LOCHRIDGE, DOROTHY LYNN. A Study in the Sexuality of Emily Dickinson, the Spider and the Flower: manifest homosexuality and its significance to critical comprehension of the poetry and the poet. (1970)
Directed by: Dr. Arthur W. Dixon. pp. 131

In Ancestors' Brocades, Millicent Todd Bingham suggested that Emily Dickinson's supposed love affair with a married man was simply a product of the poet's imagination. In Bolts of Melody she remarked that poems describing a love relationship between two women, some of them in terms of sex and marriage, were "frankly autobiographical." In The Riddle of Emily Dickinson, Rebecca Patterson advocated Kate Scott Turner (Anthon) as the "too-much-loved woman friend" (Bingham's phrase), and in fact as the inspiration for all of Emily Dickinson's love poetry.

It is the purpose of this thesis to support Mrs. Patterson's opinions--that Emily Dickinson was homosexual and that Mrs. Turner was the major object of her emotions--and in doing so, to work toward critical comprehension of the poetry and the poet.

Throughout Emily Dickinson's publishing history there are evidences of attitudes on the part of her family, her editors, and her critics, all of which may be explained by the theory that the poet was homosexual.

This theory is substantiated when one examines the letters and poems. Lack of adequate emotional relationship with both parents in her early childhood placed the poet in an essentially bisexual position that seems to have resolved itself into homosexual inclinations from her youth into the late years when her love began to turn toward Judge Otis Lord: developing emotional patterns may be traced through the letters to Abiah Root, Susan Gilbert (Dickinson) and Kate Scott Turner (Anthon), through the short, cryptic notes of the poet's later years, and finally in the correspondence with Judge Lord.

In the specifically homosexual poems, which repeat much of the emotional content of the letters, the poet describes and celebrates the love of Her, elects it as a destiny worth even death, and traces a particular relationship from beginning to end, from anticipation to a defeat resembling death in life.

Emily Dickinson employs sexual symbolism in many other poems. Upon interpretation one finds that these poems as well are concerned with the homosexual theme. More important, one finds that the symbols--and the homosexual theme--serve to interpret poems that otherwise would remain obscure, incomprehensible, or nonsensical.

In these poems the poet says that her sexuality is a thing that must be concealed, she debates the moral issue involved, and finally she writes about a love that has become a haunting, pursuing horror and describes the psychological imprisonment of a mind which cannot escape the moral bondage that condemns the love it will not let go.

Whatever the position of the male lover in Emily Dickinson's life and works, the beloved woman is of major significance in both, and knowledge of the poet's homosexuality serves effectively in working toward critical comprehension of the poetry and the poet.

A STUDY IN THE SEXUALITY OF EMILY DICKINSON, THE SPIDER AND THE FLOWER: MANIFEST HOMOSEXUALITY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TO CRITICAL COMPREHENSION OF THE POETRY AND THE POET

by

Dorothy L. Lochridge

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Arthur W. Dixon
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APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduage School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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> When realism comes into conflict with literature it loses every time, and we have preferred to take pleasure in the quaint oddities of those old maids, their neatnesses, their small timidities, the tea-caddy excitements of their gentle, scrubbed lives. Give literature a chance and it will always make a picture pretty.
>
> [Literary criticism] must make use of whatever may help it to understand one of the greatest American writers. In half a century it has not shown much understanding of that genius...
> (Vol. 190, pp. 602-605)

Literary criticism often reveals the mind of the critic more clearly than the works he criticizes. As such, it may dishonor those who create literature. It may in fact cause us to miss them altogether, or to see them as shadows of persons who fail somehow to take on viable human form. And so we come to ignore those things they say that contradict the shadows.

Emily Dickinson is far more comprehensible as a person and as a poet than we have let ourselves believe. But we must look at her realistically or we see only her shadow.

Bolts of Melody, a final volume of previously unpublished Dickinson poems, which came out in 1945, some fifty-nine years after the poet's death, contained poems about a love relationship between two women, some of them specifically describing that relationship in terms of sex and marriage. In her arrangement of the poems and in a section explaining

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that arrangement, Millicent Todd Bingham, who was the daughter of Miss Dickinson's original editor, singled out these poems as "frankly autobiographical," and suggested that they held a major position in the total biography and in fact the total poetry of Miss Dickinson. In Ancestors' Brocades, without presenting it as such, Mrs. Bingham provided sufficient source material to suggest that Emily Dickinson's whole peculiar publishing history was bound up in the concealment of the poet's homosexual tendencies, but in this same volume she suggested that the poet wrote of fantasied love affairs with gentlemen friends who knew nothing of her attachments to them. In Emily Dickinson's Home, Mrs. Bingham recommended a chronological approach to the poems as the proper course for the Dickinson biographer, and in doing so, once more made subtle but unmistakable reference to the homosexual poems as the core material in Dickinson biography.

Since the publication of Mrs. Bingham's works, the mainstream of Dickinson study has turned from pursuit of a real (male) lover to pursuit of an imaginary lover, attempting to prove his resemblance to one or another of the poet's gentlemen acquaintances.

Only one biographer, Rebecca Patterson, has attempted to examine the real relationship described in the homosexual poems. In The Riddle of Emily Dickinson, Mrs. Patterson reconstructed a love affair between the poet and Kate Scott Turner, who met the poet during a visit to Susan Dickinson and returned to Amherst repeatedly during the important years from 1859 to 1862.

Mrs. Patterson conducted a thorough investigation into the emotional biography of Mrs. Turner, the results of which serve to corroborate her thesis.

Many of Emily Dickinson's letters and other useful materials were not available at the time of Mrs. Patterson's study, or were available in partial and misdated form. The poems themselves were undated. Working with an unwieldy mass of material that was yet incomplete, Mrs. Patterson reconstructed a series of events that was certainly more accurate than not. She used portions of the available letters and information from the publishing history as well as the poems, yet in concentrating on biographical placement of her materials in order to prove a particular relationship, she did not present her evidence thoroughly and she weakened her case by mixing concrete evidence with other material that did not clearly support her thesis. The most notable examples of this are those love poems apparently addressed to a man, which do contain suggestive evidence to the contrary, but do not become proof of homosexuality upon the unsupported statement that they contain such evidence.

Mrs. Patterson's study was readily and thoroughly condemned. In recent years several Dickinson critics have discussed the poet's aversion to masculinity and/or approached the homosexual question briefly; none has supported Mrs. Patterson's thesis directly. It is my opinion that her case becomes thoroughly convincing when one goes back from it to a careful examination of Emily Dickinson's publishing history, her letters, and her poems. It is the intention of the present study to do that and in so doing to use procedures that are primarily biographical and psychological to gain critical comprehension of the poems. An important part of the study will be the exploration of contextual relationships between the letters and the poems which finally aids in our understanding of both.

In chapter one I will investigate the publishing history, in chapter two the letters, and in chapter three the obviously homosexual poems. In chapter four I will continue with the same approach, making greater use of Freudian analysis of symbols, both to present further biographical material and to interpret poems that otherwise remain obscure or even incomprehensible.

It is my opinion that these or similar procedures are useful and even necessary in seeing Emily Dickinson and her works realistically.

In a review of Rebecca Patterson's study, George Frisbie Whicher remarked:

> It might have been hoped that Emily Dickinson's own words would settle the question of her emotional attachments...[1]

I feel that they do.

[1] New York Herald Tribune Book Review, November 4, 1951, p. 21.

CHAPTER I

EMILY DICKINSON, 1886 TO 1968: FAMILY, EDITORS, AND CRITICS

This first chapter proposes to be a history of familial, editorial, and critical attitudes toward Emily Dickinson and her works from the time of her death to 1968, all of which attitudes become explicable on consideration of the theory that the poet was homosexual.[1]

On May 19, 1886, Austin Dickinson filed his sister's death certificate. Under Section Three, "Sex, and whether single, Married or Widowed," he wrote, "never married."[2] Whether or not it was intentional, this was prevarication.

Soon after Emily Dickinson's death, her sister, Lavinia burned her correspondence, purportedly without examining it,[3] and purportedly at Emily Dickinson's express command. Later certain letters appeared and were published, notably those from Helen Hunt praising Emily Dickinson's poetry and urging her to publish, and a lone, pastorly note from Charles

[1]For Rebecca Patterson's discussion of the same subject, see The Riddle of Emily Dickinson (Houghton, Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1951), pp. 15-32, 90-110, 417-420.

[2]Jay Leyda, The Years and Hours of Emily Dickinson (Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, 1960), II, p. 474.

[3]Martha Dickinson Bianchi, The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson (Houghton, Boston, 1924), p. 102; Millicent Todd Bingham, Ancestors' Brocades: The Literary Debut of Emily Dickinson (Harper, N. Y., 1945), p. 16.

Wadsworth.[4]

The poems, which Emily Dickinson had carefully arranged and sewed into small packets or volumes, were not burned. Of this, Mrs. Bianchi, her niece, said "Her sacred wishes were carried out by her family to the utmost--until they came to her own work....And in rescuing her work from the destruction to which she destined it in her naive panic before impending discovery, they were sure their decision would have been justified even by her...." (Life..., p. 102). In Ancestors' Brocades, Mrs. Bingham, the daughter of Emily Dickinson's first editor, apparently confirms Mrs. Bianchi's statement on this point (page 16); yet in the introduction to Bolts of Melody, which was published at the same time as Ancestors' Brocades, she specifically states that this was not so: "Emily died leaving no instructions as to what should be done with her poems. She did not ask to have them published nor--a fact which should be emphasized--did she ask to have them destroyed. Her part in them finished, she recklessly confided her life's work to the cosmos."[5]

Instead of burning the poems, Lavinia turned them over to Susan Dickinson, Austin's wife, who was to edit them for publication. As Austin's wife, Sue had a natural "family" concern in, and about, the publication of Emily's

[4]Millicent Todd Bingham remarks of these letters: "My Mother [Mabel Loomis Todd] did not tell me ... how they happened to have escaped Lavinia's first frenzy of destruction immediately following Emily's death...." (Ancestors' Brocades, p. 152).

[5]Emily Dickinson, Bolts of Melody: New Poems of..., ed. Millicent Todd Bingham (Harper, N. Y., 1945), p. xxviii.

poems. As Emily's confidante, she had been perhaps more consistently acquainted with Emily, the poet, with Emily's poetry, and with Emily's hopes for her poetry than had anyone else during Emily's lifetime. She seemed at first to agree with Lavinia that the poems should be published,[6] but after working on them for some time, she lost interest in the project. Lavinia retrieved the poems from Sue and took them to Mabel Loomis Todd,[7] who, with the assistance of Thomas Wentworth Higginson, published three volumes of poetry and one volume of letters in the years, 1890-1896.

There were problems. Sue's lack of interest in publication was not merely a lack of inclination to publish the poems herself. Bingham cites "opposition in the family" to the publication of the first volume of poems, and elaborates, quoting Mrs. Todd: "As the date of publication drew nearer, and it seemed that the poems were actually to appear, Vinnie became terrified. She feared lest Sue should get wind of the fact--that I had completed the task which she had failed to do. The consequences Vinnie dared not face...."[8] It was evidently considered necessary to keep from Sue the secret of Vinnie's intentions to continue with publication of the poems.

Sue's own remarks, when she learned that the poems were to be pub-

[6]"...It seemed to [her family] too much to ask of them to destroy this wealth of her inner genius, with its gift for the world of poets and kindred natures throughout all time. They knew that Emily Dickinson belonged not alone to them.... [Emily's] sister Lavinia and her brother Austin, were the ones to decide--technically--but it was the Sister Sue who realized that there had been visions of her own continuing in this world through her written words, long animating the quiet performance of daily routine by the white-robed little poet..." (Bianchi, Life..., p. 102).

[7]Bingham, Ancestors' Brocades, p. 18; and see Patterson, p. 15.

[8]Bingham, Ancestors' Brocades, pp. 59-61.

lished after all, indicate that her feelings about the matter involved more than personal jealousy of Mrs. Todd as editor. In a letter of December, 1890, to Colonel Higginson, she remarked, "I trust there may be no more personal detail in the newspaper articles. Emily Dickinson hated her peculiarities and shrank from any notice of them as a nerve from the knife. I sometimes shudder when I think of the world reading her thoughts minted in deep heartbroken convictions."[9] In a letter of February 8, 1891, to W. H. Ward, editor of The Independent, she wrote, "I was to have compiled the poems--but as I moved slowly, dreading publicity for us all, Lavinia was angry and a year ago took them from me."[10]

The matter of editing, itself, offered further difficulties. Emily Dickinson left many poems in semi-final draft, with no preference given as to final choice between words, making some selection necessary on the part of her editors. Bingham says about this, "Obliged so often to make a choice, [Todd and Higginson] might be tempted to go further, to change a word to fit their own preference--a dangerous leeway, for the thought is timeless while taste may change."[11] The changes made by these first editors were often attempts to regularize the verse, to make exact rhymes, to correct the syntax according to the poetic dictums of

[9] Bingham, Ancestors' Brocades, p. 86.

[10] Ibid., p. 115, and cited in Patterson, p. 15.

[11] Ibid., p. 38.

the day.[12] At times they were attempts to regularize in a broader sense. "A narrow Fellow in the Grass"[13] had been published anonymously in The Springfield Republican, on February 14, 1866. The following lines were printed as Emily Dickinson had written them:

> But when a Boy and Barefoot
> I more than once at Noon
>
> Have passed I thought a Whip Lash
> Unbraiding in the Sun...

When the poem was published under Emily Dickinson's name in the 1891 volume of Poems, the Boy was removed, and the line was printed in this manner:

> But when a Child and Barefoot...[14]

This seems at once a trivial change and an overly fastidious change. It is a change made by persons paying minute attention to a certain type of detail. Indications of that fastidious attention may be seen in the cor-

[12]Citing Bingham again: "The changes are in my mother's handwriting--most of them in order to make a rhyme...But whatever her motive... my mother did alter the wording of some of the poems" (Ancestors' Brocades, p. 335); and "In my mother's defense, I should repeat that she did these things to protect Emily...." (Ibid., p. 337).

[13]Emily Dickinson, The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Including variant readings critically compared with all known manuscripts, ed. Thomas H. Johnson, 3 vol. ed. (Harvard, Cambridge, 1955), poem no. 986. Hereafter the poems of Emily Dickinson will be cited by poem number, according to this edition, in parentheses, within the text of the study.

[14]In the 1955 edition, Johnson lists after each poem the poet's own variant words, and previous publications of the poem, with editorial changes made therein. Mr. Johnson will not be cited when such changes are discussed herein, unless he comments on the changes. There is no manuscript of the present poem containing the word Child.

respondence between Todd and Higginson. In a letter of July 18, 1891 to Mrs. Todd, Higginson says of a like matter, "I have combined the two "Juggler of Day" (228) poems... using the otter's window of course ... & making the juggler a woman, as is proper."[15] Decisions had to be made as to whether poems were proper as they stood--in the matter of sexual identities, as in matters of punctuation, rhyme, and syntax. It was considered proper for the sunset to be seen as feminine; the pronoun stood. It was not proper for the speaker, in a woman's poetry, to be seen as masculine, even as small masculine; the noun was changed.

