time with haste. The view is also terminated in this poem by the use of the "old Horizon," at which light lays "it's spotted face—to die!" making an end of the day, by the limit of view, by death. Again, the passing of light is associated with death.

Note that "Horizon" has been mentioned several times up to this point in the poems, and if Dickinson meant it to be anything, it must have been the limit of human comprehension, the brink of silence from which expression emerges and gives birth to poetry. So far, the poem gives a familiar setting-sun theme, but it elaborates it in a unique way to imply something much deeper. Its uniqueness lies partly in the way it progresses from vigorous and virile, blazing and leaping, to downhill all the way, represented by the tender gestures of fading away and submission, "Laying it's spotted face—to die," and "Stooping," and "Kissing it's Bonnet to the Meadow—."

But the interesting part is where Dickinson describes the sunset as "the Juggler of Day—." Note that juggler in Dickinson's dictionary meant both magician and jester. But it also meant trickster, or swindler. This calls to mind the

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provided by Franklin, who suggests that this copy "was a variant." He adds, "The conjecture is somewhat substantiated by the version of the poem which was anonymously published in the Springfield Daily Republican on 30 March 1864 in the "Wit and Wisdom" column, titled "Sunset."

Franklin says, "There is no way of knowing who supplied the version printed in the *Republican*. The copy supplied Cowen by Susan Dickinson also uses the phrase "oriel window," and since it is unlikely that ED herself sent the copy, one conjectures that the lost copy to Sue was the source as well of the text in the Republican. The text in Poems (1891), 166, titled "The Juggler of Day," reproduced the copy to Higginson, arranged as two quatrains. When Higginson was putting final editorial touches to the volume, he wrote on 18 July 1891 to Mrs. Todd (AB 140): 'I have combined the two 'Juggler of Day' poems using the otter's window of course (oriel!!) & making the juggler a woman, as is proper.'" Franklin says, "by 'oriel' he has in mind the Cowan text quoted to him by Mrs. Todd. He obviously distrusted Cowan's memory. ED's variants 'kitchen,' 'oriel,' 'Otter' all remain in fair copies nevertheless."

Franklin adds, "When Mrs. Bianchi included the poem in CP (1924), 102, and later collections, she altered line 5 to conform with that in the packet copy, thus restoring 'kitchen.' In lines 4 and 7 'her' still remains." (1998: 163-165).

opening poem of fascicle 26, J628-Fr589 “They called me to the Window, for,” where a mysterious “Showman” steals the colourful scenes that the speaker has been summoned to look at, (“Sunset,” “Sapphire Farm,” “Opal Cattle,” “Hill,” “Sea,” “Decks,” “Mediterranean”). This gives rise to a puzzle: who (or what) is this cryptic entity? The next poem gives us a hint, however slantly. Evidently, both juggler and showman are connected to the sunset, a face that hides in its glory, behind the veil of this phenomenon, an omnipotent power that plays with the sublime laws. By the modern meaning of juggler, however, one would say that the speaker juggles the leopards, which in turn can be a metaphor for clouds. That is, tosses them into the air and catches them so as to keep at least one in the air while handling the others, as in an entertaining circus performance. It is true, in many more ways than one, that if juggler is meant to be a magician or trickster, then the noun could be applied to Dickinson too. As a poet, her magical artistic abilities play with the sublime laws and deliver her version of the truth, one that is empowered by language. This in turn is justified by an attempt to communicate the ultimate knowledge. Leiter observes:

> Even within a single image, she “Juggles” her images: many leopards leap to the sky, but only one lays “her spotted face to die” at the “feet of the old Horizon.” With the death of the single leopard, the light grows tamer, becomes a country light that stoops “as low as the Otter’s Window,” touches the roof and tints the barn. (61)

Moving on to the next poem we encounter P12-J259-Fr322, “Good Night! Which put the Candle out?” the fifth and last poem of the sequence.

The poem starts off by describing a day-to-day domestic occurrence that turns out to be a metaphor for something much deeper than it seems at first sight. Like a time capsule, the opening line succeeds in conjuring up images chosen as being typical of the present time, taking the reader back in time and place to Dickinson’s era. Then, the reader is invited to imagine the darkness that pervades Dickinson’s abode amid trees every time the sun sets because there were no electric lights that wire homes, far less likely streetlights on the paths along the

unpaved roads.[109] This makes each house like an isolated island in an ocean of darkness, with its inhabitants gathered by candlelight. With this image in mind, one can imagine the speaker climbing the stairs with a candle that lights her way to bed, before it goes out causing her to utter suddenly, "Which put the Candle out?"

But as soon as we read line 2 we become aware that, as in "The Drop, that wrestles in the Sea—," the speaker becomes involved in a Delphic debate, because the candle was blown out by "Zephyr," the Greek God of the west wind.[110] This in turn justifies the usage of "Which" rather than "who." And the "celestial wick" description elaborately transfigures the candle into a star of which Zephyr is apparently "jealous."

Apparently, the jealousy of the Greek god over the gleamy star caused him to blow it out; perhaps by pushing a cloud over it and causing the vanishing of its brightness, indifferent to how the "Angels—labored diligent (ly)" over it. Then, as happened to the housewife sunset in "She sweeps with many-colored Brooms—," the Greek god gets reprimanded for his careless action:

> It might—have been the Light House spark—
> Some Sailor—rowing in the Dark—
> Had importuned to see!
> It might—have been waning lamp
> That lit the Drummer from the Camp
> To purer Reveille!

The candle is here depicted as a lighthouse that marks safe entries to harbours. By this, the speaker tries to evoke guilt in Zephyr, whose careless action had made the "rowing in the Dark" impossible for the sailor. While he "might" be the one who "Extinguished" the only guidance the sailor had to some safe harbour, the

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[109] This assumption is based on the fact that the world's first public electricity supply was provided in late 1881; long after this poem was written.

[110] Zephyr is one of the eight gods of the winds in classical times. Late Old English *zefferus*, denoting a personification of the west wind, via Latin from Greek *zephuros* "(god of the) west wind." West wind was considered the gentlest compared to the colder north wind, Boreas.

speaker adds that he "might" as well have had "Extinguished" the last dim glow a dying "Drummer from the Camp," or from war, could have seen as he stepped into eternity, into a "purer" resurrection.

There is, to be sure, a great deal of connectivity between the passage of light in the two previous poems and the light controlled by the omnipotent force in this poem, which in turn gives us a clue about the poet's understanding of this phenomenon while preserving the cryptic nature of both the juggler in the previous poem and the showman counterpart in the poem located in fascicle 26.

The emotional pitch of the poem is undoubtedly a reflective sadness that evokes the pathos of something deeply lost through the central metaphor of the vanished light. As Dickinson's speaker observes the dark sky in which a star once gleamed, her anger grows bigger at the deity whose careless blow erases what the angels have been so meticolously working on. Her feeling of loss is intensified in the second half of the poem by depicting the sailor who lost his way in the dark water and the dying "Drummer" who has been deprived from the heavenly light and thus lost his way to heaven.

The next poem, P13-J260-Fr323, "Read—Sweet—how others—strove" is pertinent to the reading of that in fascicle 12, J295-Fr300, "Unto like Story—Trouble has enticed me—," in which the speaker identifies with "Brave" sufferers.

Writers such as Buckingham have identified John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* as the source of this poem (54, 104).[111] The book is known for portraying gruesome sufferings that a group of saints went through. But, in this poem the

[111] The *Actes and Monuments*, popularly known as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, is a work of Protestant history and martiology by John Foxe, first published in English in 1563 by John Day. It includes a polemical account of the sufferings of Protestants under the Catholic Church, with particular emphasis on England and Scotland. The book was highly influential in those countries, and helped shape lasting popular notions of Catholicism there.

martyrs' destiny encourages the speaker, who urges someone she mysteriously addresses "Sweet" to be inspired by them:

> Read—Sweet—how others—strove
> Til we—are stouter—
> What they—renounced—
> Til we—are less afraid—
> How many time they—bore the faithful witness—
> Til we—are helped—
> As if a Kingdom—cared!

The speaker's objective is to become stouter, a necessary condition to pursue her physical retirement and deliver her poetry into eternity. The saints renounced a life with dishonour, and so she will. But in order to become bold she must become "less afraid." She will overcome fear once the step has been taken, as stated in J1181-Fr594 "When I hoped—I feared—" in fascicle 26. She is also aware of the importance of endurance, because the war between good and evil is endless, and the wicked will continue to destroy the enduring "faithful." Knowing what these people had been through is very helpful that it is "As if a Kingdom" (of dead martyrs) had actually "cared."

Stanza 2 is a "Hymn" dedicated to the martyrs. She urges sweet to read about how faith glistened over the martyrs' execution, to chant a song of praise to those "Brave names of Men— / And Celestial Women—" whose faith saved them from drowning, and as a result, they "Passed" from simple recognition, from mortal memory, to "Celestial" glory.

Although the glory of the people being read about seems to teach the speaker that faith inspires courage, note that these people had won a great glory for having faith in the existence of God, for which they are praised as a strong enough reason to honour and die for. The question, then, is what does the speaker believe in? What does faith represent to her in this poem? It may well be faith in the immortality of her poetry, or an afterlife reunion with her lover, or both—that is, an ultimate compensation that makes up for years of dedication and suffering.

Apart from the fact that the care of "a Kingdom" is in a sense scorned, this poem seems, at first anyway, to be inclined to a belief in faith, for it both shines brighter than the "fagot," and is never dulled, or drowned," by the "River" of disbelief. On this view, faith in this poem cannot be just thrown away or discarded. The moral of it is that there are people who would die for what they believe in, because they love the truth that they have found in this chaotic river of life.

As in the penultimate poem of fascicle 11, J250-Fr270, "I shall keep singing!" the next poem P14-J261-Fr324 "Put up my lute!" affirms that poetry is the real faith Dickinson upholds, and also how she is left out in the cold after the end of her relationship.

Considering both poems, the reader becomes aware of the ups and downs in Dickinson's vocation. In "I shall keep singing" the reader senses determination; here, on the other hand, the speaker falters. The sense of struggle starts with the opening line where she says that she puts up (can mean both lay it on a shelf after use, or give it up altogether) her "lute,"—an old stringed instrument associated with poetry—and thus conveys the impression that she has grown weary, that is, for what use is "my Music" proving to be,

> Since the sole ear I cared to charm—
> Passive—as Granite—laps My Music—
> Sobbing—will suit—as well as Psalm!

These lines are by no means confessional outpourings in spite of the genuine experience that they represent. Far from putting on display the details of her privacy, Dickinson leaves the reader guessing at the identity of the owner of the "sole ear" whom she "cared to charm." In this reading, there is a strong implication of the two previous fascicles' love, and the poem prepares the reader for the next poem where the lost love theme will be intensified.

"My Music" in lines 2 and 4 is surely a metaphor for poetry. We know, by the precision of "sole," that there is an impassive person whose attention the speaker attempts to capture. This person reads (or used to read) her poems, for he "laps My Music—." The meaning of "lap" in Webster's 1844 is take in, or receive a very small amount at a time, among other meanings, which makes the use of this verb special. But what is the point when he reacts coldly, or does not react at all. It is the lack of response that creates discomfort in the speaker. It does not matter if the mood of the poem is sad or religious or hymnal, his reaction would always be impassive, as line 5 says.

A transformation takes place in stanza 2, namely the "sole ear" becomes "them," indicating a larger readership of her poetry that would rank her among great poets. This seems to be a more honourable objective. But for that she will need a miracle:

> Would but the "Memmon" of the Desert—
> Teach me the strain
> That vanquished Him—
> When He—surrendered to the Sunrise—
> Maybe—that—would awaken—them!

She may learn from the Ethiopian king, whose statue suffered from the cruelty of time, that the creation of art is contingent on defeat, or destruction. But she may also learn the secret behind the eternal melodies that his statue produces as the rays of the raising sun fall upon it.[112] The final line says that her hope that some day her art will be appreciated is not completely abandoned.

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[112] Memnon was the king of Ethiopia who led his armies from Africa into Asia Minor to help defend the beleaguered city but was ultimately slain by Achilles. The name Memnon means "Son of the Dawn," and was probably applied to the colossus that was shattered by an earthquake, collapsing it from the waist up and cracking the lower half. Following its rupture, the remaining lower half of this statue was then reputed to "sing" on various occasions, always within an hour or two of sunrise, usually right at dawn.

P15-J322-Fr325, "There came a Day—at Summer's full—,"[113] is a testimony to the wrench of the speaker's parting from her lover; it is the key for the love theme on which the discussion of these three fascicles is based. Its location after "I shall keep singing!" makes it an extension of it, and a development of poems 3 and 6 as well as of the earlier sequence of poems that deal with loss.

"There came a Day—at Summer's full—," is one of the three poems Dickinson enclosed with her second letter to Higginson.[114] As mentioned earlier in the discussion on J321-Fr334, "Of all the sounds despatched abroad," this fair copy is also dated 25 April 1862. The third poem was J86-Fr98 "South Winds jostle them—."

Told in past tense, the day depicted is "entirely for me—," one which is more than a mortal woman whose life is marked by loss and distance could wish for; one that is more suited for "the Saints, / Where Resurrections—be—."

In stanza 2, nature does not seem to care too much about what is occuring in the speaker's soul; it just plays its usual role:

> The Sun—as common—went abroad—
> The Flowers—accustomed—blew—
> As if no soul—that solstice passed—
> Which maketh all things—new—

But nature here is not depressing, and it does not act mysteriously as it often does. Although Cynthia Wolff argues that this poem's love is a spiritual one, she makes an apt observation, "The 'solstice' of the speaker's transforming love is literally a

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[113] There is a semifinal copy of this poem written late in 1861. Additionally, Franklin notes, "a second fair copy, now lost, is reproduced in facsimile on two pages preceding the title page of *Poems* (1891). The handwriting is so nearly identical with that of the copy to Higginson that one concludes it was almost certainly written during the spring of 1862." More information on the deletions, suggested changes, comparisons, etc., can be found at (1998: 249-252).

[114] See Franklin (1998: 250).

moment outside of time: 'the point […] at which the sun stops or ceases to recede from the equator'" (413).

The day was governed by silence. Not because the lovers had nothing to say, but because speech was not needed, just as God's "Wardrobe" will not be needed when, as James Robert Guthrie notes, the marriage between the "Lamb," or Christ, and the new Jerusalem becomes reality, when the "night will cease to exist in the new Jerusalem, nor will there be any sun, for God will Himself be the light continuously illuminating all (Rev. 22:5). Similarly, the new Jerusalem will require no temples, for God will live there among mortal men forever" (21:3) (49-50):

> The time was scarce profaned—by speech—
> The falling of a word
> Was needless—as at Sacrament—
> The *Wardrobe*—of Our Lord

It could be that they were aware that there is no way for this union to come true in this life. So, before the moment slips away, they try to clutch at it greedily, as line 18 says. The lovers' awareness of this fleeting moment made them like the "sealed Church—"[115] of final communion to each other, because their physical union is impossible. Helen Vendler notes that the lovers have been given this opportunity "to prepare them for their eventual reunion in heaven (132). They were "Permitted to commune this—time—," so that they would not be "too awkward" at the heavenly "Supper of the Lamb." This religious terminology employed in stanzas 3 and 4 renders the reading of parts of the poem uneasy. Stanza 4 was ommited by *Scribner's Magazine* when it published the poem in

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[115] Dickinson's religious terminology undoubtedly offers clues of interpretation. Leiter proposes that, "the scriptural resonance of the phrase (Sealed Church) is impossible to ignore. In Revelation, Dickinson's favourite book of the Bible, the Lamb, representing Christ, is the only one capable of breaking open the sealed book that reveals the future. Moreover, the fourth line is a clear allusion to Revelation 19:9: 'Blessed *are* they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.' Through these verbal resonances, the union of the lovers is connected to their future in the Resurrection and to their worthiness as members of the spiritual elect—notions that recur in the poem's final stanza" (194).

1890, as Vendler says, "Presumably for its blasphemous intimation that this spiritual communion between the speaker and her lover was a rehearsal of the heavenly banquet, a rehearsal kindly 'permitted' so that they would not be awkward at the heavenly 'Supper of the Lamb'" (131). Sandra M. Gilbert calls attention to Dickinson's cleverness in using religious terminology, noting that she "Converts the Christianity she had begun to reject as a seventeen-year-old Mount Holyoke student into a complex theology of secular love" (25). Secular, to be sure, means not connected with religious or spiritual matters; contrasted with "sacred." If the speaker in this poem is indeed counting on an afterlife reunion, one has to keep in mind that her objectivity should be essentially dependent on the spiritual. Strictly speaking, it is the conventional belief in God's approval that would allow her to enter heaven and be resurrected. Note that in lines 3 and 4 Dickinson's speaker is excluding herself from the redeemed (by the grace of God), bringing back into the reader's mind the "Saints" in "Read—Sweet—how others—strove," who gave their lives in the cause of religion.