Determining whether to change or let stand was not the entire matter: "Out of all the conflicting difficulties loomed one perpetual problem, a decision which confronted [Mrs. Todd] afresh with each poem--should it be published or not? Just how much shock, of form or of content, could the reader absorb?"[16] One solution to this problem was partial omission, yet this was not always sufficient. In the letter from Colonel Higginson to Mrs. Todd quoted above, the Colonel expressed his opinion as to publication of another poem (206): "I demur about 'The flower must not blame the bee,' for though the first verse is exquisite, yet the footman from Vevay [sic] is so perplexing. She has associated bees & Vevay elsewhere; but here a bee is not a <u>foot</u> man & it is the bee who is repelled. What do you make of it."[18] The poem

[15]Bingham, <u>Ancestors' Brocades</u>, p. 140.

[16]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 46.

[17]For the remainder of this study misspellings and peculiarities of punctuation, etc., will be reproduced as accurately as possible from the original text without the [sic] notation.

[18]Cited in Bingham, <u>Ancestors' Brocades</u>, p. 141.

under discussion reads as follows:

> The Flower must not blame the Bee--
> That seeketh his felicity
> Too often at her door--
>
> But teach the Footman from Vevay--
> Mistress is "not at home"--to say--
> To people--any more!
> c. 1860 (206) 1935[19]

Mr. Higginson's difficulty is not perfectly clear, but it involves the identity of the bee. If he feels that the speaker identifies with the bee, not with the flower, as perhaps would be preferred, his problem becomes understandable.[20] In the other poem that associates bees and Vevey, "Pigmy seraphs--gone astray--" (138), the bee is from Vevey and the speaker clearly does not identify with the bee.

In a letter dated four days after Higginson's letter cited above (that is, July 22, 1891), Mrs. Todd wrote to him: The love poems are certainly growing less in numbers. I might find two or three more, perhaps, for this volume, but on the whole I think they will be needed more in a subsequent one--when we finally use "The flower must not blame the Bee," with its rather confused metaphors!"[21] Mrs. Todd concurred with Higginson's opinion and "The Flower must not blame the Bee--" was omitted entirely.

[19]The numbers following the poem are those assigned by Johnson: the date on the left is the probable date of composition, the number enclosed in parentheses, as in previous references to poems in this study is the poem number, the date on the right is that of first publication. Both dates and poem number will appear as here throughout this study when whole poems are cited.

[20]And cf. "Because the Bee may blameless hum," cited below, p.106.

[21]Cited in Bingham, Ancestors' Brocades, p. 144.

Mrs. Todd's letter contains another more significant point: as early as 1891, Emily Dickinson's editors were anticipating the need of a late volume in which certain love poems, and some other poems, such as those with "confused metaphors" would finally be published.[22]

There were also problems concerning publication of Emily Dickinson's letters. Of those for the 1894 publication, Mrs. Todd said, "There was something akin to dread, almost fear, as I approached them critically, lest the inner and hitherto inviolate life of Emily Dickinson might be too clearly revealed. Should they indeed be published at all?"[23] Certainly the publication of personal correspondence is more nearly a matter to cause alarm than the publication of poetry, yet Mrs. Todd's attitude was growing more and more similar to that previously expressed by Susan Dickinson. Indeed, this statement appears to paraphrase Sue's remarks to Higginson and Ward, in 1890 and 1891 (cited above, page 4). Perhaps a useful approach to the matter of Mrs. Todd's dilemma at this point is, as in the matter of the poems, to see what is known to have been omitted from publication.

Concerning the proofs of letters for the 1894 publication, Mrs. Todd wrote to Thomas Niles on February 26, 1894: "...Mr. Dickinson,

[22]This point is made even more significant by the fact that Mrs. Todd's letter (as Higginson's) was published in Ancestors' Brocades, which accompanied Bolts of Melody, almost certainly the "subsequent volume" anticipated by Mrs. Todd. See below, pp. 21-22 and see Patterson, pp. 106, 223, 388.

[23]Mabel Loomis Todd, "Introduction," Letters of Emily Dickinson, ed. Mabel Loomis Todd (Roberts Brothers, Boston, 1894), cited in Bingham, Ancestors' Brocades, p. 192.

of course, wants to see them all, and he never judges satisfactorily what he wants in or out until he sees them in print; and I must confess that some things I thought quite safe to go in, look very startling in the cold impartiality of type, and have to come out. Besides this is a peculiarly delicate piece of literary work for many reasons, and takes an endless amount of thought and tact."[24]

The mutilation of Emily's letters to Austin would seem to be directly related to the concerns stated by Mrs. Todd. Millicent Todd Bingham says about the mutilation:

> Mr. Dickinson stipulated that if Emily's letters to him were to be used, the name of one of her girlhood friends must be left out--that of Susan Gilbert, his wife. But omitting her name was not enough. Before turning over the letters he went through them, eliminating Susan Gilbert's name and in some instances making alterations to disguise a reference to her. . . .
> ...Sometimes, after obliterating what Emily had written, pronouns were altered; "she" to "he" or to "you." In other cases "Sue" was changed to "she" or to "Lucy," even to "Vinnie."... [the mutilations] first appear in the fall of 1851 when Emily began to show a special interest in Sue after she had gone to teach in Baltimore. But not until more than a year later does the image intrude itself upon the reader so insistently that he is unable to forget the bitterness of Austin's life.[25]

Mrs. Bingham sees "a lack of mutual understanding with his wife" as the reason for Austin Dickinson's mutilation of his sister's letters.[26]

[24]Cited in Bingham, Ancestors' Brocades, p. 275.

[25]Emily Dickinson's Home: Letters of Edward Dickinson and His Family (Harper, N. Y., 1955), pp. 54-55. R. W. Franklin cites a similar mutilation of packet 80 of the poems, remarking, "The intent was obviously to destroy the effusive poem ['One sister have I in the house'] about Susan Dickinson": The Editing of Emily Dickinson (Univ. of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1967), p. 76.

[26]Bingham, Emily Dickinson's Home, p. 409.

This is generally interpreted to mean that Mr. Dickinson's almost savage attempts[27] to eradicate references to his wife from the published works of his sister were the direct results of his own marital difficulties--having nothing to do with his sister. This is not an incredible explanation, yet it was Sue herself who first objected to the publication of Emily Dickinson's works, and her objections seemed to have nothing to do with her marriage to Austin. She was not trying to eradicate evidence of her connection with him. Aside from this, Mrs. Todd's letter to Mr. Niles (cited above, page 9), does not seem to bear out this implication as to Austin's criterion for judging what should or should not be printed. His marital difficulties might very well have caused him pain at seeing his wife's name as he reread Emily's letters. Surely they would not have caused either him or Mrs. Todd to feel alarm: to see some portions of the letters as so "very startling in the cold impartiality of print" that they must be omitted.

Some other notable omissions in the 1894 publication are the letters to Susan Dickinson herself, in their entirety, and sections of the earlier letters to Abiah Root.[28] Letters such as these,[29] in the wake of

[27]For Bingham's description of the mutilations, see Home, pp. 54-55.

[28]See Rebecca Patterson's discussion of the omission of letters to Sue: Riddle, pp. 87, 90; and other relevant omission, partial omission, and possible omission: Riddle, pp. 90, 184, 199, 210. Other noteworthy omissions (aside from those discussed by Patterson) are the "Master" letters and the letters to Judge Otis Lord (a clearly romantic attachment of ED's late years); that is, those letters and passages that were omitted, serve, as is usual in early publication of correspondence, as an illuminating index of high emotional content.

[29]See chapter two, below, where these two groups of letters are cited at length.

similar disturbance over the poems, may well have elicited in Susan Dickinson a determination not to have them published in her lifetime,[30] in Austin Dickinson, rage at his own unwilling comprehension of poems and letters, perhaps particularly of letters to his own wife, and even greater rage at his wife's insistence that he comprehend, and in fact that he eradicate references to herself from any correspondence that was to be published. This situation, and not the one generally imputed to be correct, would have elicited Mrs. Todd's alarmed remarks to Mr. Niles.

In 1896, Lavinia Dickinson brought a lawsuit against Mrs. Todd to regain a piece of land that she had given her earlier in partial payment for Mrs. Todd's work on the poems and letters. Lavinia Dickinson won the lawsuit and regained the land. Afterwards, she divided the poems of Emily Dickinson with the woman against whom she had brought suit.[31] Mrs. Todd put the poems that were in her keeping away in a locked chest and left them there until 1929, when she began preparing them for publication with the assistance of Mrs. Bingham.[32] Lavinia Dickinson attempted surreptitiously, that is , either without the knowledge of, or against the wishes of, Susan Dickinson, to prepare another volume of poems for publication (compare above, page 3). In this respect,

[30]In 1914, the year after her mother's death, Martha Dickinson Bianchi published The Single Hound: Poems of a Lifetime ... (Little, Boston), consisting of selected poems and letters sent to Susan Gilbert Dickinson. See Patterson, Riddle, pp. 30-31, 418.

[31]Bingham, "Introduction" Bolts of Melody, p. vii; Bingham, Ancestors' Brocades, p. 397; Franklin, p. xvi.

[32]Bingham, "Introduction," Bolts of Melody, pp. vii-ix.

Mrs. Bingham cites from the letters of Mary Lee Hall to Mrs. Todd:

> Vinnie gave me the "Further" poems to copy just after Christmas of 1898....When she became ill I felt that it was better that she should have the poems in the house, especially as she was having some serious battles with "the other house." She said she would hide them where prowlers could not discover them....Vinnie intended to publish the poems, but was never well enough to do so, & I did not want to have any part in such an undertaking.[33]

> I copied many of them, and intended helping Vinnie to do as she wished me to, but there was "war between the houses," especially severe, ... and I returned the...manuscripts... giving them into Vinnie's hands, & telling her to hide them well.[34]

In Ancestors' Brocades, published in 1945 with Bolts of Melody, Bingham discusses at length the early editing of Emily Dickinson's poetry, the lawsuit and surrounding circumstances, and the long delay in publication of the poems in Bolts of Melody. In the "Introduction" to Bolts of Medody, she states her aim in respect to the last of these three matters: "a fully documented account of why publication ceased in 1896 and was not resumed by [Mrs. Todd] " (page viii). As stated in that account, the lawsuit is the explanation for delay:

> incongruous though it may seem it was this suit to recover a strip of land fifty-three feet wide which put a stop to further publication of the poetry of Emily Dickinson. It furnishes the explanation of why the bulk of her unpublished poems, far from having been withheld by her sister," were merely clogged at the source.[35]

[33] September 21, 1930, cited in Bingham, Ancestors' Brocades, p. 371.

[34] August 5, 1933, Ibid., p. 372.

[35] Ancestors' Brocades, p. 349.

> the answer is simple. Because of the lawsuit my mother was unwilling to have anything more to do with Lavinia Dickinson. After the trial they never spoke again--....although the poems were ready for the printer, to see them through the press would have necessitated collaborating with Lavinia, and that was out of the question.[36]

Elsewhere Mrs. Bingham gives further detail which complicates this simple matter:

> For the significance of [Austin's] death[39]... lay... in the fact that it brought about a stalemate which blocked publication of a large part of the poetry of Emily Dickinson. If Austin had outlived Lavinia, all of Emily's poems would have been published during the early part of the century,....But because he preceded his sister in death by the narrow margin of four years, further publication stopped, Lavinia's hopes were ended, and the stalemate ensued which for nearly half a century has held unbroken.[38]

and quoting a letter to herself from Mary Lee Hall:

> It must have been Sue who held a sword over Vinnie's head, ready to let it drop if she did not get that land back. It was not Vinnie who started the trouble, I am sure of that.
> I think ... Vinnie admired & loved your mother, but dared not admit it on account of some dire threat held over her head.[39]

Lavinia Dickinson wanted her sister's poems published. Otherwise, she would not have continued in her attempt to get them published. In

[36] Ibid., p. 397. In respect to this passage, two significant points might be made: Whether or not they spoke after the lawsuit, Mrs. Todd and Lavinia Dickinson did divide the poems (see above, p. ||, and n.3|). Instead of attempting to prepare other poems for publication, why did Lavinia not simply take these poems to the printer?

[37] August 16, 1895.

[38] Bingham, Ancestors' Brocades, p. 331.

[39] Ibid., p. 372; and see Patterson, p. 23.

the opinion of Mrs. Bingham,[40] she did not want the land. In the lawsuit, she was working against her own purposes.

Austin's death brought about the lawsuit. It served as well to remove a principal counter-influence to Susan Dickinson's very powerful determination that Emily Dickinson's works be, at least temporarily, halted.[41] Perhaps it was the injustice of the lawsuit that hushed Mrs. Todd. Perhaps there were other factors. She had experienced the difficulties of "editing out" materials she felt to be unsuitable for present publication; with the editing of the letters she had begun to express her doubts in words very like those of Susan Dickinson. Yet she, Austin, and Lavinia had continued in their efforts to publish, however cautiously. With Austin gone, she may have given over entirely to Sue's influence--and to those of her own feelings that agreed with it. If Sue was pressuring Lavinia to stop publication of Emily Dickinson's works as well as to press suit against Mrs. Todd (as is suggested in the letters from Mary Lee Hall, above, page12), Mrs. Todd, like Mary Lee Hall, may not have considered herself to be in a suitable position to continue as editor. If the two matters were interrelated (as seems more than likely, considering together Mary Lee Hall's letters, pages 12 and 13 above), she would certainly have felt so. Whatever part the lawsuit actually played, she was effectively stopped.

As for Lavinia, it appears that with Austin's death, she did become particularly vulnerable to Sue's pressures, or rather to Sue's threat.

[40] Bingham, Ancestors' Brocades, p. 349.

[41] See Patterson, p. 28.

She yielded in the matter of the lawsuit, which would have made it possible for her to appear to yield in the matter of publication. But she continued surreptitiously with this,[42] fearing that "prowlers" (or Sue?) would either steal or destroy the poems that were in her possession. Finally, because of "war" between Lavinia and Sue, Lavinia's new editor decided to stop her work on the poems. Lavinia soon died, and publication essentially halted until after Sue's death in 1913.

Most significant, some "dire threat" was behind the lawsuit, and behind the dire threat,[43] most likely, was Susan Dickinson's determination to halt publication. This suggests that Sue's determination to halt publication--not the lawsuit--explains the long delay in publication.

Finally, the lawsuit as the explanation leaves several unanswered questions. Why, after having been unjustly sued by Lavinia, would Mrs. Todd keep any of Emily Dickinson's poems? What right would she have to them? Why would Lavinia allow it? Why would the two women in fact divide the poems? What would be the purpose if Mrs. Todd put her share away, intending never to publish?[44] And, with all due consideration to the injustice of the lawsuit, how could she feel justified in doing so?