The moment of farewell comes at stanza 5, where the passage of time features significantly:

> The Hours slid fast—as Hours will,
> Clutched tight, by greedy hands—
> So faces on two Decks, look back,
> Bound to opposing lands—

Time slips away, and the flowery meadow and summer scene have faded and in their place appear two ships, each taking one of the lovers, who look back at each other from the "two Decks," sailing towards "opposing lands." Intrigued by the reasons behind this separation, one may ask why the use of "opposing," which bring to mind J640-Fr706 "I cannot live with you," where Dickinson says,

> For You—served Heaven—You know,
> Or sought to—
> I could not—

Their meeting had just flown by as good times often do, and did so "Without external sound—." They did not exchange rings on parting, there will be

"no other bond" between them. Instead, they "bound" one another's crucifixes, which represent their suffering. Farr gives an explanation of the verb "bound," "[W] hen a Victorian novice took final vows, her crucifix was often 'bound' or fastened on her breast as a sign of Christian witness, but also of her calling as the spouse of Christ" (1992: 306). Dickinson's view of this custom is, "the speaker and another act as sponsor and sponsored in taking up the cross to wear" (306). So, in essence, they are like Christ, who will undergo "Calvaries of Love" in pursuance of "that New Marriage" that will happen when the "Grave" has been "Deposed," and they have been resurrected. Dickinson was, after all, proud of being the Queen of Calvary.

Sewall (1974: II, 552) and Habegger (413) do not rule out the possibility of an actual farewell meeting, "perhaps with Reverend Charles Wadsworth (although his 1860 visit was in March, and not in June, as 'solstice' suggests), perhaps with Samuel Bowles, who often attended the August commencements of Amherst College, in which the Dickinson family played a prominent role, or with Benjamin Franklin Newton, her first 'tutor,' who saw her poetic gift and died prematurely in 1853."[116]

Supported by Farr and Pollak's views on Dickinson's relationship with Newton, George Mamunes notes in his book *So has a Daisy vanished*, "even if Ben *had* commited to Emily, it's unlikely that she would have thrown herself into his arms." Mamunes adds, "He sent Emily a handsome volume of Emerson's poems, in which he had marked a number of passages. Writing to a friend, Jane Humphrey, Emily gushed over Newton's gift. Judith Farr intuits that Emily had 'a crush on him.' Vivian Pollak imagines Jane guessing at 'a romance … her thoughts might have reverted to Benjamin Franklin Newton and to the possibility of a secret engagement … Or if Jane's speculations did not extend to a secret

[116] See Leiter (193).

engagement, she might have imagined something more tentative, such as an engagement to be engaged, sealed by a series of rapturous embraces'" (16-18).

P16-J262-Fr326, "The lonesome for they know not What—," represents a reflection on those transitory moments of exaltation, or revelation.

The poem starts by addressing those who live alone and do not know what they are lonesome for. They are like the "Eastern Exiles," who were removed from their native land and, consequently, lost their way. The fact that they drifted beyond the sun, as line 3 says, does not mean that they are strangers, for it suggests a high status of consciousness. Crossing that line, as typical in Dickinson, is going behind the limits of the natural world.

Just as "Birds," who in their inconceivably vast home may perk up by a momentary tune, will strive to evoke this tune when they have "tumble [d] from the clouds," so the "Eastern Exiles" will strive fruitlessly to climb back into what once was their joyous home, once they have "strayed." By implication, this could be a reference to mankind, the dispersed roamers who search "in vain" for the "Blessed Ether" that they have once experienced:

> Who strayed beyond the Amber line
> Some madder Holiday—

By imagining the east as the origin of humankind, and the topographical use of "Transatlantic" to refer to the actual east across the Atlantic Ocean, Dickinson hints at a cultural and intellectual resonance that is impossible to ignore, with which she gives strength to the poem.

The imagery of "purple Moat" (sky) and "Ether" refer to a transcendental experience. But loss is also sensed in the poem; it shines and at the same time ruins the existence of this group of people, namely by a boundless, incomprehensible heaven revoked:

The Blessed Ether—taught them—
Some Transatlantic Morn—
When Heaven—was too common—to miss—
Too sure—to dote upon!

So, if this is a loss of identity, then the fact that this group of people does not know what they are lonesome for could be explainable, since they attempt to regain a land that once belonged to their ancestors, not to them, and therefore it is unknown to them. In her discussion on the poem, Cristanne Miller says, "We are all 'Eastern Exiles,' all diasporic wanderers taught by 'blessed Ether' to stray from Eden and then incapable of regaining that native land. The poem imagines the East as humanity's mythic place of origin, suggesting that all humans stem from the original exiles, Adam and Eve" (128). The poem could also be a description of what it is like to look back on the Paradise Lost of lost love.

As the end of the facicle approaches, we find P17-J291-Fr327 "How the old Mountains drip with Sunset"; the last of a series of sunset poems in another attempt to capture what has been referred to as the "Western Mystery" in "This—is the land—the Sunset washes—."

While the movement of the day's end contextually remains suggestive of the movement towards an inevitable demise, what this sunset poem tries to explore simultanuously is the perception of the poet in particular, artist in general, and the impact that nature can have upon the ones with higher sensibilities. In spite of the fact that artists can be thought of as wizards (a variant of the "Juggler of Day" and "Showman" discussed earlier) in their artistic attempts to picture the day's end by expressing what the poem refers to as "Visions," there remain those moments of captivation that fill them with awe: in this case, we are given three great Italian painters by way of example in the last stanza:

These are the Visions flitted Guido—
Titian—never told—
Domenichino dropped his pencil—
Paralyzed, with Gold—

"Gold" would definitely open a religious debate if the letter "l" were removed. Still, its secondary meaning in Dickinson's dictionary is holiness and sanctity. This state of awe generated by the grandeur of the sunset that artists are left with, then, is where inspiration springs. But note the stanza also hints at the artists' inability to match the magnificence of an actual sunset.

The poem's development goes hand in hand with the movement of the day's end, which is depicted as drenching the "old Mountains," causing the pine trees to figuratively burn. The dark grass fields are as though covered with glowing coal that has ceased to flame, a magical illusion by the "Wizard Sun," whose ability to control the sunset makes it the true possesor of all its mysteries.

Then, stanza 2 depicts the solar globe on the horizon at sunset embraced by the soaring "old Steeples," with distinctive colours that add a perceptable effect to the scene. Then it is as though Dickinson felt that she came short in her description and thus says that she might be in need of "the lip of the Flamingo" to express in words the sweeping force of the sunset that takes an ocean tide form, depicted as fire:

> Touching all the Grass
> With a departing—Sapphire—feature—
> As a Duchess passed—

This description of the grass being touched by the fire is particularily impressive. The scene grows dim as sunset dies away and darkens the grass, as though a "Duchess" in a sapphirine elegant dress "passed" by. This brief fairy-tale effect only lasts a few moments before "Dusk" pervades, and is depicted as a crawling creature that invades the "Village," making the "Houses" indistinguishable as if they all had been covered up with black ink. And the waxy "Street" lights start to be seen glistening as though early floating stars:

> How it is Night—in Nest and Kennel—
> And where was the Wood—
> Just a Dome of Abyss is Bowing
> Into Solitude—

The night has now fallen and the birds and dogs are safe and snug in their respective houses. And, as the speaker tries to look once more at the "Wood," the splendour is gone, and a "Dome of Abyss" had taken over the scene. This oblivious attitude of what we may refer to, as a dark chasm, is truly unmasking. It reveals the true nature of things and how magical times come to an end. Note that throughout the poem we are given vivid images, starting with the "Wizard Sun" whose magical illusion adds colour to the "Grass," the "old Steeples" that embrace the sunset, the "Duchess" whose sapphirine dress touches the "Grass" and adds a beautiful blue effect to the scene, and the sparkling stars that iluminate the "Street." But now it is as though everything had sunk into remoter shades and glooms. This empty gap, unmeasurable space represented by "Dome of Abyss," does not only refers to death, but the abode of it, its origin. And this, as the poem intimates, is what only a poet can bring into expression when the colours of the painters fail.

The last two poems drive home a moral point. P18-J325-Fr328, "Of Tribulation, these are They," contains a stinging satire that seems to be directed at the egocentricity of those who think themselves "Victors" in life, when wearing their adorned, fancy "Gowns."

> The Spangled Gowns, a lesser Rank
> Of Victors—designate—

This sense of ostentation indicates people of higher "Rank" on earth, but in heaven, these are "a lesser Rank." They "did Conquer—," yet their gain remains a wordly one, insignificant compared to that of the sufferers who will be well redeemed and "Denoted by the White" robes:

> But the ones who overcame most times—
> Wear nothing commoner than snow—
> No Ornament, but Palms—

In a clear reference to herself, the speaker insists that those who have suffered and learned to endure are the greater "Rank / Of Victors." In a world where women and men sport their identities like necklets and neckties, she evokes whiteness as a sign of righteousness. She dresses wholly in "White," with nothing to decorate, adorn, or beautify.

It should be clear by now what sort of victory Dickinson strives after. The last stanza dispels any doubt by giving a striking example of the speaker's own relief after being saved:

> Our panting Ancle barely passed—
> When Night devoured the Road—
> But we—stood whispering in the House—
> And all we said—was "Saved"!

This certainly implies more than a simple walk at sunset. The reading of these lines is dependent upon how the reader sees the "superior soil" in line 10, at which, the "Surrender" and "Defeat" experienced on earth has become "unknown," forgotten. Furthermore, "an outgrown Anguish" is strongly suggestive of the moment of death, of transit, for it is now "Remembered, as the Mile," when left behind. The tone of the lines intimates a transformation from being a sufferer to the attainment of victory (moral victory, victory over adversity, sadness, or maybe even success in art), a process which is behind comprehension for the speaker and her partners, implied by "Our" and "we." Ultimately, the last two lines picture them remaining poised and uncertainly wondering what has just happened, "whispering" as uninvited guests at a party.

The fascicle's last poem, P19-J292-Fr329, "If your Nerve, deny you—," is Dickinson's instruction to the reader to go beyond the limits of fear; if strength denies "you," never negate, or neglect yourself.

This poem about strong wills is a perfect way to end a fascicle most of whose parts are marked by loss, by urging the reader (or herself, or both) to

luxuriate in what Robert Weisbuch refers to as “the dangerous, authentic feeling” (1998: 222). Sharon Cameron, who sees that there is a “mechanistic rhetoric” in the poem, and who believes that the speaker’s lost love is present in the fascicle, mainly through the poems that constitute the mini-sequence discussed earlier, notes that this poem “proposes terms of recompense: Oxygen will be found in death.” She adds, “with reference to the surrounding poems, it will be found in the restoration of the lover who has been taken” (96, 101-102).

Love is not mentioned at all in this poem. Not even implicitly. But this is because Dickinson plays with readers with a child’s astuteness, as though on a “seesaw,” lifting our side into the air, and bringing us down, in a very “steady” way.

The poem deals with the nerve and the soul as different aspects of our human structure. If the nerve repudiates, or wavers, or lacks confidence, “He” can be sent to contemplate death, whose “arms” are here described as “Brass.” One of the old meanings of “Brass” in Dickinson’s dictionary is “armored, soldier’s uniform,” a metalic description akin to that given J286-Fr243, “That after Horror—that ’twas us—” in fascicle 11. Once is “Held” by the arms of the “Best Giant made—,” the nerve will become “steady,” because, normally, it should become stronger in the face of adversity.

Stanza 3 is about the “Poltroon” “Soul,”—that is, rascal—who needs oxygen shut up behind the “door” of the “Flesh.” So, in case it vacillates, or wavers, the appropiate way to discipline it would be to “Lift the Flesh Door,” to deprive him of the only thing that he “wants.”

This poem brings the curtain down on a series of poems of loss in the fascicle, and the fear that came as a result of this loss. It hints at how the awareness of death, of life’s fleeting nature, can be a good motivation to overcome “fear.”

Conclusion

Fascicle 13 has shown that Emily Dickinson's courage, to endure agony and to rise above despair, has enriched her life of seclusion and her habit of looking inward. Throughout the fascicle the reader is informed about the rarity of joy in her life, and how she had learned to live in harmony with her fears (P2, P10, P13, P14, 18, 19).

Loss, of which she speaks directly only twice (P16, P6), is nonetheless the axis about which the other topics rotate. The love that was obvious in fascicle 11 has become a symbol related to a spiritual realm in fascicle 13. Its tone has become both vendictive and personalized (P6), and the only way for it to survive is to immortalize it and deliver it to distant readers (P15). For a moment, at any rate, she is distant, but still pining for the lover (P3).

Consequently, her integration with nature becomes a daily routine. And that is not dull or morbid; it is intrinsic to a high quality of life. She misses summer when it is gone, and the sunset is not just an indication of the approach of night; the horizon is not just the line where the sun rises or sets; and candlelight, and a ray of sunlight, carry deep meanings. In fact, things seem to be looking up at last; the Aurora becomes a model she aspires to, distant and self-sufficient (P9), and she experiences a transformation from sufferer to victor. She frees herself from temptations, acquires a rich human experience, and death and mortality held no fears for her. In the end, what Emily Dickinson lacked supplied her with motifs, and her reverie indeed did meet her needs.

Epilogue

The main assumption that undergirds the present study relates systematically to the internal structure of the three fascicles and the way the poems were arranged by Dickinson; neither to reveal nor to conceal, but to function, as authentic poetry does, covered by a coating of gold, like the yellow golden abdomen of the bee, which makes the hidden reality denied to the "Unqualified" (J353-Fr335).

It is unlikely that, if Dickinson planned publication, she would have classified her readers as unqualified others. And the fact that her poems and letters remained in a small social circle that she herself created means that she was aware of what she was doing. Secrecy meant too much to Dickinson, and she admits it all along. In J664-Fr279, "Of all the Souls that stand create—," she states that when "subterfuge—is done" the reader then will "Behold" the "Elected—one," that is, the one she loved above all other persons. The primary meaning of "subterfuge" in Dickinson's dictionary is "Earth life," to be sure. But there are reasons to believe that the secret of her love was kept from her family and those whom she knew, since no one living can in any way be negatively affected by an over 130-year-old love story, a fact that sheds light on who the "Unqualified" others truly are, and which explains the surreptitious character of her poetry. But what is this secret that had to be kept, and resists being revealed after more than 130 years? Is it a love for a married man, or a first and last love that was lost at an early age, or a love that involves lesbianism, or all of these? These kind of personal matters of Dickinson, like her possible lesbian involvement with Kate Scott Anthon and her sister-in-law Susan, have been discussed and given a great dedication by Rebecca Patterson's *The Riddle of Emily Dickinson* and Ellen Louise Hart and Martha Nell Smith's recent publication *Open Me Carefully: Emily Dickinson's Intimate Letters to Susan Huntington Dickinson*, among others.

In 1870, Dickinson wrote to Higginson, "I never had a mother. I suppose a mother is one to whom you hurry when you are troubled" (L 324). In 1874, the sense of motherlessness developed when she wrote, "I always ran Home to Awe

when a child, if anything befell me. He was an awful Mother, but I liked him better than none" (L 405). "My Mother does not care for thought—and Father, too busy with his Briefs—to notice what we do" (L 261). "I have none to ask" (L 260). Was it really true that Dickinson had none to ask, or that her secret was too heavy, too exciting to share? Hans Werner Luescher (1901-1999) dedicated much of his life to Dickinson's poetry. Rolf Amsler and Margaret Freeman *in Emily Dickinson's Double Language: An Introduction to the Writings of Hans W. Luescher,*[117] have decided to complete what Hans could not do and bring his work into final and proper publication. They say that Hans believed that Dickinson had created a double language, "at one level writing the masterpieces of poetry, and on the other describing, in lush detail, her erotic experiences." Based on Hans' claims and as a result of his long dedication, Amsler and Freeman think that,

> She was first put off with declarations of love and promises by her seducer, then halfway forsaken for a longer period of time. He was a well-off owner of a newspaper, some years her senior, living in a neighboring town, and standing at the beginning of his professional career. His name was Samuel Bowles. He became a distinguished and politically influential man. He was married. However, this dilemma did not bother him long. Cunningly, he started befriending her brother and father in such a way that he would occasionally be welcomed as an overnight guest in the Dickinson house.
>
> Emily submitted to being his "White Lady" in Amherst. This relationship lasted for two decades, though with repeated interruptions. Two entanglements almost broke it up. One was a short love affair with another woman, Kate Scott Anthon, with whom she tried to escape from the claws of her "man of the world lover." He reacted brutally and abused her in a tripartite love affair. The other was the appearance of another "White Lady," Maria Whitney, who then rose to occupy first place in the affections of her mighty master.