[42]In this she was repeating the situation of the 1890 publication (see above, p. 3).

[43]Patterson cites Martha Dickinson Bianchi, "Preface," The Single Hound (Boston, Little, 1914) as saying Susan Dickinson considered destroying both letters and poems as late as 1912 (pp. 30, 418). This is very plausible as the "dire threat," considering Lavinia Dickinson's evident fear for the safety of the poems and Susan Dickinson's consistent behavior in respect to both poems and letters.

[44]Bingham indicates that this was the case in the introduction to Bolts of Melody, p. viii.

It is at least interesting that although Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Bingham removed the poems from the camphor-wood chest in 1929, they were not published until 1945, after the deaths in 1932 of Mrs. Todd, and in 1943 of Martha Dickinson Bianchi, Emily Dickinson's last close relative, who herself died childless.[45] It is also interesting that so many of the poems Mrs. Todd would have earmarked for the "subsequent" volume, anticipated as early as 1891, came to be in that group that Mrs. Todd kept after the lawsuit and withheld from publication for forty-seven years.[46]

After her mother's death in 1913, Martha Dickinson Bianchi periodically published selected poems, and produced two biographical accounts of her aunt. Millicent Todd Bingham made significant editorial commentaries in Bolts of Melody and published three well-documented works on Emily Dickinson. Bolts of Melody has been discussed to some extent, and Ancestors' Brocades to a larger extent, above. It is important to examine the works of both Bianchi and Bingham further in specific reference to the question of sexual abnormality.

In The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson, published in 1924, Martha Dickinson Bianchi writes of the adolescence and young womanhood of her Aunt:

[45]See "Chronological Table of Events," Patterson, Riddle, pp. 423-430.

[46]See Patterson's discussion of the late publication of the homosexual poems: Riddle, pp. vii, 223, 388, 420. In this respect, see publication dates of the poems cited in the present study (below, chapters 3 and 4).

> In one of her earliest letters preserved Emily Dickinson makes fun of the future, saying, "I am growing handsome. I expect I shall be the belle of Amherst when I reach my eighteenth year. I don't doubt but that I shall have perfect crowds of admirers at that age--but away with my nonsense." All of which shows her a natural (italics mine), silly, happy girl.[47]

> All the next spring she was fitting to go to South Hadley....She was always in love with her teachers at that time, quite regardless of their being men or women, but whatever there was fanciful or romantic in her girl imagination she was surely grounded as firmly in the uncompromising fundamentals of education as her Puritan father saw fit to have her. Her anticipations were boundless and she only feared in her dreams for a long time, yet she felt that it was part of her own nature always to anticipate more than to realize; a curious instinct in one so entirely normal (italics mine) with life just opening before her.... (p. 18).

> (Quoting a letter to Susan Gilbert of June 1852, misdated fall, 1847)[48] "Mattie Gilbert was here last evening and we sat on the front door steps and talked about life and love and whispered our childish fancies about such blissful things, the evening was gone so soon--and I walked home with Mattie beneath the silent moon and wished for you and heaven. You did not come darling, but a bit of heaven did--or so it seemed to me. As we walked silently side by side and wondered if that great blessedness which may be ours sometime is granted now to some. Those unions, dear Susie, by which two are one, this sweet and strange miracle." [Bianchi continues] A perfectly normal young heart responding to the natural wondering of impending maturity. (italics mine) (pp. 19-20).

Bianchi quotes this final letter as above. In its entirety, the letter continues to discuss that impending maturity, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of marriage, and delving into Emily Dickinson's

[47](Houghton, Boston, 1924), p. 17.

[48]Patterson notes Bianchi's misdating of Emily's letters, pp. 86-87, 90-91, 100. Mrs. Bianchi's misdating presented the emotions of a young women, here 22, as those of a very young girl, here 17.

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fears about it.[49]

In the other instances as well, Bianchi has labelled as "perfectly normal" some material that, although it does not indicate definite abnormality, does suggest (but for the fact that she sets us straight) something other than absolute normality. In the second citation in particular she remarks that the material presented is somewhat odd, coming from one so entirely normal, and gives no supporting evidence for the normality. In all three instances, Mrs. Bianchi specifically associates the matter of normality with the poet's emotional and sexual responses to life.

Aside from these particulars, she has said twice that Emily Dickinson was normal and twice that she was natural, within the space of four pages. That is perhaps an over-emphasis on normality and naturalness.

In Emily Dickinson Face to Face, Mrs. Bianchi indicates that Emily Dickinson was the victim of gossip in the Amherst community without any indications as to what the gossip was:

> Some of the tales told lacked all taste or personality, and my father shrank from them. He could never reconcile himself to her way of living that brought such ridiculous conjecture down upon her. He would have wished her happy and natural (italics mine) although even in the same breath he could never wish her any different.[50]
>
> In regard to his sister, my father was a victim of the prevalent scourge of dread of the New England village gossip

[49]Emily Dickinson, The Letters of..., ed. Thomas H. Johnson and Theodora Ward, 3 vols. (Belknap, Harvard, Cambridge, 1958), III, p. 209: letter number 93. Hereafter the letters of Emily Dickinson will be cited by letter number, in parentheses, within the text of the study.

[50](Houghton, Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1932), p. 38.

> concerning all unmarried women of that narrow time. He had what would seem to modern eyes a morbid horror of his sister Emily being thought to have been 'disappointed' in love.[51]
>
> It was impressed on my brother and myself as early as I can remember, by both our parents, that Aunt Emily was not to be a subject of discussion with outsiders.... I asked my father what I should say when people like that plied me with questions about Aunt Emily, and he replied tersely: 'Tell them you don't know. Don't say a word more,' adding, 'But always remember, little girl, it is not in the highest taste to make remarks about things people don't talk about themselves and don't care to have talked about.[52]

Mrs. Bianchi's purpose is apparently to assure us that the gossip was unfounded. However her insistence serves, as in the question of normality above, to suggest the contrary. The passages, themselves in fact carry evidence to the contrary: Emily's evident unhappiness and unnaturalness; the attitudes of Austin and Susan Dickinson.[53]

The repetition of the word natural here, Mrs. Bianchi's opinion that some of the tales lacked "all taste or personality" and were "ridiculous conjecture," her later statement that the story of a love affair with a married man was correct (below, note 51), and her similarly defensive tone in discussing both matters suggests that in Mrs. Bianchi's

[51] Face To Face, p. 48. On page 51 Mrs. Bianchi assures us that the story of a love affair with a married man is accurate. Millicent Todd Bingham says: "...so it was whispered that she sought seclusion because of hopeless love for a married man. This was not only plausible, it was the most acceptable explanation of her conduct." (Emily Dickinson, A Revelation [Harper, N. Y., 1954], p. 58-59).

[52] Apparently the gossip and the anxiety of ED's family concerning it were actualities of the poet's lifetime (Mrs. Bianchi was born in 1866). If this is correct, it would have contributed to the poet's need for withdrawal.

[53] Their attitudes here may well bear on their later anxieties about publication, as in the matter of mutilation of manuscripts.

mind, at least, the question of the poet's normality and the problem of gossip about her may very well have direct bearing on each other.

Although she gives a completely different account of Austin's behavior, Mrs. Todd appears to think along the same lines and to be as insistent:

> Emily's curious leaving of outer life never seemed unnatural to Austin. He told me about her girlhood and her normal blossoming and gradual retirement, and her few love affairs. Her life was perfectly natural. All the village gossip merely amused him...(italics mine)[54]

In Ancestors' Brocades, published in 1945, Millicent Todd Bingham approaches Emily Dickinson's love poems, and so her love life, in the following manner:

> If you grasp the significance which a stranger's face can assume, seen through a half-closed blind--the release of imagination in a single glimpse, the surge of feeling it unlooses--you will understand why an experience which for most of us must be mutual to be complete could be carried through by Emily to the end, alone, with an intensity which may have been as genuine as though fulfillment had been reached....
>
> For Emily, I venture to think, a hint was enough to launch a flight of ecstasy no less real because it was deprived of outward expression. Some of the gentlemen--and there were several at different times who occasioned such a response--would no doubt have been startled could they have known the havoc they were creating....
>
> Emily was more engrossed in the feeling she experienced in a realm which to her was of the essence of mystery--in her own response to a stimulus, if you will, with or without a specific object--than in any one person. My mother expressed the idea in simple words: "Emily was more interested in her poems than in any man." I am tempted to step on dangerous ground and to suggest further that from the very incompleteness of her experience may have sprung her love poems.... one thing is sure: it is not necessary to assume a lover who broke her heart. (pages 321-322)

[54]Cited in Bingham, Ancestors' Brocades, p. 12.

Finally she suggests that the poet's seclusion and her way of life may not be accounted for by a specific event or a measurable cause (page 322).

Yet in Bolts of Melody, the volume published at the same time as Ancestors' Brocades, in which the poems Mrs. Todd stored away in 1898 were finally brought before the public, Mrs. Bingham presents a different picture. In the introduction she remarks, "The poems of Emily Dickinson should eventually be arranged in the order of composition as well as by subject matter as heretofore. Her inner development would thus become apparent--the gradual turning away from acute personal feeling to emotion universal in scope" (page xxiv). In the "Guide to Arrangement of Poems" immediately preceding the text of the book, Bingham discussed twelve headings under which the poems are to be grouped. "The Mob within the Heart" is especially pertinent here and seems as well to be very closely related to the suggestion for further study just cited: "Dealing with personal emotion as it does, the section is frankly autobiographical, beginning with the quality of childhood loneliness, devotion to girlhood friends, disappointment in a too-much-loved woman friend, 'bandaged moments' and the effort to forget, followed by two or three poems on the anatomy of disenchantment. After the passage of time comes emancipation from the feeling of loneliness, and with it a sense of excape and the exhilaration of discovery that

> The staple must be optional
> That an immortal binds.

Her detachment was not completely successful, however, for the last two poems, cries of exasperation, are in the very latest handwriting" (pages 4-5).

In this section Bingham includes such obviously homosexual poems as

"Like eyes that looked on wastes" and "Ourselves were wed one summer, dear" (see below, pages 91-93), as well as a very important poem using spider symbolism, "Alone and in a Circumstance" (see below, page 113).

In placing poems such as "A loss of something ever felt I," "Up Life's hill with my little bundle," "Had I known that the first was the last," "A great hope fell, you heard no noise," and "My wars are laid away in books," which do not in any way specifically state love for a woman, in this same section, she appears to be relating Miss Dickinson's major poetic themes to the homosexual issue.

Neither does Bingham confine love poems written to a woman to this particular section of the book. Under "Italic Faces," which poems "describe specific persons, some of them historical" (page 5), she lists "Her face was in a bed of hair," probably the most overtly sexual poem written by Emily Dickinson (see below, page 85). Under "The Campaign Inscrutable," which poems depict "emotion in the abstract," complementary to "Similar feelings narrowed to a person in the section entitled 'The Mob within the Heart'" (page 7), she places "Her sweet weight on my heart a night," which is not a poem about abstract emotion. This serves again to associate the homosexual poems with the larger, more abstract themes in the poetry--or perhaps to remark the importance of homosexuality in the emotional life of Miss Dickinson.

In 1954 and 1955, Mrs. Bingham published two more books about Emily Dickinson. Emily Dickinson: A Revelation[55] is the documented account of a real and mutual love between Emily Dickinson and Otis Lord in the years, 1878-1883. Emily Dickinson's Home: Letters of Edward Dickinson

[55](1954), see note 51, above.

and His Family[56] is primarily, as the title suggests, an exposition of Dickinson personalities and interrelationships as revealed in their letters.

In the latter volume Bingham reiterates, in somewhat greater detail, the suggestion she made in the introduction to Bolts of Melody:

> after a chronological scale has been constructed and tested for accuracy, and the probable time of composition of all available manuscript poems determined within a year or two, the shattering experiences--"the mob within the heart"--revealed in the poems with an almost frightening frankness can be placed in tentative order. Then, when their true meaning becomes clear, will a biographer for the first time have firm ground on which to stand. It is not impossible that in a routine study such as this may be found the key to an understanding of those volcanic changes which marked the steps of progress in Emily Dickinson's stern and simple life. (page 53)

Mrs. Bingham is not speaking of the love between Emily Dickinson and Judge Otis Lord, which was, according to her own documentation, late and happy, and was not, in the sense meant here, a "shattering experience." Nor is she referring to any fantasied love affairs with gentlemen acquaintances: here she very specifically points out "The Mob within the Heart," and so, the frankly autobiographical poems about a too-much-loved woman friend, thereby saying it is these poems which reveal the shattering experiences that provide the key to an understanding of what appears to be the crisis situation in Emily Dickinson's life.

Taking all of this seemingly contradictory material together, it appears that there was definitely a late and mutual love between the poet and Judge Lord, that Mrs. Bingham regards the earlier poems addressed to a man as products of the poet's fantasies, that she seems to

[56](Harper, N. Y., 1955).

be saying there was no early lover who broke the poet's heart, and yet that she specifies the poems addressing a woman lover as frankly autobiographical, and in fact, as the key to an understanding of the poet's life. Perhaps the remark that no specific event or measurable cause can account for Emily Dickinson's way of life is the clue and she means that the "disappointment in a too-much-loved woman friend" was merely the climax in an emotional history that progressed naturally in accordance with early psychological causes and would have been much the same anyway.

The Riddle of Emily Dickinson by Rebecca Patterson was published in 1951, before Emily Dickinson's Home was published but after it was delivered to the publisher on March 3, 1950 (see Home, page xvi). Mrs. Patterson had begun to examine the likelihood of a sexual relationship between Emily Dickinson and a woman after reading Bolts of Melody and considering it in the light of the Dickinson family's behavior, the peculiar publishing history, and the personality of the poet.[57] Her book advocates Catherine Scott Turner as the "too-much-loved woman friend," and for a brief period, lover, of Emily Dickinson and attempts to reconstruct the progress of the relationship between the two women.

Mrs. Patterson did a study very much like that specifically suggested in Emily Dickinson's Home several years before that suggestion came out in print, yet lacking the use of the dated and chronologically arranged poems[58] and the biographical chronology[59] that are now avail-

[57]Riddle, pp. vii-viii.

[58]Emily Dickinson, The Poems, ed. T. N. Johnson.

[59]Jay Leyda, Years and Hours.

able, she did not, in Bingham's words, "have firm ground on which to stand." Checking Riddle against those volumes, one finds however that there is a very close, though inexact, correspondence between Mrs. Patterson's chronology and the dates assigned by Johnson and Leyda. Yet it should be stated that neither Johnson nor Leyda agrees with Mrs. Patterson's thesis.

Since Mrs. Bingham's commentaries and Mrs. Patterson's book, nobody has openly and directly argued the presence of homosexuality in the life or works of Emily Dickinson, yet the issue arises in some form in most recent biographical and critical works on the poet.

In 1960, Charles R. Anderson published Emily Dickinson's Poetry: Stairway of Surprise, the most valuable critical study of Emily Dickinson's poetry yet produced.[60] Mr. Anderson, who does not profess to be writing biographical criticism becomes equivocal in his examination of two significant poems. Concerning "Wild Nights--Wild Nights!" (see below, pp.103-4), he says, "Unless one insists on taking the 'I' to mean Emily Dickinson, there is not even any reversal of the lovers' roles (which has been charged, curiously enough, as a fault in this poem) ....The theme here is that of sexual passion which is lawless, outside the rule of 'Chart' and 'Compass.' But it lives by a law of its own, the law of Eden, which protects it from mundane wind and wave" (page 190).

Mr. Anderson's manner of dealing with the reversal of roles would perhaps be acceptable if "Wild Nights..." were an isolated instance. It

[60] (Doubleday, Garden City, N. Y.).

is not.[61] Aside from this, it does not explain either the poems in which both parties are specifically identified as of the same sex, or those poems in which the speaker appears to have a bisexual identity.[62] Further, one faces the problem of deciding whether or not to insist on taking the 'I' in many of Emily Dickinson's letters to mean Emily Dickinson (see below, chapter 2, passim).

The other poem with which Mr. Anderson has the same kind of difficulty is "My Life had stood--a Loaded Gun--." Here, both parties are masculine. As the speaker--identification is symbolic, Mr. Anderson simply refrains from interpreting the symbol and proceeds as follows:

> In the special climate of frontier America, another turn is given to the convention of courtly love. Since the male provider is unavoidably committed to the strenuous life, here it is the woman who celebrates the softer arts, pledging eternal fidelity and the rapture of love's service. So the courtly roles are reversed: he is only the adored 'Master' while she is the joyous servant, which accounts for her assuming the active role in the love-game....
>
> To give him security ... calls forth an unquestioning loyalty destructive of his enemies....Only the "Owner" has a thumb to raise the hammer, and a finger to fire the gun, but here it fires itself. Her gun-life has so usurped the initiative as to reduce his function to hunting while she herself does the shooting. One of the hazards of the private poet is that the self tends to become the only reality. The lover certainly plays a negative role. (page 196)

Mr. Anderson's concluding sentence bears some qualification, which tends to invalidate the preceding sentence: The lover certainly plays a negative role for a male.

In Heaven Beguiles the Tired: Death in the Poetry of Emily Dickin-

[61] Patterson remarks that a woman "might sometimes but not habitually, imagine the love affair from the viewpoint of the man involved" (p. 223).

[62] See "Because the Bee may blameless hum," cited below, p. 106.

son, published in 1966,[63] Thomas W. Ford says about "Not probable--the barest chance--," "...the chances for immortality are at best tenuous.... The soul may be only next door to paradise,and then, "A smile too few--a word too much" and immortality is missed...." (Compare below, page 88). The final stanza of the poem reads:

> What if the Bird from journey far--
> Confused by Sweets--as Mortals--are--
> Forget the secret of His wing--
> And perish--but a Bough between--
> Oh, Groping feet--
> Oh Phantom Queen!
> (346)

Rebecca Patterson comments on Mr. Ford's interpretation: "...since the poet's "Groping feet" are in obvious pursuit of a "Phantom Queen," the worship intended must be that of the Great Goddess. No doubt it was."[64]

In 1967, David Higgins published Portrait of Emily Dickinson: The Poet and Her Prose,[65] the first detailed study of Emily Dickinson's letters. He remarks at length on her strange use of the personal pronoun:

> probably she began to write 'it' or 'they' instead of 'you' and 'he' for the sake of privacy. The first friend so impersonalized was 'Master.' Emily's use of this name, coupled with 'Daisy' (herself), appears in the 1859 poems of Packet 1. In the same booklet is this poem:
>
> My friend must be a Bird--
> Because it flies!
> Mortal, my friend must be,
> Because it dies!
> Barbs has it, like a Bee!
> Ah, curious friend!
> Thou puzzlest me!
> (73)

[63](U. of Ala. Press, University, Ala.).

[64]"Brief Reviews...," The Midwest Quarterly, Vol. VIII (Winter, 1967), p. 201.

[65](Rutgers Univ. Press, New Brunswick, N. J.).

> Not a good poem, but well enough disguised. If someone in the Dickinson household had come upon the poems of Packet I, he would have found nothing that clearly specified a man who interested Emily. (pages 19-20)

To continue Mr. Higgins' line of logic: Had such person come upon Packet 28,[66] it (they? we?) would have found more of the same nothing, and more, if somewhat different, disguise, as in "Her sweet Weight on my Heart a Night" (518).

Elsewhere Higgins remarks, "Romanticism also shaped Emily's descriptions of her affection for Sue. Many of the letters make embarrassing reading. Friendship was stated in a way which sounds abnormal to the twentieth-century ear....Resisting the current critical fashion for treating all great writers as sexual misfits, one finds in such letters simply the romantic conventions of an era when women fainted and men wept at the slightest provocation...." (pages 38-39).

Mr. Higgins may be resisting a critical fashion. He appears to be resisting many of his own insights into the prose of the poet.

In Circumference and Circumstance: Stages in the Mind and Art of Emily Dickinson, published in 1968[67] William R. Sherwood supports Charles Wadsworth, or rather, an imaginary love for the "image" Emily Dickinson made of Wadsworth, as the inspiration for the love poems:

> She clearly regards her loyalty to Wadsworth, or to the "image"...she made of him, as unjustifiable in the eyes of God, and she anticipates that at the Last Judgment these unrepentant lovers, faithful to their own religion, will be sentenced to an eternal death..The occasion of the poem below (italics mine) would seem to be the pronouncement of

[66]This is R. W. Franklin's packet assignment, revising Johnson's packet 5 assignment for this particular poem: The Editing of Emily Dickinson, p. 51.

[67](Columbia, N. Y.).

this sentence:

Like Eyes that looked on Wastes--
Incredulous of Ought
But Blank--and steady Wilderness--
Diversified by Night--

Just Infinites of Nought--
As far as it could see--
So looked the face I looked upon--
So looked itself--on Me--

I offered it no Help--
Because the Cause was Mine--
The Misery a Compact
As hopeless--as divine--

Neither--would be absolved--
Neither would be a Queen
Without the Other--Therefore--
We perish--tho' We reign--
(Sherwood, pp. 91-92)
c. 1862 (458) 1945[68]

It may be true, as Mrs. Bingham suggested in Ancestors' Brocades, that Emily Dickinson wrote poems about fantasied relationships with male lovers. It may be true that she wrote them about Charles Wadsworth, however that cannot possibly be the situation in the present poem.

Without actively supporting Patterson's thesis or even examining the homosexual issue directly, several other critics are certainly less negative in their approach to it than Anderson, Ford, Higgins, and Sherwood.

In a brief appraisal of The Riddle of Emily Dickinson in Sex Variant Women in Literature (1956),[69] Jeanette Foster remarks that "[Patterson's study] is a fairly detailed reconstruction of events for which proof positive can never be produced," (page 147) but continues "...Mrs. Patterson's demonstration of how closely a new out-going happiness in poems and letters paralleled Emily's meeting with Kate Anthon, how

[68]See below, pp. 91-93.

[69](Vantage Press, N. Y.).

exactly the beginning of her period of 'agony' coincided with Kate's withdrawal, is too apt to be dismissed as 'absurdly biased special pleading,'" (page 148).[70]

In "Was Emily Dickinson Psychotic?" (1962), Anna Mary Wells says that Rebecca Patterson "is not generally believed to have made a very convincing case." Yet she adds, "One thing to which [Patterson] calls attention is worthy of comment, Emily Dickinson's letters to Sue Gilbert during the years of her brother's courtship and engagement exhibit an overstrained emotion resembling that of a schoolgirl crush, but surely abnormal in a young woman in her twentys addressing her brother's fiancée. Often they sound more like the letters of a lover than a prospective sister-in-law. In them Emily Dickinson identifies both with her brother and with the young woman who has succeeded where she has failed, in finding a husband"[71] (page 316). Further, Emily Dickinson "suffered a severe, incomprehensible, and guilt-laden psychic shock in the marriage of her brother and her best friend, and began to write the letters in which she spoke of herself as mad" (page 317).

In The Long Shadow: Emily Dickinson's Tragic Poetry (1964)[72] one of Clark Griffith's primary theses is Emily Dickinson's hostility toward masculinity. Explicating such poems as "I started early--Took my Dog--" (pages 18-24) and "He fumbles at your Soul" (pages 171-173), Griffith finds that "...at least half-consciously, [Emily Dickinson] stood in

[70]The internal quotation is from one of Mrs. Patterson's reviewers.

[71]American Image, xix (Winter, 1962).

[72](Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1964).

dread of everything masculine, so that one of the bogies she fled from was nothing less than the awful and the implacable idea of him" (page 166). Concerning her "childish primness and dislike of exposure," "her white dress and protective screen," her seclusion itself: "These without exception are acts that strongly imply a pathological loathing of the other sex...." (page 167). Further, "...in poem after poem masculinity is equated with power, and power becomes the right to imperil or destroy a weaker being" (page 170).

"In Winter, in my Room" (see below, pp.11-12) is the focal point of Griffith's argument. In the action of the poem, he sees the speaker as attempting to defend womanhood, to punish the worm-snake, and "to secure for herself...something that she secretly admires, and so unconsciously desires to possess," the penis (page 286).[73] And on this last point, "...in the case of Emily Dickinson, the envious response [of the female child] to maleness seems to have lingered into maturity, and to have remained, in the mind of the mature woman, a central idea, a compulsive and a driving force" (page 287).[74]

Finally, Mr. Griffith remarks, "...neither criticism nor psychology has a way of telling us why Emily Dickinson transformed personal problems into poetry, while another woman, confronted with the same grave issues, might have become an hysteric, a feminist, a lesbian, a religious tractarian, or an aggressive shrew... but would, at all events, have written nothing of value" (pages 296-297). Griffith fails to mention the existence of any love poems addressing a woman, and he does not suggest that the poet was lesbian, yet that appears to be a major implication of his

[73]In reference to this poem, see also pp. 168-171, 177-183.

[74]See also pp. 288-290.

study.

In Emily Dickinson: the Mind of the Poet (1965),[75] Albert J. Gelpi cites as "the dilemma that determined [Emily Dickinson's] response to experience on all levels" the hesitation "between the desire to be ravished and the fear of being violated, between the need for integration with something else and the assertion of a self-contained individuality, between the need for union with or subservience of the not-me and the insistence upon the separate identity of the ego" (page 2).

More immediately significant, Gelpi goes on to discuss the poet's habit of taking on the masculine role within her poems:

> In some of the "Wife" poems she... [boasts] that although "I gave myself to Him," she also "took Himself for Pay" and so assimilated the "Emperor of Men" into herself. As for the mighty mountain and the lowly daisy, "which, Sir, are you and which am I? Upon an August day?"....In her unmistakably feminine manner she insisted upon her inclination toward the "masculine" role throughout the poetry, so that in a sense the wedding of the beggar-maid to the King was consummated in her displacing him. The imagery of the poetry accurately projects the pattern of her consciousness. Aware of her incompleteness, yet wary of external commitments, she persisted in her effort to arrogate to herself as much of the burden, the responsibility, and the glory of experience as she could. (page 119)

> She spoke metaphorically not of ravishment by the lightning but of the incendiary energies of "my volcano" within. (page 136, referring to poem no. 1677; see below, page 110)

> There are other metaphors to express the quandary of the "Inner" and the "Outer" force in images more suggestive of a timid feminine sensibility than the lightning and the volcano, though these patterns too have ambivalent sexual overtones.... On the other hand, there are poems in which she masters Nature in what is clearly in her own mind a rape: "I robbed the Woods--The trusting Woods"; she plucked the blossom and "bore

[75] (Harvard, Cambridge).

her struggling, blushing,/ Her simple haunts beyond." The early poems also introduce the problem through the symbolism of the flower and the bee: images which in their variation throughout her writing dramatize the poet's duality..../

When Emily identified herself with the blossom, it seemed to her that "to be a Flower, is profound Responsibility," and at such times her only complaint was...that the bee was a deceitful Master, a casual lover who loved her only to leave her godless again....

On other occasions Emily Dickinson liked to fancy herself the bee quaffing Nature's nectar, like Emerson's "Humble--Bee" .... As Thoreau shifted from tasting the flowers of the world to impregnating the flowers of the world, so Emily could not rest in the rose's ability "to subdue the Bumblebee" nor in the bee's mere savoring of the rose for its sweetness. It was (in Hopkins' phrase) "the achieve of, the mastery of the thing" that she finally had to have for herself: "Oh, for a Bee's experience/ Of Clovers...."

Emily Dickinson could think of herself as the flower or the bee, as the poet possessed or the poet possessing. Since she was no stickler for logic or rigid theory, the point is not that these concepts of the poet existed for her as distinct abstract categories but, on the contrary, that in living poetically she knew both experiences and appropriated both roles:

> Because the Bee may blameless hum
> For Thee a Bee do I become
> List even unto Me.
>
> Because the Flowers unafraid
> May lift a look on thine a Maid
> Alway a Flower would be.[76]
>
> (pages 137-139)

Although he comments that the feminine speaker is displacing her own masculine lover by taking over the masculine role, Gelpi finally seems to be suggesting a bisexual personality.

In "Emily Dickinson Against the World: An Interpretation of the Poet's Life and Work" (1967), Cynthia Chaliff says:

[76] For citation of the entire poem, see below, p. 106.

> Her poetry tells us that her earliest memories were of deprivation. Her parents' denial of her need for love made her feel that she had been betrayed by them....
>
> The frustrations of her need for love only aggravated Dickinson's demands and love came to be synonymous with total possession....
>
> Emily's projection of all her father's bad characteristics onto God allowed her to maintain her love for and dependence on her father and the men who later replaced him. Although she desired independence, she feared to surrender the support of a parental figure, and heterosexual relations never developed beyond a father-child relationship with her.[77]

A sense of childhood deprivation, inability to reach maturity in heterosexual relationships, dread of sexual contact with the male, masculine identification of the self, feminine identification of the loved one, "too-much-love" for a woman friend, persistent difficulty in use of pronouns, and even the likelihood of psychosis fit into a picture that might be called coherent personality structure. Manifested in sexual relationship with the woman friend, it is the personality reflected in the attitudes of Emily Dickinson's family, her early editors, and those of her critics who prefer not to see.

> My father used to say that in science the things you leave out are as worth recording as those you discuss.
>
> --Millicent Todd Bingham, Ancestors' Brocades, Appendix V, p. 421.

[77] Unpubl. diss. (NYU), cited in Dissertation Abstracts, 28: 1070A.

CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHY: THE LETTERS OF EMILY DICKINSON

In The Riddle of Emily Dickinson, Rebecca Patterson presents an extensive examination of the emotional biography of Kate Scott Turner Anthon[1] as recorded in the diary, letters, and literary tastes of Mrs. Anthon. Nowhere in the materials presented is there a statement of homosexuality as such. Everywhere there are implications that the tendency existed, in controlled form, throughout Mrs. Anthon's life.[2] As extensive an emotional biography may be traced in the letters of Emily Dickinson.[3] Nowhere in the letters is there a nonsymbolic statement of homosexuality as such. The implications are more conclusive than those in the Anthon Materials.