Maria Whitney could be the "Amphitrite" who stands between the speaker and the sea-god Poseidon, the man she desires in "The Drop, that wrestles in the Sea—," the second poem of fascicle 11, which, interestingly, was sent in a letter to Bowles. This could be true, but should not be surprising. Apart from this affair that Bowles had with Maria Whitney, we also know about Dickinson's brother

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[117] Amsler, R. and Freeman, M. H. (2001), 'Emily Dickinson's Double Language: An Introduction to the Writings of Hans W. Luescher,' in Gudrun M. Grabher and Martina Antretter (eds.), *Emily Dickinson At Home.* Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2001, pages 249-66.

Austin and Mabel Todd's affair (while Austin was still married to Susan) and the many of Dickinson's letters that were mutilated and destroyed intentionally by both Austin and Todd in order to hide Dickinson's intimate details about her private life, especially her intimate letters to Susan. But one may stop to wonder whether Dickinson's poems are subjective or objective. There is always the danger of making a subjective judgement. But the love probability can be derived from the poems analytically, and the 19 love poems in the three fascicles do carry biographical implications. That only a few of Dickinson's poems were published in her lifetime may serve as a reminder of this fact. The pathos of Dickinson's love is obvious in the way she cherishes memories of the past; she bargains for a glimpse of her beloved's face, living out her days "in the smallest parlor in the world" (L 225), her heart.

George Mamunes is one among other writers who investigated Dickinson's love. As regards the parting poem J322-Fr325, "There came a Day—at Summer's full—" located in fascicle 13 (the fascicle where the parting from the lover happens), Mamunes believes that Benjamin Franklin Newton is the mysterious other: "they almost certainly avoided expressions of outright love. Ben (Benjamin) had no family pedigree, no college degree, and no immediate income. His health was sub-marginal, and his religious views an affront to almost everyone in Amherst" (16). So, one could assume that Dickinson was attracted to Newton's open-minded character, since she was opposed to organized religion, too. Mamunes wonders if Dickinson and Newton had a parting walk and talk in early autumn of 1849 "during the run-up to Ben's departure to Worcester and a law career." Since the poem was written in 1862, Mamunes says that, "It is not unusual for any one of us to remember, many years later, the time, the setting, some of the exact words and all of the emotions of the day that someone we loved walked out of our lives. In 1862 Emily Dickinson memorialized a parting scene between two people who apparently meant the world to one another" (16). Mamunes means, "There came a Day—at Summer's full—," a poem that has also been recognized by Sharon Cameron, among others, and on which I based my analysis of fascicle 13.

The approach I have taken in this thesis is prone to seeming unconcerned with this private matter. But, as I said at the very beginning, I am not here concerned to argue the identity of the lover [s]; I do not "Split the Lark" for the sake of discovering "the Music" (J861-Fr905). However shallow or disappointing this may seem to some, it was a poetic journey through which few questions have been asked, because living the poetry was sufficient. If we start to analyze everything that Dickinson wrote with the intention to make everything have the meaning we want them to mean, it would be easier, and perhaps shorter, to wait until "subterfuge—is done." I understand, though, again, as Frederick J. Pohl stressed, some 83 years ago, that "the full significance of many of Emily's poems is a locked chamber to which the identity of the lover is the only key" (469).

Of course, there are reasons to believe that love afforded Dickinson more pain than peace, and fascicle 11 is a testimony to this. The poems describe expectancy, distance, desire, "Ah, Moon—and Star!" and fascicles 12 and 13 testify to inner torment after losing her love. She turns to nature in a dramatic way, to "naturalize loss," as Sharon Cameron has observed (101).

The resulting growth sensed in fascicle 13 is hers; she looks at, and gets inspired by heroes from the past who went through agony, in history books, and that makes her suffering perhaps easier. It is difficult to perceive growth within a singular poem, because of the poems' minimalistic character, intended to reach the poetic goal instantly. But reading the poems within the context of the fascicles can indeed provide a series of events and ideas and occurrences. Still, Dickinson's fascicles should be studied as a whole, to understand a lifetime of dedication, of building a literary space and a long-lasting reputation. But it is doubtful that one could find out and reveal a secret that, as Emily Dickinson stated, will last until,

> When Figures show their royal Front—
> And Mists—are carved away,
> Behold the Atom—I preferred—
> To all the lists of Clay! J664-Fr279

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Appendices

In the following transcripts of F11, F12, and P13, spelling, punctuation and capitalisation are according to R. W. Franklin *The Poems of Emily Dickinson, Variorum Edition.*

I. Fascicle 11

(J283-Fr254)

A Mien to move a Queen—
Half Child—Half Heroine—
An Orleans in the eye
That puts it's manner by
For humbler Company
When none are near
Even a Tear—
It's frequent Visitor—

A Bonnet like a Duke—
And yet a Wren's Peruke
Were not so shy
Of Goer by—
And Hands—so slight,
They would elate a sprite
With merriment—

A Voice that alters—Low
And on the ear can go
Like Let of Snow—
Or shift supreme—
As tone of Realm
On Subjects Diadem—

Too small—to fear—
Too distant—to endear—
And so Men Compromise—
And just—revere—

(J284-Fr255)

The Drop, that wrestles in the Sea—
Forgets her own locality—
As I—toward Thee—

She knows herself an incense small—
Yet *small*—she sighs—if *all* is *all*—

How *larger*—be?

The Ocean—smiles—at her Conceit—
But *She,* forgetting Amphitrite—
Pleads—"Me"?

(J285-Fr256)

The Robin's my Criterion for Tune—
Because I grow—where Robins do—
But, were I Cuckoo born—
I'd swear by him—
The ode familiar—rules the Noon—
The Buttercup's, my whim for Bloom—
Because, we're Orchard sprung—
But, were I Britain born,
I'd Daisies spurn—

None but the Nut—October fit—
Because—through dropping it,
The Seasons flit—I'm taught—
Without the Snow's Tableau
Winter, were lie—to me—
Because I see—New Englandly—
The Queen, discerns like me—
Provincially—

(J243-Fr257)

I've known a Heaven, like a Tent—
To wrap it's shining Yards—
Pluck up it's stakes, and disappear—
Without the sound of Boards
Or Rip of Nail—Or Carpenter—
But just the miles of Stare—
That signalize a Show's Retreat—
In North America—

No Trace—no Figment—of the Thing
That dazzled, Yesterday,
No Ring—no Marvel—
Men, and Feats—
Dissolved as utterly—

As Bird's far Navigation
Discloses just a Hue—
A plash of Oars, a Gaiety—
Then swallowed up, of View.

(J223-Fr258)

I Came to buy a smile—today—
But just a single smile—
The smallest one opon your face
Will suit me just as well—
The one that no one else would miss
It shone so very small—
I'm pleading at the "counter"—Sir—
Could you afford to sell—

I've Diamonds—on my fingers—
You know what Diamonds are?
I've Rubies—like the Evening Blood—
And Topaz—like the star!
'Twould be "a Bargain" for a Jew
Say—May I have it—Sir?

(J287-Fr259)

A Clock stopped—
Not the Mantel's—
Geneva's farthest skill
Cant put the puppet bowing—
That just now dangled still—

An awe came on the Trinket!
The Figures hunched—with pain—
Then quivered out of Decimals—
Into Degreeless noon—

It will not stir for Doctor's—
This Pendulum of snow—
The Shopman importunes it—
While cool—concernless No—

Nods from the Gilded pointers—
Nods from the Seconds slim—
Decades of Arrogance between

The Dial life—
And Him—

(J288-Fr260)

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you—Nobody—too?
Then there's a pair of us!
Dont tell! they'd banish us—you know!

How dreary—to be—Somebody!
How public—like a Frog—
To tell your name—the livelong June—
To an admiring Bog!

(J245-Fr261)

I held a Jewel in my fingers—
And went to sleep—
The day was warm, and winds were prosy—
I said "'Twill keep"—

I woke—and chid my honest fingers,
The Gem was gone—
And now, an Amethyst remembrance
Is all I own—

(J244-Fr242)

It is easy to work when the soul is at play—
But when the soul is in pain—
The hearing him put his playthings up
Makes work difficult—then—

It is simple, to ache in the Bone, or the Rind—
But Gimblets—among the nerve—
Mangle daintier—terribler—
Like a Panther in the Glove—

(J286-Fr243)

That after Horror—that—'twas us—
That passed the mouldering Pier—
Just as the Granite crumb let go—
Our Savior, by a Hair—

A second more, had dropped too deep
For Fisherman to plumb—
The very profile of the Thought
Puts Recollection numb—

The possibility—to pass
Without a moment's Bell—
Into Conjecture's presence
Is like a Face of Steel—
That suddenly looks into our's
With a metallic grin—
The Cordiality of Death—
Who drills his Welcome in—

(J240-Fr262)

Ah, Moon, and Star!
You are very far—
But were no one
Farther than you—
Do you think I'd stop
For a Firmament—
Or a Cubit—or so?