In the letters as in the poems, Emily Dickinson occasionally referred to herself--or other women--as masculine:

[1]Patterson presents Mrs. Turner Anthon as Emily Dickinson's "too-much-loved" woman friend: see above, p. 24.

[2]See Patterson, especially pp. 278-400.

[3]Patterson also offers many valuable insights into the emotional background of Emily Dickinson (see pp. 3-8, 60-70, et passim), but her book is very incomplete in this respect because many of the letters were not yet available, or were available in incomplete form when she did her study. In tracing persistent attitudes and evolving emotional patterns, an extensive examination of these letters is very useful.

> The next time you a'int going to write me I'd thank you to let me know--this kind of protracted insult is what no man can bear--fight with me like a man--let me have fair shot...
> (to Austin Dickinson, 27 July, 1851)[4]

> I feared one day our little brothers would see us no more...
> (to and referring to Louise and Frances Norcross, March 1862?; II, no. 254)

> [Ned Dickinson] inherits his Uncle Emily's ardor for the lie.
> (to Mrs. J. G. Holland, early March, 1866; II, no. 315)

> (signature) Brother Emily.
> (to Norcross sisters, early October, 1871; II, no. 367)

> Mother told me when I was a Boy, that I must "turn over a new Leaf--
> (to Ned Dickinson, about 1878; II, no. 571)

> An unexpected impediment to my reply to your dear last, was a call from my Aunt Elizabeth--"the only male relative on the female side..."
> (to Mrs. J. G. Holland, August, 1879; II, no. 473)

> Mrs. _____ re-decided to come with her son Elizabeth.
> (to Louise Norcross, early September, 1880; III, no 656)[5]

In reference to the poem, "A narrow fellow in the Grass" (see above, page 5), Samuel Bowles once asked Susan Dickinson, "How did that girl ever know that a boggy field wasn't good for corn?" Mrs. Dickinson's

[4]Emily Dickinson, The Letters of..., ed. Thomas H. Johnson, 3 vols. (Belknap, Harvard, Cambridge, 1958), I, letter no. 49. Hereafter volume and letter number will be placed in parentheses following citation of letter, within the text of the study.

[5]The dates of letters and poems which are recorded throughout this study but rarely commented on herein are quite significant because they indicate that certain attitudes and inclinations of mind were present throughout Emily Dickinson's lifetime, that they held intrinsic positions in her approach to, and her perception of, life.

reply was, "Oh, you forget that was Emily 'when a boy':"[6]

Certain of Emily Dickinson's attitudes toward her father are visible in her letters. The relationship is more clearly revealed in Bingham's study of the Dickinson family life and, especially, of the correspondence of other family members. Edward Dickinson was a stern, serious man, his emotions well-hidden and kept carefully in check. Responsibilities--as citizen, as husband, as father were very important to him. His responsibility toward his children was twofold: to provide for them; to guide them in obedience, goodness, and responsibility. In performing his fatherly duty, he expressed little emotional warmth.[7] Emily Dickinson admired, and loved her father--cautiously and at a distance; she feared and resisted his dictatorial tendencies.[8] Albert Gelpi, Clark Griffith, and Cynthia Chaliff place considerable importance on this relationship in their studies of Emily Dickinson.

Rebecca Patterson says "the cardinal fact in Emily Dickinson's life was the absence of her mother, not the presence of her father," that "much of her behavior reads like a vain search for a mother" (page 69). This last is certainly true, but the cardinal situation more truly in-

[6]Bianchi, Face to Face, p. 27; cited in Patterson, pp. 129-130. It is interesting that, despite her accurate quotation here, Mrs. Bianchi, in quoting the whole poem per se, uses Todd's "...when a Child, and Barefoot."

[7]Bingham, Emily Dickinson's Home, pp. 3-6, 124, 238, et passim.

[8]Gelpi, pp. 11, 13.

volved both factors: the domineering father, the subservient mother,[9] the lack of emotional warmth in either relationship, the consequent feeling that she was rejected by both parents.

Mrs. Dickinson's wifely role made her overly fastidious with household matters, and in this and other ways absorbed all of her time and energies--or so her poet daughter felt. Emily Dickinson came to regard her mother as a non-person, and indeed, to expect nothing from her:[10]

> You must tell mother that I was delighted to see her handwriting once more, but that she need not put herself out to write me, for I know just how much she has to do & on that account do not expect to see letters from her very often. Please tell Viny, that if she has any time from the cares of her household to write a line to me....
> Give much love to Father, mother, Viny, Abby, Mary, Deacon Haskell's family & all the good folks at home, whom I care anything about.
> (to Austin Dickinson, 21 October, 1847; I, no. 17; and cited in Patterson, p. 69)

> Mother would send her love--but she is in the "Eave spout," sweeping up a leaf, that blew in, last November.
> (to Mrs. Samuel Bowles, about August, 1861; II, no. 235)

> (Vinnie) has no Father and Mother but me and I have no Parents but her. [Both parents were still alive at this time.]
> (to Mrs. J. G. Holland, early summer, 1873; II, no. 391)

> 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.
> (to T. W. Higginson, January, 1874; II, no 405; and cited in Patterson, p. 69).

Edward Dickinson died on June 16, 1874. A year thereafter, his wife became paralyzed and remained an invalid until her death on November 14, 1882. Rebecca Patterson states that this seven-year period of

[9]Mrs. Dickinson's life pursuits were to please, to be pleasing to, to obey, and to serve Mr. Dickinson. She recruited the assistance of her daughters in these efforts. More important, she represented feminity to them, and she represented it as a kind of existence Emily could not emulate and would not accept. Patterson, pp. 63-64, 69.

[10]See Patterson, pp. 63-64, 69; and Higgins, pp. 30, 211.

nursing, by transposing the relationship between them, reconciled Emily Dickinson with her mother (pages 69, 282). Exact citation from the letters of Emily Dickinson is pertinent:

> She was scarcely the aunt you knew. The great mission of pain had been ratified--cultivated to tenderness by persistent sorrow, so that a larger mother died than had she died before.
>
> (to the Norcross sisters, late November, 1882; III, no. 785; and cited in Patterson, p. 67)

> Her dying feels to me like many kinds of Cold--at times electric, at times benumbing--then a trackless waste, love has never trod--
>
> (to James D. Clark, late 1882, III, no. 788)

> We were never intimate Mother and Children while she was our Mother--but Mines in the same Ground meet by tunneling and when she became our Child, the Affection came--When we were Children and she journeyed, she always brought us something. Now, would she bring us but herself, what an only Gift--...
>
> (to Mrs. J. G. Holland, mid-December, 1882; III, no. 792)

> Fashioning what she is,
> Fathoming what she was,
> We deem we dream--
> And that dissolves the days
> Through which existence strays
> Homeless at home.
>
> (last stanza of poem no. 1573, cited in letter to Maria Whitney, Spring, 1883; III, no. 815)

The first passage says, in effect, that, through pain, the non-person Emily Dickinson had called mother had finally become her Mother. From another viewpoint, one might say that the death of Mr. Dickinson, and Mrs. Dickinson's own illness, had transferred her dependence onto her daughters, so that a non-relationship had become a relationship. The second passage states both the love and the absence of love that Emily Dickinson had known for her mother. The third passage reiterates both of the first two in saying that Emily Dickinson did not feel emo-

tional relatedness to her mother so long as she was her mother's child; only when she became her mother's mother did she feel that she had found her mother.[11] The final passage in a sense comprises Emily Dickinson's final position in the search for a mother: she had indeed come to feel that where her own mother was, was home; that where her own mother was not, was homelessness.[12]

Until this time, Emily Dickinson had looked to her feminine companions for a protectiveness like that of mother for child:

> I'm just from meeting, Susie, and as I sorely feared, my "life" was made a "victim"....
>
> In Vain I sought to hide behind your feathers--Susie--feathers and Bird had flown [Sue was visiting in Manchester, New Hampshire] , and there I sat, and sighed, and wondered I was scared so, for surely in the whole world was nothing I need to fear--Yet there the Phantom was ....After the opening prayer I ventured to turn around. Mr. Carter immediately looked at me--Mr. Sweetser attempted to do so, but I discovered nothing, up in the sky somewhere, and gazed intently at it, for quite half an hour. During the exercises I became more calm, and got out of church quite comfortably. Several roared around, and, sought to devour me, but I fell an easy prey to Miss Lovina Dickinson, being too much exhausted to make any farther resistance....
>
> ...How I did wish for you--how, for my own dear Vinnie--how for Goliah, or Samson--to pull the whole church down....
>
> (to Susan Gilbert Dickinson , 15 January, 1854; I, 154)

> I often remember you both, last week. I thought that flown mama [Mrs. Norcross had died in 1859] could not, as was her wont, shield from crowd, and strangers, and was glad Eliza was there. I knew she would guard my children, as she has often guarded me, from publicity, and help to fill the deep place never to be full.
>
> (to the Norcross sisters, mid-September, 1860; II, no. 225)

[11] Cf. Patterson, cited above, page 39.

[12] Cf. statements from 1873 (letter no. 391) and 1874 (letter no. 405), cited above, p. 38.

> The nights turned hot, when Vinnie had gone, and I must keep no window raised for fear of prowling "booger," and I must shut my door for fear front door slide open on me at the "dead of night," and I must keep "gas" burning to light the danger up, so I could distinguish it--these gave me a snarl in the brain which don't unravel yet....
>
> About Commencement, children, I can have no doubt, if you should fail me then, my little life would fail of itself. Could you only lie in your little bed and smile at me, that would be support.
>
> (to the Norcross sisters, late May, 1863; II, no. 281)

> That you be with me annuls fear and I await Commencement with merry resignation. Smaller than David you clothe me with extreme Goliath.
>
> (to Mrs. J. G. Holland, early May, 1866; II, no. 318)

> Did you know Mama was a Precious Inn, where the Fair stopped?... Good Night, Little Brother...
>
> (to Ned Dickinson [Emily Dickinson places herself in the position of child to Sue] autumn, 1873; II, no. 398)

Emily Dickinson soon ceased going to meeting altogether. Commencement continued for many years to be her one social venture.[13] Her fear of being seen was neurotic to the point of morbidity; it was in fact a neurotic maneuver for freedom: that is, for the selectivity of seclusion. It served her in several ways. It freed her, in most instances, from social contacts that she would have found unpleasant. Perhaps it served as well to free her from attendance at religious panegyric in which she did not believe. It insured her a great deal of motherly attention and concern on the part of her female friends; it in fact demanded it. In the third passage cited above, Emily Dickinson said that if the protective feminine love she requested was denied, she could not continue to exist. That is a sweetly worded and delicately maneuvered

[13] Edward Dickinson held a reception in his home each year during Commencement week and desired that all of his children attend. Emily complied with this wish.

suicidal threat.

Further, this objection to being seen served to protect her from contact with the male.[14] The fear of the prowling "booger" of letter number 281, like the fear of the "Phantom" of letter number 154, is, in fact, the fear of the male, suggested by Griffith.[15] It suggests repressed, even perhaps rejected, heterosexual potential.

This fear of prowling "booger," together with the extreme need of feminine protection, recreates the situation of the female child frightened of the dominant father and lacking adequate love and security in the relationship with her mother. In that situation, the child may well reject her own developing attraction toward the father and return with greater force and greater need to the first love object, the mother.[16] Such a situation may be perpetuated in fearful hostility toward maleness (hence, rejection of normal sexuality), and craving, beyond

[14]Cf. Clark Griffith on dread of the male, cited above, pp. 30-31, but cf. also "On my volcano grows the grass," below, p. 110, in which the seclusion covers not a shrinking sensibility concealing itself from the male, but a frighteningly powerful sensibility; in which, in fact, the shrinking sensibility as well is an external maneuver to conceal its opposite.

[15]Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams in The Complete Psychological Works of..., trans. James Strachey (London, Hogarth, 1953), V, pp. 403-404, says, "Robbers, burglers, and ghosts of whom some people feel frightened before going to bed, and who sometimes pursue their victims after they are asleep, all originate from one and the same class of infantile reminiscence. They are the nocturnal visitors ... [to] ... children...in their sleep....In every case the robbers stood for the sleeper's father...."

[16]Sigmund Freud, "Femininity," New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis and Other Works in The Complete Psychological Works of..., trans. James Strachey (London, Hogarth, 1964), XXII, p. 130, discusses the progression from early masculinity complex to oedipal complex to disappointment in the father to return of masculinity complex.

possibility of fulfillment for motherly love-security. Sexual desire rejects the feared unknown in favor of what is known and craved already in the physical and emotional demands of infantilism; in its redirection to the primary object, sexual desire becomes entangled with the infant's craving.[17] This, most likely, was Emily Dickinson's psychosexual position for most of her life. It is a position of bisexual potential and homosexual manifestation.

To say that Emily Dickinson was hostile toward the male, however, is an oversimplification.[18] She did have friendships with men throughout her lifetime, yet she picked her men carefully; that is, she picked men who were "safe"--either much older than she, or married, or both. These relationships, until the time of her late love for Judge Otis Lord,[19] were either filial or fraternal (Patterson, p. 133). Several pertinent remarks might be made in this respect. In 1870, Emily Dickinson told Thomas Wentworth Higginson that Major Hunt interested her more than any man she had ever seen.[20] She saw Major Hunt only once, when he came to call in the company of his wife, Helen Hunt [Jackson].

Emily Dickinson saw Samuel Bowles more consistently than any other male friend. He is considered by several present day biographers to have been the poet's lover, or the person she fantasied to be her lover.

[17] Ibid., p. 130, " [Homosexual women] play the parts of mother and baby with each other as often and as clearly as those of husband and wife."

[18] See Cynthia Chaliff's remarks, cited above, p. 34.

[19] Judge Lord, who had been Edward Dickinson's close friend, was father image as well as love object. For further discussion of this relationship, see below, pp. 80-81.

[20] Emily Dickinson, The Letters of, II, no. 342b.

In 1859, Emily Dickinson sent Bowles the following poem:

> Her breast is fit for pearls,
> But I was not a "Diver"--
> Her brow is fit for thrones
> But I have not a crest.
> Her heart is fit for home--
> I--a Sparrow--build there
> Sweet of twigs and twine
> My perennial nest.
> c. 1859 (84) 1894[21]

On June 28, 1877, Samuel Bowles called on Emily Dickinson. After a period of disappointing reunion with Kate Scott Turner Anthon, a friend she had not seen in many years, Emily refused to see Bowles. Calling her "You damned rascal," he ordered her downstairs to see him. She went,[22] and afterwards sent him this message:

> ....
> I have no Life but this--
> To lead it here--
> Nor any Death--but lest
> Dispelled from there--
> Nor tie to Earths to come--
> Nor Action new
> Except through this extent
> The love of you.
>
> It is strange that the most intangible thing is the most adhesive.
> Your "Rascal."
>
> I washed the Adjective.
> (Letters, II, no. 515)

First of all, this letter seems to imply another more tangible love that has been lost. Coming almost immediately after Mrs. Anthon's visit,

[21]Cf. "The Malay took the pearl" (452) and "I'll clutch and clutch" (427), not cited in the present study, and cf. the dates of the letters to Kate Scott Turner, cited below, pp. 66-68.