I could borrow a Bonnet
Of the Lark—
And a Chamois' silver Boot—
And a stirrup of an Antelope—
And be with you—tonight!

But, Moon, and Star,
Though you're very far—
There is one—farther than you—
He—is more than a firmament—from me—
So I can never go!

(J317-Fr263)

Just so—Jesus—raps—
He—does'nt weary—
Last—at the Knocker—
And first—at the Bell.
Then—on divinest tiptoe—standing—
Might He but spy the lady's soul—
When He—retires—
Chilled—or weary—
It will be ample time for—me—
Patient—opon the steps—until then—
Heart! I am knocking—low at thee.

(J246-Fr264)

Forever at His side to walk—
The smaller of the two!
Brain of His Brain—
Blood of His Blood—
Two lives—One Being—now—

Forever of His fate to taste—
If grief—the largest part—
If joy—to put my piece away
For that beloved Heart—

All life—to know each other
Whom we can never learn—
And bye and bye—a Change—
Called Heaven—
Rapt neighborhoods of men—
Just finding out—what puzzled us
Without the lexicon!

(J221-Fr265)

It cant be "Summer"!
That—got through!
It's early—yet—for "Spring"!
There's that long town of White—to cross—
Before the blackbirds sing!
It cant be "Dying"!
It's too Rouge—

The Dead shall go in White—
So Sunset shuts my question down
With Cuffs of Chrysolite!

(J247-Fr266)

What would I give to see his face?
I'd give—I'd give my life—of course—
But *that* is not enough!
Stop just a minute—let me think!
I'd give my biggest Bobolink!
That makes *two*—*Him*—and *Life*!
You know who "*June*" is—
I'd give *her*—
Roses a day from Zinzebar—
And Lily tubes—like wells—
Bees—by the furlong—
Straits of Blue—
Navies of Butterflies—sailed thro'—
And dappled Cowslip Dells—

Then I have "shares" in Primrose "Banks"—
Daffodil Dowries—spicy "*Stocks*"—
Dominions—broad as Dew—
Bags of Doubloons—adventurous Bees
Brought me—from firmamental seas—
And Purple—from Peru—

Now—have I bought it—
"Shylock"? Say!
Sign me the Bond!
"I vow to pay
To Her—who pledges *this*—
One hour—of her Sovreign's face"!
Extatic Contract!
Niggard Grace!
My *Kingdom's worth* of Bliss!

(J1737-Fr267)

Rearrange a "Wife's" Affection!
When they dislocate my Brain!
Amputate my freckled Bosom!
Make me bearded like a man!

Blush, my spirit, in thy Fastness—
Blush, my unacknowledged clay—
Seven years of troth have taught thee
More than Wifehood ever may!

Love that never leaped its socket—
Trust entrenched in narrow pain—
Constancy thro' fire—awarded—
Anguish—bare of anodyne!

Burden—borne so far triumphant—
None suspect me of the crown,
For I wear the "Thorns" till *Sunset*—
Then—my Diadem put on.

Big my Secret but it's *bandaged*—
It will never get away
Till the Day its Weary Keeper
Leads it through the Grave to thee.

(J248-Fr268)

Why—do they shut me out of Heaven?
Did I sing—too loud?
But—I can say a little "minor"
Timid as a Bird!
Would'nt the Angels try me—
Just—once—more—
Just—see—if I troubled them—
But don't—shut the door!
Oh, if I—were the Gentleman
In the "White Robe"—
And they—were the little Hand—that knocked—
Could—I—forbid?

(J249-Fr269)

Wild nights—Wild nights!
Were I with thee
Wild nights should be
Our luxury!

Futile—the winds—

To a Heart in port—
Done with the Compass—
Done with the Chart!

Rowing in Eden—
Ah—the Sea!
Might I but moor—tonight—
In thee!

(J250-Fr270)

I shall keep singing!
Birds will pass me
On their way to Yellower Climes—
Each—with a Robin's expectation—
I—with my Redbreast—
And my Rhymes—

Late—when I take my place in summer—
But—I shall bring a fuller tune—
Vespers—are sweeter than matins—Signor—
Morning—only the seed—of noon—

(J251-Fr271)

Over the fence—
Strawberries—grow—
Over the fence—
I could climb—if I tried, I know—
Berries are nice!

But—if I stained my Apron—
God would certainly scold!
Oh, dear—I guess if He were a Boy—
He'd—climb—if He could!

II. Fascicle 12

(J214-Fr207)

I taste a liquor never brewed—
From Tankards scooped in Pearl—
Not all the Frankfort Berries
Yield such an Alcohol!

Inebriate of air—am I—
And Debauchee of Dew—
Reeling—thro' endless summer days—
From inns of molten Blue—

When "Landlords" turn the drunken Bee
Out of the Foxglove's door—
When Butterflies—renounce their "drams"—
I shall but drink the more!

Till Seraphs swing their snowy Hats—
And Saints—to windows run—
To see the little Tippler
From Manzanilla come!

(J161-Fr208)

A feather from the Whippowil
That everlasting—sings!
Whose galleries—are Sunrise—
Whose Opera—the Springs—
Whose Emerald Nest the Ages spin
Of mellow—murmuring thread—
Whose Beryl Egg, what School Boys hunt
In "Recess—" Overhead!

(J181-Fr209)

I lost a World—the other day!
Has Anybody found?
You'll know it by the Row of Stars
Around it's forehead bound!

A Rich man—might not notice it—

Yet—to my frugal Eye,
Of more Esteem than Ducats—
Oh find it—Sir—for me!

(J182-Fr210)

If I should'nt be alive
When the robins come,
Give the one in Red Cravat
A Memorial crumb.

If I could'nt thank you,
Being fast asleep,
You will know I'm trying
With my Granite lip!

(J183-Fr211)

I've heard an Organ talk, sometimes—
In a Cathedral Aisle,
And understood no word it said—
Yet held my breath, the while—

And risen up—and gone away,
A more Bernardine Girl—
Yet—knew not what was done to me
In that old Chapel Aisle.

(J184-Fr212)

A transport one cannot contain
May yet, a transport be—
Though God forbid it lift the lid,
Unto it's Extasy!

A Diagram—of Rapture!
A sixpence at a show—
With Holy Ghosts in Cages!
The *Universe* would go!

(J185-Fr202)

"Faith" is a fine invention
When Gentlemen can *see*—
But *Microscopes* are prudent
In an Emergency.

(J293-Fr292)

I got so I could hear his name—
Without—Tremendous gain—
That Stop-sensation—on my Soul—
And Thunder—in the Room—

I got so I could walk across
That Angle in the floor,
Where he turned so, and I turned—how—
And all our Sinew tore—

I got so I could stir the Box—
In which his letters grew
Without that forcing, in my breath—
As Staples—driven through—

Could dimly recollect a Grace—
I think, they called it "God"—
Renowned to ease Extremity—
When Formula, had failed—

And shape my Hands—
Petition's way,
Tho' ignorant of a word
That Ordination—utters—

My Business—with the Cloud,
If any Power behind it, be,
Not subject to Despair—
It care—in some remoter way,
For so minute affair
As Misery—
Itself, too great, for interrupting—more—

(J263-293)

A single Screw of Flesh
Is all that pins the Soul
That stands for Deity, to mine,
Opon my side the Vail—

Once witnessed of the Gauze—
It's name is put away
As far from mine, as if no plight
Had printed yesterday,

In tender—solemn Alphabet,
My eyes just turned to see—
When it was smuggled by my sight
Into Eternity—

More Hands—to hold—These are but Two—
One more new-mailed Nerve
Just granted, for the Peril's sake—
Some striding—Giant—Love—

So greater than the Gods can show,
They slink before the Clay,
That not for all their Heaven can boast
Will let it's Keepsake—go

(J264-Fr294)

A Weight with Needles on the pounds—
To push, and pierce, besides—
That if the Flesh resist the Heft—
The puncture—Cooly tries—

That not a pore be overlooked
Of all this Compound Frame—
As manifold for Anguish—
As Species—be—for name.

(J217-Fr295)

Savior! I've no one else to tell—
And so I trouble *thee*.
I am the one forgot thee so—
Dost thou remember me?
Nor, for myself, I came so far—
That were the little load—
I brought thee the imperial Heart
I had not strength to hold—
The Heart I carried in my own—
Till mine too heavy grew—
Yet—strangest—*heavier since it went—*
Is it too large for you?