[22]Gertrude M. Graves, Boston Sunday Globe, Jan. 12, 1930, cited in Emily Dickinson, The Letters of... ed. Thomas H. Johnson, commentary ff. letter no. 515, and in Jay Leyda, II, p. 275.

it may very well refer to her (especially considering the poem sent to Bowles in 1859, this seems likely). Whether or not this is the case, the letter appears to set Emily Dickinson's love for Samuel Bowles in the proper perspective; that is, in the perspective from which she herself saw it: it was the most intangible thing, and yet the most enduring love.[23]

It is useful to examine further Emily Dickinson's attitude toward those young women whose protection she so delicately demanded.[24] Those of her letters written prior to her mid-twenties exhibit persisting adolescent emotionalism and girlish innocence, veiling deeper and more unconscious longings.

[23]Patterson comments on the critical mis-readings of Emily Dickinson's filial and sisterly attachments to men, and especially to Samuel Bowles (page 133). In reference to the "Rascal" encounter, Jay Leyda cites Dickens' The Old Curiosity Shop, Chapter 33: "It may be observed in this place, lest the fact of Mr. Brass calling a lady [his sister] a rascal, should occasion any wonderment or surprise, that he was so habituated to having her near him in a man's capacity, that he had gradually accustomed himself to talk to her as though she were really a man. And this feeling was so perfectly reciprocal, that not only did Mr. Brass often call Miss Brass a rascal, or even put an adjective before the rascal, but Miss Brass looked upon it as quite a matter of course..." (Leyda, II, p. 277). The Old Curiosity Shop was published in 1841. Both Emily Dickinson and Samuel Bowles would have been familiar with it. The commentaries by both parties suggest that both indeed were familiar with it. There are several suggestions in all of this: that Emily Dickinson delighted in Bowles' allusion, that he was a confidant of long standing, that this particular exchange was a conversation-in-hieroglyph about Emily Dickinson's life-long, as well as her immediate, situation.

[24]In these demands (see above, pp. 40-41), Emily Dickinson was in fact using behavior resembling that of her timid and subservient mother to satisfy needs more closely resembling those of a father who received the absolute attention of his wife-companion. It may be that the poet's extreme timidity was a well introjected mask.

To Abiah Root:

> Abby has been to see you, and you had the happiest time.... Oh you are both asleep, and your hand is fast in Abby's. I stand by the fond young bedside, and think of "Babes in the Wood"--large babes--the ones we hear of were small ones--I seem to myself a robin covering you with leaves--the Babies we were are buried, and their shadows are plodding on.
> (Late 1850; I, no. 39)

To Emily Fowler [Ford]:

> ...I cant find many so dear to me as you--then I know I cant have you always--some day a "brave dragoon" will be stealing you away and I will have farther to go to discover you at all...
> (about 1851; I, no. 40)

> I miss you always, dear Emily, and I think now and then that I can't stay without you, and half make up my mind to make a little bundle of all my earthly things, bid my blossoms and home good-by, and set out on foot to find you....
> But another spring, dear friend, you must and shall be here, and nobody can take you away, for I will hide you and keep you--and who would think of taking you if I hold you tight in my arms?
> (Spring, 1854; I, no. 161)

Emily Fowler married (and left Amherst) on December 16, 1853, that is between the writing of these two letters. Despite the difference in dating, the two passages appear to be very closely related. The brave dragoon has come and the anticipated theft has taken place.

To Austin Dickinson:

> I guess he thinks he will certainly have her now--I mean will have Eliza [Coleman]. If I loved a girl to distraction, I think it would take some coaxing before I would act as footman to her crazy friends--yet love is pretty solemn. I don't know as I blame John.
> (27 July, 1851; I, no. 49)

> I showed [Martha Gilbert] all my treasures--I opened the little box containing the scented beads--I tried it on my wrist, she exclaimed it was how beautiful--then I clasped it on her own, and while she praised it's workmanship and turned it O'er and O'er, I told her it was her's, and you

> did send it to her--then that sweet face grew radiant, and joyful that blue eye, and Martha seemed so happy to know you'd tho't of her, it would have made you happy--I know!
> (23 September 1851; I, no. 52)

In each of these passages, Emily Dickinson identifies with the masculine party. In the first, she imagines herself in the servile suitor's position. In the second, she becomes a self-appointed proxy for her brother, yet the emotions in this case are hers, not Austin's. It is she who has thought of Martha. She "knows" that in her position Austin would have been made happy because she has been made happy in that position.

There was much discussion of religion between Emily Dickinson and her young friends. In her letters it became a debate about the relative merits of the religious and the irreligious life. Emily Dickinson did not see herself as either the typical "old maid" or the "New England nun", she is often considered to be; she saw her friends as religious and herself as worldly. Her descriptions of the desirable evils that Satan provides for worldlings, even in those early years, tend to be descriptions of the feminine:

> I determined to devote my whole life to [God's] service & desired that all might taste of the stream of living water from which I cooled my thirst. But the world allured me & in an unguarded moment I listened to her syren voice. From that moment I seemed to lose my interest in heavenly things by degrees....
> (to Abiah Root, 28 March, 1846; I, no. 11)

> The halt--the lame--and the blind--the old--the infirm--the bed-ridden--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.
> (to Jane Humphrey, 23 January, 1850; I, no. 30)

God's service in the first passage becomes an enumeration of unpleasantries in the second, and godliness is equated with meekness, patience, submission. This suggests an equation between godliness and feminine self-identification. The world's siren voice in the first passage becomes "this very sinful, and wicked world," that is, "other things," which "Satan covers...up with flowers," in the second passage. A siren is an enticing, dangerous woman. The flower is a feminine sexual symbol.

Also, the association between apparently "proper" behavior (the godly and feminine enterprise of visiting the halt, the lame, the blind), seeing and being seen by "the perfectly hateful to me," and the inclination to other things suggests the siutation of four years later (Letter 154, above, page 40) in which attending a religious service, and seeing and being seen, particularly by the men in the assembly, make escape mandatory. Comparison of the two passages, and consideration of the later date of letter 154, again suggests the extreme fear and the consequent necessity of escape in that letter as a mask, that is, as an unconscious maneuver to avoid the role assignment iterated in this, with its encumbrance of religiosity, feminine meekness, and compliance to the male, in this instance, to God. In letter 154, female companionship is professed to be needed as a protection; in the present letter, the feminine is the object of inclination, and, it seems, the gift of Satan.

Close examination of the emotional patterns in several successive relationships with women-friends, as revealed in extant letters, would be helpful at this point.

The first extant letter from Emily Dickinson to Abiah Root is dated 1845. The last is dated 1854, the year of Abiah Root's marriage. The following correspondence took place in the years 1848 to 1852; that is, during Emily Dickinson's eighteenth to twenty-second years:

> Slowly, very slowly, I came to the conclusion that you had forgotten me, & I tried hard to forget you, but your image still haunts me, and tantalizes me with fond recollections. At our Holyoke Anniversary, I caught one glimpse of your face, & fondly anticipated an interview with you..... Why did you not come back that day, and tell me what had sealed your lips toward me? Did my letter never reach you, or did you coolly decide to love me, & write to me no more? If you love me, & never received my letter--then may you think yourself wronged, and that rightly, but if you dont want to be my friend any longer, say so, & I'll try <u>once</u> more to blot you from my memory. Tell me very soon, for suspense is intolerable. I need not tell you, this is from,
>
> Emilie
>
> (29 October, 1848; I, no. 26)

> Wont you read some work upon snakes--I have a real anxiety for you!....There is an air of misanthropy about the striped snake that will commend itself at once to your taste, there is no monotony about it--but we will more of this again. Something besides ... serpents, and we will try to find <u>that</u> something. It cant be a garden, can it, or a strawberry bed, which rather belongs to a garden--nor it cant be a schoolhouse, nor an Attorney at Law. Oh dear I dont know <u>what</u> it is! Love for the absent dont <u>sound</u> like it, but try it, and see how it goes.
>
> I miss you very much indeed, think of you at night when the world's nodding.....
>
> I wondered when you had gone why we did'nt [sic] talk more--it was'nt for want of a subject, it never <u>could</u> <u>be</u> for <u>that</u>. Too many perhaps, such a crowd of people that nobody heard the speaker, and all went away discontented. You astounded me in the outset--perplexed me in the continuance--and wound up in a grand snarl--I shall be all my pilgrimage unravelling....
>
> (29 January 1850; I, no. 31)

> if you come in <u>November</u> you shall be mine, and I shall be thine, and so on "vice versa" until "ad infinitum" which isn't a <u>great</u> way off! While I think of it my dear friend, and we are upon these subjects, allow me to remark that you have the funniest manner of popping into town, and the most <u>lamentable</u> manner of popping <u>out</u> again of any one I know.
>
> It really becomes to me a matter of serious moment, this propensity of your's concerning your female friends--the

"morning cloud and the early dew" are not more evanescent.

I think it was Tuesday evening that we were so amused by the oratorical feats of three or four young gentlemen--I remember I sat by you and took great satisfaction in such seat and society--I remember further our mutual Goodnights, our promises to meet again, to tell each other tales of our own heart and life, to seek and find each other after so long a time of distant separation...

(19 August 1851; I, no. 50)

And I have many memories, and many thoughts beside, which by some strange entwining, circle you round and round; if you please, a vine of fancies, towards which dear Abiah sustains the part of oak, and as up each sturdy branch there climbs a little tendril so full of faith and confidence and the most holy trust, so let the hearts do also....[25]

...I am on the blue Susquehanna paddling down to you; I am not much of sailor, so I get along rather slowly, and I am not much of a mermaid, though I verily think I shall be, if the tide overtakes me at my present jog. Hard-hearted girl! I don't believe you care, if you did you would come quickly and help me out of this sea; but if I drown, Abiah, and go down to dwell in the seaweed forever and forever, I will not forget your name, nor all the wrong you did me![26]

Why did you go away and not come to see me? I felt so sure you would come, because you promised me, that I watched

[25]The memories and thoughts and fancies appear to comprise fantasy, with which the religious tone in the latter part of the sentence works in strange contrast. The expressed worshipful devotion is particularly interesting in reference to letters 11 and 30, above, page 47. The devotion that determined to serve God appears to have transferred itself to ED's friendship, perhaps, considering the three letters together, to the "siren voice," that is, to the feminine, that allured her away from God. Perhaps what Satan is covering up with flowers, or, in the present letter with tree imagery, is a new "Heaven," the service of which is not distasteful to Emily Dickinson.

[26]In this paragraph as in the preceding one, ED is quite clearly discussing her own emotional behavior toward Abiah. The goal of the rowing (sailor) and/or swimming (mermaid) is Abiah herself. To become "much of a sailor," etc., is to become capable or reaching this goal. There is, apparently, in the present "jog," a great deal of floundering, and so, the need of being assisted by the goal. The possibility of drowning suggests the possibility of ceasing to exist in letter no. 281, above, page 41. The absolute necessity of being rescued is a threat similar to the one in that letter, but here, the danger from which ED must be rescued is within the relationship, whereas there it appears to be external to it.

and waited for you, and bestowed a tear or two upon my absentee....
Notwithstanding your faithlessness I should have come to see you, but for that furious snow-storm; ...I did want one more kiss, one sweet and sad good-by, before you had flown away...
Johnson places the following previously unpublished material after the signature of the present letter, thus, suggesting this letter as its most probable placement:[27]

...but my dear child, you know that I do not feel well at sometimes, and when my feelings come, I permit them to overcome me when perhaps I ought not--yet at the time submission seems almost inevitable. I will try to get stout and well before you come again, and who says the past shall not be forgiven by the day to come? I say she shall be, and that the deeper and crimson, the purer and more like snow the heart repentant, when penitence can come.[28]
(about January 1852; I no. 69)

You remarked that I had written you more affectionately than wont--I have thought that word over and over, and it puzzles me now: whether our few last years have been cooler than our first ones, or whether I write indifferently when I truly know it not, the query troubles me. I do believe sincerely, that the friendship formed at school was no warmer than now, nay more, that this is the warmest--they differ indeed to me as morning differs from noon--...[29]
(about May 1852; I, no. 91)

It appears that what is growing steadily warmer on the one hand ("they differ...to me as morning differs from noon--") is growing steadily cooler on the other. That is, that as Abiah's interests were,

[27]See Johnson, "Notes on the Present Text," The Letters of Emily Dickinson, p. xxiii.

[28]Whether or not this is the original placement of the apology, it is particularly pertinent to this letter, which expresses stronger feelings than the previous extant letters. It indicates awareness that, at least to Abiah Root, such feelings were "wrong." It suggests anxiety about that awareness. The matter of apology for expression of strong feelings is reiterated in the letters to Susan Gilbert (Dickinson).

[29]This letter immediately follows letter no. 69 in ED's known correspondence with Abiah Root; it is, as well, the next-to-last extant letter to Abiah Root.

most likely, turning more and more toward men and the choosing of a husband, Emily Dickinson's interests were becoming more and more specifically focused on Abiah herself. It appears, further, that the more intense Emily's feelings became, the more elusive and evanescent Abiah became, and that the more elusive Abiah became, the more demanding became Emily's attentions to her. It is interesting that in the last letter, Emily misunderstands or perhaps deliberately misunderstands the meaning of Abiah's remark: "You remarked that I had written you more affectionately than wont--...it puzzles me.... whether I write indifferently when I truly know it not..."

Rebecca Patterson says of Emily Dickinson's friendship with Susan Gilbert (Dickinson), "Sue was to influence her more profoundly than [Benjamin] Newton or any other friend of her youth" (page 85);[30] she reports that the relationship was highly emotional for a while, but "declined to a calmer good will" when Susan became engaged to Austin (page 90), and thereafter lost much of its influence. The intensity of Emily Dickinson's emotions toward Susan Gilbert did certainly decline, yet in certain respects, the relationship was one of the most adhesive, and the most lastingly influential of Emily Dickinson's life. The early intense emotion, on Emily Dickinson's part, and the continuing relationship between the two women, represent two distinct stages in the emotional life of Emily Dickinson. They will be examined separately, and chronologically.

[30]See Patterson's discussion of this relationship, pp. 81-113, 221-222, 585, et pas. Note: In particular, the letters to Sue were not available in very useful or complete form at the time of Mrs. Patterson's study, and only several of them are quoted there.