(J265-Fr296)

Where Ships of Purple—gently toss—
On Seas of Daffodil—
Fantastic Sailors—mingle—
And then—the Wharf is still!

(J266-Fr297)

This—is the land—the Sunset washes—
These—are the Banks of the Yellow Sea—
Where it rose—or whither it rushes—
These—are the Western Mystery!

Night after Night
Her Purple traffic
Strews the landing—with Opal Bales—
Merchantmen—poise opon Horizons—
Dip—and vanish like Orioles!

(J294-Fr298)

The Doomed—regard the Sunrise
With different Delight—
Because—when next it burns abroad
They doubt to witness it—

The Man—to die—tomorrow—

Harks for the Meadow Bird—
Because it's Music stirs the Axe
That clamors for his head—

Joyful—to whom the Sunrise
Precedes Enamored—Day—
Joyful—for whom the Meadow Bird
Has ought but Elegy!

(J225-Fr197)

Jesus! thy Crucifix
Enable thee to guess
The smaller size!

Jesus! thy second face
Mind thee in Paradise
Of Our's!

(J267-Fr299)
Did we disobey Him?
Just one time!
Charged us to forget Him—
But we could'nt learn!

Were Himself—such a Dunce—
What would we—do?
Love the dull lad—best—
Oh, would'nt you?

(J295-Fr300)

Unto like Story—Trouble has enticed me—
How Kinsmen fell—
Brothers and Sisters—who preferred the Glory—
And their young will
Bent to the Scaffold, or in Dungeons—chanted—
Till God's full time—
When they let go the ignominy—smiling—
And Shame went still—

Unto guessed Crests, my moaning fancy, leads me,
Worn fair

By Heads rejected—in the lower country—
Of honors there—
Such spirit makes her perpetual mention,
That I—grown bold—
Step martial—at my Crucifixion
As Trumpets—rolled—

Feet, small as mine—have marched in Revolution
Firm to the Drum—
Hands—not so stout—hoisted them—in witness—
When Speech went numb—
Let me not shame their sublime deportments—
Drilled bright—
Beckoning—Etruscan invitation—
Toward Light—

(J296-Fr301)

One Year ago—jots what?
God—spell the word! I—cant—
Was't Grace? Not that—
Was't Glory? That—will do—
Spell slower—Glory—

Such anniversary shall be—
Sometimes—not often—in Eternity—
When farther Parted, than the common Wo—
Look - feed opon each other's faces—so—
In doubtful meal, if it be possible
Their Banquet's real—

I tasted—careless—then—
I did not know the Wine
Came once a World—Did you?
Oh, had you told me so—
This Thirst would blister—easier—now—
You said it hurt you—most—
Mine—was an Acorn's Breast—
And could not know how fondness grew
In Shaggier Vest—
Perhaps—I could'nt—
But, had you looked in—
A Giant—eye to eye with you, had been—
No Acorn—then—

So—Twelve months ago—
We breathed—
Then dropped the Air—
Which bore it best?
Was this—the patientest—
Because it was a Child, you know—
And could not value—Air?

If to be "Elder"—mean most pain—
I'm old enough, today, I'm certain—then—
As old as thee—how soon?
One—Birthday more—or Ten?
Let me—choose!
Ah, Sir, None!

(J297-Fr302)

It's like the Light—
A fashionless Delight—
It's like the Bee—
A dateless—Melody—

It's like the Woods—
Private—Like the Breeze—
Phraseless—yet it stirs
The proudest Trees—

It's like the morning—
Best—when it's done—
And the Everlasting Clocks—
Chime—Noon!

(J298-Fr303)

Alone, I cannot be—
The Hosts—do visit me—
Recordless Company—
Who baffle Key—

They have no Robes, nor Names—
No Almanacs—nor Climes—
But general Homes
Like Gnomes—

Their Coming, may be known
By Couriers within—
Their going—is not—
For they're never gone—

(J273-Fr330)

He put the Belt around my life—
I heard the Buckle snap—
And turned away, imperial,
My Lifetime folding up—
Deliberate, as a Duke would do
A Kingdom's Title Deed—
Henceforth—a Dedicated sort—
A Member of the Cloud—

Yet not too far to come at call—
And do the little Toils
That make the Circuit of the Rest—
And deal occasional smiles
To lives that stoop to notice mine—
And kindly ask it in—
Whose invitation, know you not
For Whom I must decline?

(J274-Fr331)

The only Ghost I ever saw
Was dressed in Mechlin—so—
He had no sandal on his foot—
And stepped like flakes of snow—

His Mien, was soundless, like the Bird—
But rapid—like the Roe—
His fashions, quaint, Mosaic—
Or haply, Mistletoe—

His conversation—seldom—
His laughter, like the Breeze
That dies away in Dimples
Among the pensive Trees—

Our interview—was transient—
Of me, himself was shy—

And God forbid I look behind—
Since that appalling Day!

(J275-Fr332)

Doubt Me! My Dim Companion!
Why, God, would be content
With but a fraction of the Life—
Poured thee, without a stint—
The whole of me—forever—
What more the Woman can,
Say quick, that I may dower thee
With last Delight I own!

It cannot be my spirit—
For that was thine, before—
I ceded all of Dust I knew—
What Opulence the more
Had I—a freckled Maiden
Whose farthest of Degree,
Was—that she might—
Some distant Heaven,
Dwell timidly—with thee

Sift her, from Brow to Barefoot!
Strain till last Surmise—
Drop, like a Tapestry, away,
Before the Fire's Eyes—
Winnow her finest fondness—
But hallow just the snow
Intact, in Everlasting flake—
Oh, Caviler, for you!

(J276-Fr333)

Many a phrase has the English language—
I have heard but one—
Low as the laughter of the Cricket,
Loud, as the Thunder's Tongue—

Murmuring, like old Caspian Choirs,
When the Tide's a'lull—
Saying itself in new inflection—

Like a Whippowil—

Breaking in bright Orthography
On my simple sleep—
Thundering it's Prospective—
Till I stir, and weep—

Not for the Sorrow, done me—
But the push of Joy—
Say it again, Saxon!
Hush—Only to me!

(J321-Fr334)

Of all the Sounds despatched abroad—
There's not a charge to me
Like that old measure in the Boughs
That phraseless Melody—
The Wind does—working like a Hand
Whose fingers brush the Sky—
Then quiver down—with Tufts of Tune—
Permitted men—and me—

Inheritance it is—to us—
Beyond the Art to Earn—
Beyond the trait to take away—
By Robber—since the Gain
Is gotten, not with fingers—
And inner than the Bone—
Hid golden—for the whole of Days—
And even in the Urn—
I cannot vouch the merry Dust
Do not arise and play—
In some odd fashion of it's own—
Some quainter Holiday—

When Winds go round and round, in Bands—
And thrum opon the Door—
And Birds take places—
Overhead—
To bear them Orchestra—

I crave him grace—of Summer Boughs—
If such an Outcast be—
He never heard that fleshless Chant

Rise solemn, in the Tree—
As if some Caravan of sound
On Deserts, in the Sky
Had broken Ran—
Then knit—and passed—
In Seamless Company—

(J514-Fr335)

Her smile was shaped like other smiles—
The Dimples ran along—
And still it hurt you, as some Bird
Did hoist herself, to sing,
Then recollect a Ball, she got—
And hold opon the Twig,
Convulsive, while the Music crashed—
Like Beads—among the Bog—

(J353-Fr335)

A happy lip—breaks sudden—
It does’nt state you how
It contemplated—smiling—
Just consummated—now—
But this one, wears it’s merriment
So patient—like a pain—
Fresh gilded—to elude the eyes
Unqualified, to scan—

III. Fascicle 13

(J289-Fr311)

I know some lonely Houses off the Road
A Robber'd like the look of—
Wooden barred,
And Windows hanging low,
Inviting to—
A Portico,
Where two could creep—
One—hand the Tools—
The other peep—
To make sure all's asleep—
Old fashioned eyes—
Not easy to surprise!

How orderly the Kitchen'd look, by night—
With just a Clock—
But they could gag the Tick—
And Mice wont bark—
And so the Walls—dont tell—
None—will—

A pair of Spectacles ajar just stir—
An Almanac's aware—
Was it the Mat—winked,
Or a nervous Star?
The Moon—slides down the stair—
To see who's there!

There's plunder—where—
Tankard, or Spoon—
Earring—or Stone—
A Watch—Some Ancient Brooch
To match the Grandmama—
Staid sleeping—there—

Day—rattles—too—
Stealth's—slow—
The Sun has got as far
As the third Sycamore—
Screams Chanticleer
"Who's there"?