Emily Dickinson's early attachment to Susan Gilbert was partially concurrent with her attachment to Abiah Root. In early September, 1851, she accompanied Sue as far as Springfield, Massachusetts, as Sue traveled to Baltimore, where she taught school until the summer of 1852. There is only one published letter dated between that trip and late January, 1852. On January 21, 1852, Emily Dickinson began her letter, "Will you forgive me, Susie, I cannot stay away...," and continued, "The days dont go very fast--I shall certainly have to poke them--if they dont go along; yet they do move a little, and bounding o'er them all--I meet the glad July--and have you in my arms--Oh Susie--you shall come, though the time be ever so long, and go ever so slowly--..." (I, no. 70). Had there not been a considerable number of letters in the interim, Emily would not have felt it necessary to apologize for writing on this occasion. The content of those letters would have been, to a greater or lesser degree, in keeping with that suggested here, and in the correspondence as it continued in the spring of 1852:

> Oh my darling one, how long you wander from me, how weary I grow of waiting and looking, and calling for you; sometimes I shut my eyes, and shut my heart towards you, and try hard to forget you because you grieve me so, but you'll never go away, Oh you never will--say, Susie, promise me again....Susie, forgive me, forget all what I say, get some sweet scholar to read a gentle hymn, about Bethleem and Mary, and you will sleep on sweetly and have as peaceful dreams, as if I had never written you all these ugly things. Never mind the letter Susie, I wont be angry with

you if you dont give me any at all...[31]
(about 6 February, 1852; I, no. 73 cited in Patterson, page 101)

Oh Susie, I would nestle close to your warm heart, and never hear the wind blow, or the storm beat, again. Is there any room there for me, or shall I wander away all homeless[32] and alone? Thank you for loving me, darling, ...and <u>will</u> you "love me more if ever you come home"?--it is enough, dear Susie, I know that I shall be satisfied....[33]
(about February 1852; I, no. 74)

They will all go but me, to the usual meetinghouse, to hear the usual sermon; the inclemency of the storm so kindly detaining me; and as I sit here Susie, alone with the winds and you present as addressee of the letter , I have the old <u>king feeling</u> even more than before, for I know that not even the <u>cracker man</u> will invade <u>this</u> solitude, this sweet Sabbath of our's....[34]--Oh, Susie, I often think that I will try to tell you how very dear you are, ...--yet darling, you know

[31]In expressed grievance and in expressed apology this letter reiterates letter no. 69 to Abiah Root (above, p. 51). There is more abjection in the present apology, suggestive of greater need to hold. The "ugly things" written, and apoligized for, in the present letter, are quite like the feelings that ED permits to overcome her, but apologizes for, in that letter. In naming them as "ugly" here, there is some suggestion of <u>greater</u> awareness, hence greater anxiety, than in letter no. 69. The "ugly" things written in the present letter are not "ugly." Perhaps they came to be considered "ugly" because they were objected to and because they were "inappropriate."

[32]Cf. "homeless," letter no. 815, cited above, p. 39.

[33]In this letter is expressed need for ever more motherly-protective loving. "Love me more"--"it is enough"--"I know that I shall be satisfied...," in the context of the preceding sentences, defeats its own stated confidence. It is hope, not assurance that "more" love will be adequate love.

[34]ED says she feels like a king when alone, imagining herself to be with Sue. This interview (because it is during church service, and perhaps because it is imaginary) can be invaded by no man--which situation produces the old <u>king feelings</u> involve the concepts of power and glory, as well as that of kingdom as realm. Elsewhere, ED remarks that she prefers power, "for Power is Glory, when it likes, and Dominion, too--" (<u>Letters</u>, II, no. 292).

it all--then why do I seek to tell you? I do not know; in thinking of those I love, my reason is all gone from me, and I do fear sometimes that I must make a hospital for the hopelessly insane, and chain me up there such times, so I wont injure you.

(about February 1852; I, no. 77)

Do I repine, is it all murmuring, or am I sad and lone, and cannot, cannot help it? Sometimes when I do feel so, I think it may be wrong, and that God will punish me by taking you away; for he is very kind to let me write to you, and to give me your sweet letters, but my heart wants more.[35]

(about 5 April 1852; I, no. 85; and cited in Patterson, p. 101)

So sweet and still, and Thee, Oh Susie, what need I more, to make my heaven whole?

Sweet Hour, blessed Hour, to carry me to you and to bring you back to me, long enough to snatch one kiss, and whisper Good-bye, again....

I have heard all about the journal. Oh Susie, that you should come to this! I want you to get it bound--at my expense--Susie--so when he takes you from me, to live in his new home, I may have some of you....[36]

(late April 1852; I, no. 88)

[35]Cf. letter no. 77, cited on this page, letter no. 69, cited above, p. 51 , letter no. 73, cited above, p. 53 , and the self-bewilderment, the suggestion that ED feels herself to be either fundamentally evil or insane, the apology for verbal behavior that is apparently unacceptable to the other party, and the anxiety over the whole situation, in each instance. In each case, the crux of the matter is ED's tremendous profession of, and demand for, love. In letter no. 77, love, loss of reason, insanity, and controlled inclination to act toward, are most specifically related. Particularly in this last, is there a suggestion of something becoming other than child-love. In the statement about king feeling, in the same letter, there is no suggestion of child-love.

[36]Cf. letter no. 40, cited above, p. 46 ; the requisite for king feeling in letter no. 77, cited above, p. 55 ; and "The Malay took the pearl..." (poem No. 452, not cited in the present study).

> Precious Sue--Precious Mattie!
> All I desire in This life--all I pray for, or hope for in that long life to come!
> (about May 1852; I, no. 92)[37]

> I hope for you so much, and feel so eager for you, feel that I cannot wait, feel that now I must have you--that the expectation once more to see your face again, makes me feel hot and feverish, and my heart beats so fast--....
> Why, Susie, it seems to me as if my absent Lover was coming home so soon--and my heart must be so busy, making ready for him.[38]
> (27 June 1852 [age 22]; I, no. 96)

Susan did return to Amherst, as planned, the following Saturday; consequently, there is no record of Emily Dickinson's friendship for her from June 27, 1852 to the following February. There is an interesting, however nonspecific commentary on Emily's general emotional outlook in a letter of December 29, 1852, from Lavinia Dickinson to Austin: "Emilie is pensive just now, recollections of "by gones" you know, "Old un" [Austin, himself] &c" (cited in Leyda, I, p. 229).

On February 24, 1853, Emily wrote to Sue, who was now visiting relatives in Manchester, New Hampshire, "How much escapes me, mine; whether you reached there safely, whether you are a stranger....All this, and more, Susie, I am eager to know, and I shall know soon, shant I? I love to think I shall. Oh Susie, Susie, I must call out to you in the old old way--I must say how it seems to me to hear the clock so silently tick all the hours away, and bring me not my gift--my own, my own!" (I, no. 102). Rebecca Patterson says that in this letter a "child-

[37] Cf. letter no. 88, cited above, p. 55, in which the heaven includes only Sue.

[38] Cf. footnote no. 35, above, p. 55.

like" mask is being ripped away from what is becoming mature passion (page 103). The hesitation, the pleading, the obliging acquiescence, and the apology are all present in the letter, yet the last portion of the final sentence does seem to be a stripping away of child-emotion and protective-concealing device. It seems, as well, to be the failure of a rather frenetic attempt to keep passions--child passions--mature passions--sharply in check. Perhaps it is more exactly the failure of an attempt to stop speaking of such passions to an unreceptive object.[39] When next she wrote (5 March 1853; I, no. 103), Emily was apologetic about that "quick letter," and asked forgiveness for it.[40]

On March 12, 1853, Emily commented about the fact that she was now addressing envelopes to Sue for Austin, remarking, "I love the opportunity to serve those who are mine, and to soften the least asperity in the path which ne'er "ran smooth," is a delight to me....I think of you and Austin--and know it pleases you to have my tiny services." The letter closed thus: "...Susie, I do bring you a Sister's fondest love--and gentlest tenderness, little indeed, but "a'," and I know you will not refuse them...." (I, no. 107). This is very sudden change, too sudden to be a natural abatement of emotion. Patterson suggests that Emily was, for the first time, beginning to realize Austin's "superior claims on Sue" (page 103).

[39]Cf. letter no. 96, in which "child" element is certainly absent. Perhaps that letter made necessary a redoubling of ED's efforts to control, and to refrain from speaking.

[40]Cited in Patterson, p. 103.

Susan returned to Amherst, via Boston, arriving on March 24. On March 23, Lavinia Dickinson wrote to Austin, "...Mrs. Cutler told Emilie that Sue would come home through Boston as she had never seen the city and besides she would see Austin & that would be so pleasant.[41] I wonder how she'll like the city & the people! I think she staid a long time [in Manchester] & during it all she has written but a short note to Emilie. It has made Emily unhappy & me vexed" (cited in Leyda, I, page 265).

Emily Dickinson's own letters to Austin, of this particular period, are of similar interest:

> I suppose the young lady will be getting home today--how often I thought of you yesterday afternoon and evening. I did "drop in at the Revere" a great many times yesterday. I hope you have been made happy. If so I am satisfied. I shall know when you get home.
> (24 March 1853; I, no. 109)

> And Austin is a Poet, Austin writes a psalm. Out of the way, Pegasus, Olympus enough "to him," and just say to those "nine muses" that we have done with them!
> Raised a living muse ourselves, worth the whole nine of them. Up, off, tramp!
> Now Brother Pegasus, I'll tell you what it is--I've been in the habit myself of writing some few things, and it rather appears to me that you're getting away my patent, so you'd better be somewhat careful, or I'll call the police! Well Austin, if you've stumbled through these two pages of folly without losing your hat or getting lost in the mud, I will try to be sensible, as suddenly as I can, before you are quite disgusted. Mademoiselle [Sue] has come, quite to the surprise of us all. I

[41] T. H. Johnson comments, "According to a carefully contrived plan between Austin and Sue, the latter returned from Manchester by way of Boston. The correspondence that follows indicates that they became engaged at this time" (Letters, I, p. 234). Emily's addressing of the letters was most likely part of this carefully contrived plan.

> concluded you had concluded to sail for Australia. Sue's very sober yet, she thinks it's pretty desolate without old Mr. Brown [Austen?].
>
> She seems to be absent, sometimes, on account of the "old un," and I think you're a villainous rascal to entrap a young woman's "phelinks" in such an awful way.
>
> You deserve,let me see; you deserve hot irons, and Chinese Tartary; and if I were Mary Jane, I would give you one such "mitten" Sir, as you never had before! I declare, I have half a mind to throw a stone as it is, and kill five barn door fowls, but I wont, I'll be considerate! Miss Susie was here on Friday, was here on Saturday, and Miss Emilie, there, on Thursday....
>
> Dear Austin, I am keen, but you are a good deal keener. I am something of a fox, but you are more of a hound![42] I guess we are very good friends tho', and I guess we both love Sue just as well as we can.
>
> (27 March 1853; I, no. 110)

> Last Saturday evening I spent with Sue in her room--she read me some funny things which you had just written her, concerning her sorry suitors, and your excellent suggestionsto prevent future accidents! I think you are rather hard upon unfortunate gentlemen--presume they would like to shoot you, if they knew you had won the bird.
>
> (8 April 1853; I, no. 114)

These letters are full of a kind of humor that amounts to sarcasm. It is the kind of humor Emily Dickinson found necessary for saying much of what she had to say; that is, for expressing strong and often "unacceptable" emotions and opinions, without taking the full responsibility that would be entailed in saying the same thing "seriously." The mask of humor was one of Emily Dickinson's deftest instruments in her correspondence as in her verse.[43]

[42]Cf. letter III, of the same spring, to Emily Fowler: "I come and see you a great many times every day, though I dont bring my body with me.... nobody sees me then, and I sit and chat away, and look up in your face, and no matter who calls, if its 'my Lord the King,' he does'nt interrupt me." Cf. letters no. 40, 77, 88 and footnote no. 34, cited above, pp. 46, 55, 54 respectively.

[43]Emily Dickinson's use of masks is gradually becoming a matter of critical discussion. Rebecca Patterson discusses at some length both the child-mask and the mask of irony (pp. 17-40, 41-71).

In letter number 110, Emily informs her brother, in jesting seriousness, that she is the poet, that he is a tramp, and threatens that if he is not more careful about trying to take what is rightfully hers, she will call the police. In the next she accuses Austin of villainy for winning Sue. In the last she suggests fitting punishments for such villainy--to be administered by herself, and comments indirectly that although she can have something of Sue, he is capable of having more. She guesses that she and Austin are good friends, and that they both love Sue as much as they can. In this last, there is at least a suggestion of doubt that Austin loves Sue more.

In the next letter (114), Emily suggests that those unfortunate gentlemen who have loved and lost in respect to Susan Gilbert would--if they knew of the situation (as she does)--like to shoot Austin (or throw a stone, or call the police?). If Emily Dickinson was jealous of Austin for presuming to write verse, her jealousy was two-fold.

In October, 1853, Susan Gilbert returned to Amherst from a trip to New York. Instead of paying an immediate visit, Emily sent the following note:

> It's hard to wait, dear Susie, though my heart is there...and I wanted to go to you, but I thought it would be unkind--so not till tomorrow, Darling--...Love for you Darling--How can I sleep tonight?
>
> Ever Emilie--
>
> So precious, my own Sister, to have you here again--Somebody loves you more--or I were there this evening--
>
> (I, no. 135)

In the summer of 1854, Sue was on an extended trip to New York and Michigan. In late August, Emily wrote to her:

> Thro' Austin, I've known of you, and nobody in this world except Vinnie and Austin, know that

> in all the while, I have not heard from you....
> I do not miss you Susie--of course I do not miss you--I only sit and stare at nothing from my window, and know that all is gone....
> I rise, because the sun shines, and sleep has done with me, and I brush my hair, and dress me, and wonder what I am and who has made me so,[44] and then I wash the dishes, and anon, wash them again, and then 'tis afternoon, and Ladies call, and evening, and some members of another sex come in to spend the hours, and then that day is done. And, prithee, what is Life?....
> It's of no use to write to you--Far better bring dew in my thimble to quench the endless fire--My love for those I love--not many--not very many, but dont I love them so?
> (I, no. 172)

Emily's resolve to subdue her emotions and/or to keep quiet about them, continued to yield at times to the force of what she felt, and could not prevent herself from saying.

The mention of "members of another sex" in this letter is significant, for one thing, because such mention is a rarity in the correspondence of Emily Dickinson, particularly of this period, and for another, because visits from members of that other sex are given the same significance as brushing one's hair, dressing oneself, washing dishes twice, and Ladies' social visits, that is, they are completely insignificant. "All is gone" (my italics), and "all" is Sue.

In another letter of the same period (and following this one in the Johnson text), Emily appears to be disturbed at Sue's reactions to her feelings:

> Sue--you can go or stay--There is but one alternative--We differ often lately,and this must be the last.

[44]Cf. letter no. 69, p.51 and letter no. 77, above, 55.