And Echoes—Trains away,
Sneer—"Where"!
While the old Couple, just astir,
Fancy the Sunrise—left the door ajar!

(J252-Fr312)

I can wade Grief—
Whole Pools of it—
I'm used to that—
But the least push of Joy
Breaks up my feet—
And I tip—drunken—
Let no Pebble—smile—
'Twas the New Liquor—
That was all!

Power is only Pain—
Stranded—thro' Discipline,
Till Weights—will hang—
Give Balm—to Giants—
And they'll wilt, like Men—
Give Himmaleh—
They'll carry—Him!

(J253-Fr313)

You see I cannot see—your lifetime—
I must guess—
How many times it ache for me—today—Confess—
How many times for my far sake
The brave eyes film—
But I guess guessing hurts—
Mine—get so dim!

Too vague—the face—
My own—so patient—covets—
Too far—the strength—
My timidness enfolds—
Haunting the Heart—
Like her translated faces—
Teazing the want—
It—only—can suffice!

(J254-Fr314)

"Hope" is the thing with feathers—
That perches in the soul—
And sings the tune without the words—
And never stops—at all—

And sweetest—in the Gale—is heard—
And sore must be the storm—
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm—

I've heard it in the chillest land—
And on the strangest Sea—
Yet—never—in Extremity,
It asked a crumb—of me.

(J255-Fr315)

To die—takes just a little while—
They say it does'nt hurt—
It's only fainter—by degrees—
And then—it's out of sight—

A darker Ribbon—for a Day—
A Crape opon the Hat—
And then the pretty sunshine comes—
And helps us to forget—

The absent—mystic—creature—
That but for love of us—
Had gone to sleep—that soundest time—
Without the weariness—

(J256-Fr316)

If I'm lost—now—
That I was found—
Shall still my transport be—
That once—on me—those Jasper Gates
Blazed open—suddenly—

That in my awkward—gazing—face—
The Angels—softly peered—
And touched me with their fleeces,
Almost as if they cared—
I'm banished—now—you know it—
How foreign that can be—
You'll know—Sir—when the Savior's face
Turns so—away from you—

(J257-Fr317)

Delight is as the flight—
Or in the Ratio of it,
As the Schools would say—
The Rainbow's way—
A Skein
Flung colored, after Rain,
Would suit as bright,
Except that flight
Were Aliment—

"If it would last"
I asked the East,
When that Bent Stripe
Struck up my childish
Firmament—
And I, for glee,
Took Rainbows, as the common way,
And empty skies
The Eccentricity—

And so with Lives—
And so with Butterflies—
Seen magic—through the fright
That they will cheat the sight—
And Dower latitudes far on—
Some sudden morn—
Our portion—in the fashion—
Done—

(J219-Fr318)

She sweeps with many-colored Brooms—
And leaves the shreds behind—

Oh Housewife in the Evening West—
Come back—and—dust the Pond!

You dropped a Purple Ravelling in—
You dropped an Amber thread—
And now you've littered all the East
With Duds of Emerald!

And still, she plies her spotted Brooms—
And still the Aprons fly,
Till Brooms fade softly into stars—
And then I come away—

(J290-Fr319)

Of Bronze—and Blaze—
The North—tonight—
So adequate—it forms—
So preconcerted with itself—
So distant—to alarms—
An Unconcern so sovreign
To Universe, or me—
Infects my simple spirit
With Taints of Majesty—
Till I take vaster attitudes—
And strut opon my stem—
Disdaining Men, and Oxygen,
For Arrogance of them—

My Splendors, are Menagerie—
But their Competeless Show
Will entertain the Centuries
When I, am long ago,
An Island in dishonored Grass—
Whom none but Daisies, know—

(J258-Fr320)

There's a certain Slant of light,
Winter Afternoons—
That oppresses, like the Heft
Of Cathedral Tunes—

Heavenly Hurt, it gives us—

We can find no scar,
But internal difference—
Where the Meanings, are—

None may teach it—Any—
'Tis the Seal Despair—
An imperial affliction
Sent us of the Air—

When it comes, the Landscape listens—
Shadows—hold their breath—
When it goes, 'tis like the Distance
On the look of Death—

(J228-Fr321)

Blazing in Gold—and
Quenching—in Purple!
Leaping—like Leopards the sky—
Then—at the feet of the old Horizon—
Laying it's spotted face—to die!

Stooping as low as the kitchen window—
Touching the Roof—
And tinting the Barn—
Kissing it's Bonnet to the Meadow—
And the Juggler of Day—is gone!

(J259-Fr322)

Good Night! Which put the Candle out?
A jealous Zephyr—not a doubt—
Ah, friend, you little knew
How long at that celestial wick
The Angels—labored diligent—
Extinguished—now—for you!

It might—have been the Light House spark—
Some Sailor—rowing in the Dark—
Had importuned to see!
It might—have been the Waning lamp
That lit the Drummer from the Camp
To purer Reveille!

(J260-Fr323)

Read—Sweet—how others—strove—
Till we—are stouter—
What they—renounced—
Till we—are less afraid—
How many times they—bore the faithful witness—
Till we—are helped—
As if a Kingdom—cared!

Read then—of faith—
That shone above the fagot—
Clear strains of Hymn
The River could not drown—
Brave names of Men—
And Celestial Women—
Passed out—of Record
Into—Renown!

(J261-Fr324)

Put up my lute!
What of—my Music!
Since the sole ear I cared to charm—
Passive—as Granite—laps my music—
Sobbing—will suit—as well as psalm!

Would but the "Memnon" of the Desert—
Teach me the strain
That vanquished Him—
When He—surrendered to the Sunrise—
Maybe—that—would awaken—them!

(J322-Fr325)

There came a day—at Summer's full—
Entirely for me—
I thought that such were for the Saints—
Where Resurrections—be—

The Sun—as common—went abroad—
The Flowers—accustomed—blew—
As if no soul—that solstice passed—

Which maketh all things—new—

The time was scarce profaned—by speech—
The falling of a word
Was needless—as at Sacrament—
The *Wardrobe*—of Our Lord!

Each was to each—the sealed Church—
Permitted to commune—*this* time—
Lest we too awkward show—
At supper of "the Lamb."

The hours slid fast—as hours will—
Clutched tight—by greedy hands—
So—faces on two Decks—look back—
Bound to *opposing*—lands.

And so when all the time had leaked—
Without external sound—
Each bound the other's Crucifix—
We gave no other Bond—

Sufficient Troth—
that we shall rise—
Deposed—at length the Grave—
To that new—Marriage—
Justified—through Calvaries—of Love!

(J262-Fr326)

The lonesome for they know not What—
The Eastern Exiles—be—
Who strayed beyoned the Amber line
Some madder Holiday—

And ever since—the purple Moat
They strive to climb—in vain—
As Birds—that tumble from the clouds
Do fumble at the strain—

The Blessed Ether—taught them—
Some Transatlantic Morn—
When Heaven—was too common—to miss—
Too sure–to dote opon!

(J291-Fr327)

How the old Mountains drip with Sunset
How the Hemlocks burn—
How the Dun Brake is draped in Cinder
By the Wizard Sun—

How the old Steeples hand the Scarlet
Till the Ball is full—
Have I the lip of the Flamingo
That I dare to tell?

Then, how the Fire ebbs like Billows—
Touching all the Grass
With a departing—Sapphire—feature—
As a Duchess passed—

How a small Dusk crawls on the Village
Till the Houses blot
And the odd Flambeau, no men carry
Glimmer on the Street—

How it is Night—in Nest and Kennel—
And where was the Wood—
Just a Dome of Abyss is Bowing
Into Solitude—

These are the Visions flitted Guido—
Titian—never told—
Domenichino dropped his pencil—
Paralyzed, with Gold—

(J325-Fr328)

Of Tribulation, these are They,
Denoted by the White—
The Spangled Gowns, a lesser Rank
Of Victors—designate—

All these—did Conquer—
But the ones who overcame most times—
Wear nothing commoner than snow—
No Ornament, but Palms—

Surrender—is a sort unknown—
On this superior soil—
Defeat—an outgrown Anguish—
Remembered, as the Mile

Our panting Ancle barely passed—
When Night devoured the Road—
But we—stood whispering in the House—
And all we said—was “Saved”!

(J292-Fr329)

If your Nerve, deny you—
Go above your Nerve—
He can lean against the Grave,
If he fear to swerve—

That’s a steady posture—
Never any bend
Held of those Brass arms—
Best Giant made—

If your Soul seesaw—
Lift the Flesh door—
The Poltroon wants Oxygen—
Nothing more—