> You need not fear to leave me lest I should be alone, for I often part with things I fancy I have loved....
> Sue--I have lived by this. It is the lingering emblem of the Heaven I once dreamed,[45] and though if this is taken, I shall remain alone, and though in that last day, the Jesus Christ you love, remark he does not know me--there is a darker spirit will not disown it's child.[46]
> Few have been given me, and if I love them so, that for idolatry, they are removed from me--I simply murmur gone, and the billow dies away into the boundless blue, and no one knows but me, that one went down today.
> (about 1854; I, no. 173)

T. H. Johnson remarks about this letter, "There is nothing in other letters to indicate a rift between the girls at this time... [this letter] is placed here to follow the emotional tone of the letter to Susan of late August, though the disagreement on spiritual matters that seems to lie behind it may have no connection with the feeling of neglect shown in the earlier one" (Letters, I, page 307). A close examination of the present letter suggests that the cause of disagreement is not so obscure. Emily Dickinson says, "....if I love them so, that for idolatry, they are removed from me--I simply murmur gone..."[47] Emily's idolatry for Susan is the cause of disagreement; it is the cause of

[45] Cf. Heaven in letter no. 88, cited above, p.54, and letter no. 92, cited above, p. 56.

[46] Cf. "And wonder what I am and who has made me so" in letter no. 172, cited above, p. 61.

[47] Cf. letter no. 85, cited above, p. 55: "...God will punish me by taking you away...

anticipated loss.[48] The idolatry is what Emily Dickinson has lived by; the idolatry is "the lingering emblem of the Heaven [she] once dreamed." Mr. Johnson's placement of the letter is most likely accurate, as is the connection between the disagreement in this letter and the feeling of neglect in the previous one.

The tone and content of the letter suggest protest, on Sue's part, to the effect that Emily has written "more affectionately than is wont,"[49] perhaps even that Sue has initiated the thought of ending the friendship. Emily's friendship with Sue followed the pattern of that with Abiah Root in many respects, but it did not end precipitately. Perhaps Emily was more dependent on Sue than she had been on Abiah. In any case, Sue was to be Emily's sister-in-law, and Emily continued throughout her life to seek Sue's love and approval, gradually finding other and more "acceptable" means of resolving her emotional situation.

Yet the idolatry letter solved nothing. Emily's apparent resolve to be accepted as she was or else to end the friendship was more nearly invocation of resolve than resolve itself. In a final letter of 1854, Emily remarks, "Austin goes tomorrow, unless kept by storm. He will see

[48]A note of 1868 from Emily to Sue is pertinent here:

> Susan's Idolator keeps a Shrine for Susan.
> (II, no. 325)

[49]Cf. letters 69 and 91, cited above, page 51. In reference to Sue's apparent reactions to Emily's letters: Certainly she would later object to publication of sentiments she had objected to receiving (see pp.3,8,10 above).

you, Darling! What I cannot do. Oh could I!....They say that absence conquers. It has vanquished me. Mother and Vinnie send their love. Austin must carry his."[50]

Sue was to return from her trip on February 10, 1855. Emily wrote to her again in late January:

> I love you as dearly, Susie, as when love first began...and it breaks my heart sometimes, because I do not hear from you. I wrote you many days ago--I wont say many weeks, because it will look sadder so....
> I miss you, mourn for you, and walk the Streets alone--often at night, beside, I fall asleep in tears, for your dear face, yet not one word comes back to me from that silent West. If it is finished, tell me, and I will raise the lid to my box of Phantoms, and lay one more love in; but if it lives and beats still, still lives and beats for me then say me so, and I will strike the strings to one more strain of happiness before I die....
> (II, no. 177)

And in the same letter:

> Vinnie and I are going [to Washington] soon--either this week or next--father has not determined. I'm sure I cannot go, when I think that you are coming, and I would give the whole world if I could stay, instead.

Here the sense of self-possession and control is once more completely lacking. In the context of the letter, "I will strike the strings to one more strain of happiness before I die" is an indirect suicidal threat. What will happen if the love is finished?

The plans for going to Washington appear to be unalterable, for Emily "would give the whole world" to remain home and see Sue, but does not. This desire to stay is like her apparently self-prohibited desires to see Sue on other occasions. On those occasions the prohibition involved deference to Austin's superior claims and Emily's apparent

[50] (1 November to 3 December 1854; I, no. 176).

opinion that her own wishes were unsuitable, and not to be respected.[51]

While in Washington, Emily wrote, "I think I cannot wait, when I remember you, and that is always, Children [the letter is addressed to both Sue and her sister, Mattie][52] I shall love you more for this sacrifice....We think we shall go to Philadelphia next week, tho' father has'nt decided...I dont know how long we shall stay there, nor how long in New York. Father has not de -ci- ded" (28 February 1855, II, 178). Several years earlier, Mr. Dickinson had taken his family to Washington, but allowed Emily to change her plans and remain at home with Sue. The unalterable plans on the present occasion, Emily's unwillingness to go, her feeling of sacrifice in going, and the parental dictums concerning the progress of the trip suggest that her self-prohibition, at least in the present instance, was condoned, perhaps encouraged, maybe even instigated and controlled, by her parent. If Emily were becoming quite excited at the prospect of Sue's return home, and if Mr. Dickinson were aware that her eagerness to be with Sue was an unpleasant or disturbing interruption to Austin or to Sue, he may have decided that a trip away from home would both serve as a diversion for Emily and allow Sue and Austin a pleasanter time together.

Two years after Sue's marriage to Austin in 1856, Emily wrote to her:

[51] Cf. letter no. 135, cited above, p. 60, and letter no. 176, cited p. 64.

[52] Cf. letter no. 92 cited above, p. 56, and letter no. 88, which immediately precedes it, p. 55. In that situation, as in the present one, the mention of Mattie appears to be an attempt to disperse emotion felt for Sue.

> I will never sell you for a piece of silver. I'll keep you in a casket--I'll bury you in the garden--and keep a bird to watch the spot--perhaps my pillow's safer--Try my bosom last--That's nearest of them all, and I should hear a foot the quickest, should I hear a foot--..."[53]
>
> (26 September 1858; II, no. 194)

The crisis period in Emily Dickinson's life is generally considered to have been the years 1859-62. The love affair, or as is generally held now, the imaginary love affair, took place during this period. It is the period during which Emily Dickinson became a great poet, and in fact, wrote over one-third of her poetry. It is the period during which many of the "Mob within the Heart" poems were written (see above, pages 21-22).[54] It is as well the period that precipitated the deepening seclusion and near-madness.

It is also the period during which Kate Scott Turner carried on an intimate correspondence with Emily Dickinson and made several extended visits to Amherst.

Patterson attempts to reconstruct the events of the period by establishing relationships between these various factors. Perhaps it would be helpful to examine letters to Kate separately:

> Sweet at my door this March night another candidate....Then bright I record you! Kate gathered in March! It is a small bouquet, dear--but what it lacks in size, it gains in fadelessness,--Many can boast a hollyhock, but few can bear a rose!...So I rise, wearing her--so I sleep, holding--Sleep at last with her fast in my hand and wake bearing my flower.
>
> (about March 1859; II, no. 203)

[53]Freud interprets both bird and foot as phallic symbols, "The Acquisition and Control of Fire," in Works, XXII (1964), p. 190, and "Three Essays on Sexuality--The Sexual Aberrations," in Works, VII (1953), p. 155, respectively.

[54]The poet's age at this period is significant. In 1859, Emily Dickinson was twenty-nine.

Finding is slow, facilities for losing so frequent in a world like this, I hold with extreme caution,[55]a prudence so astute may seem unnecessary, but plenty moves those most dear, who have been in want...I have been a Beggar, and rich tonight, as by God's leave, I believe I am, the "Lazzaroni's faces haunt, pursue me still! You do not yet "dislimn," Kate, Distinctly sweet your face stands in its phantom niche--I touch your hand--my cheek your cheek--I stroke your vanished hair, Why did you enter, sister, since you must depart? Had not its heart been torn enough but you must send your shred? Oh! our Condor Kate! Come from your crags again! Oh; Dew upon the bloom fall yet again a summer's night....There is a subject dear--on which we never touch, Ignorance of its pageantries does not deter me,--I, too went out to meet the "Dust" early in the morning, I, too in Daisy mounds possess hid treasure--therefore I guard you more--You did not tell me you had once been a "Millionaire"[56]....I write you from the summer. The murmuring leaves fill up the chinks thro' which the winter red shone, when Kate was here, and Frank[57] was here--and "Frogs" sincerer than our own splash in their Maker's pools--Its but a little past--dear--and yet how far from here it seems...

(Johnson dates the letter "summer 1860?"; II, no. 222)

Katie--

Last year at this time I did not miss you, but positions shifted until I hold your black in strong hallowed remembrance, and trust my colors are to you tints slightly beloved. You cease indeed to talk, which is a custom prevalent among things parted and torn, but shall I class this, dear, among elect exceptions, and bear you just as usual unto the kind Lord?--We dignify our Faith, when we can cross the ocean with it, though most prefer ships.

How do you do this year? I remember you as fires begin, and evenings open at Austin's, without the Maid

[55]Cf. "I held a jewel in my fingers--" (poem no. 245, not cited in this study) with this letter and letter no. 203, cited above p. 66.

[56]This sentence apparently refers to Kate's marriage to Campbell Turner who died in 1857 (Patterson, p. 168).

[57]Unidentified; Patterson suggests two possible identifications (p. 168).

in black, Katie, without the Maid in black, Those were unnatural evenings.--Bliss is unnatural--How many years, I wonder, will sow the moss upon them, before we bind again, a little altered it may be, elder a little it will be, and yet the same as suns, which shine, between our lives and loss, and violets, not last years, but having the Mother's eyes.--

Do you find plenty of food at home? Famine is unpleasant.--

It is too late for "Frogs," or which pleases me better, dear--not quite early enough! The pools were full of you for a brief period, but that brief period blew away, leaving me with many stems, and but a few foliage! Gentlemen here have a way of plucking the tops of trees, and putting the fields in their cellars annually, which in point of taste is execrable, and would they please omit, I should have fine vegetation & foliage all the year round, and never a winter month. Insanity to the sane seems so unnecessary--but I am only one, and they are "four and forty," which little affair of numbers leaves me impotent. Aside from this dear Katie, inducements to visit Amherst are as they were.--I am pleasantly located in the deep sea, but love will row you out of her hands are strong, and don't wait till I land, for I'm going ashore on the other side--

Emilie.

(Johnson dates the letter "late 1859?"; II, no. 209)[58]

These letters at once repeat and alter the pattern of the earlier

[58]Johnson says the tone of letter 209 suggests that it was written very early in ED's friendship with Kate Scott Turner, that otherwise the date is conjectural (Letters, II, p. 355). I suggest that the tone suggests that the letter was written very near the end of the friendship and certainly after letter number 222 (see discussion below, pp. 70-72), and further, that this chronology is intrinsic in the symbolism of the two letters: in letter 222, ED speaks of the frogs as present; in letter 209, it is "too late for frogs"; in letter 222, Kate does not yet "dislimn"; in letter 209, "The pools were full of you for a brief period, but that brief period blew away" (she has "dislimned"). In letter 222, it is summer; in letter 209, it appears to be autumn. In letter 209, there is possible suggestion that a year has elapsed. Letter 209 was written in early fall after letter 222 was written in the summer. Rebecca Patterson suggests this order for the two letters, as well, with letter 209 placed in early 1861 (pp. 146, 166, 186-188).

letters to Abiah Root and Susan Gilbert.[59] They are noticeably more mature: youthful effusion and childish pleading give way to reticent and controlled wit.

Letter 203 is most like those of the earlier relationships. Its meaning reiterates a primary theme in the early correspondence.[60] There, however, it is always a matter of longing for. Here, it is stated as a matter of having. In the present letter, there is self-confidence, even triumph, as though Emily Dickinson feels that love is given her without the pleading.

In letter 222, the familiar sense of necessary caution and fear of loss slip in. The demands, however, are more truly demands that the beloved person return to Amherst than demands for a love of greater intensity. Despite the ever-present fear of loss, and the fact of Kate's absence, the relationship is considered to be very much in the present: "rich tonight, as by God's leave, I believe I am...." The use of the word Condor is significant. The condor is a large American vulture; the vulture is, as well as a bird of prey, a rapacious person, greedy in eating (compare food below, page 71).

[59]Patterson says Emily's attachment to Sue "served to prepare her for the later relationship with Kate Scott Turner (pp. 94-95), and elsewhere she remarks, "To note the unchanging character of Emily's ideas is not to suggest that she was unusual. The ideas of youth, and especially of childhood, set like concrete; the child is always father of the man. But it is necessary to show how Emily behaved in her youth in order to show that she was behaving in the same manner at a later period. Her attitude toward Sue would be a model of her attitude toward Kate" (p. 385).

[60]Cf. especially the letters about "heaven" to Sue and the "idolatry" letter, which states that heaven as apparently only dreamed.

In letter 209, fear of loss gives way to acknowledgment of apparent loss. "You cease indeed to talk, which is a custom prevalent among things parted and torn" brings to mind Emily's pleas for letters from Abiah Root and Susan Gilbert. In hoping "that this is an elect exception" Emily is requesting assurance of continuing love, yet there is no child-mask in this letter. There are no cryings out in the old, old way and no abject apologies, in fact no apologies. There are no indications that Emily Dickinson cannot comprehend her own emotions and behavior, and there is no anxiety about "what I am" and "who made me." There are no stated fears of insanity. There is a calm statement of something referred to as insanity. There is wit that tends toward a subtle mergence with symbolism. There is self-control throughout: Emily Dickinson's wishes are firmly stated; they do not plead. The symbolism of the closing sentence, which, according to Freudian analysis, is sexual symbolism, repeats that of "I am on the Blue Susquehanna paddling down to you..." in letter 69 to Abiah Root (cited above, page 51). There Emily suggests that Abiah "come quickly and help me out of this sea..." Here she invites Kate to join her in the sea, and states her intention to go "ashore on the other side" decisively.

Rebecca Patterson says that the emotion in these letters is expressed in figures or by allusions (pages 167-168), yet the meaning is available and the emotion apparent in letters 203 and 222.

Letter 209 presents greater difficulties. Patterson suggests that food represents love, and famine the absence of love (pages 188-189), and cites a letter of 1874 to the Norcross cousins:

> Affection is like bread, unnoticed till we starve, and then we dream of it, and sing of it, and paint it, when

> every urchin in the street has more than he can eat. (II, no. 379, cited in Patterson, page 189).

A letter of March 2, 1859 is both more immediate chronologically and more specific as to the nature of food:

> I gather from [the "Springfield Republican"] that you are about to doff your weeds for a Bride's Attire. Vive le fireside! Am told that fasting gives to food marvellous Aroma, but by birth a Bachelor, disavow Cuisine. [The occasion is Dr. Holland's return from a lecture tour].
> (II, no. 204)

Here food is specifically sexual love. In letter 209 to Kate, everything preceding the remarks about food refers to the relationship between Emily and Kate, and the sentences immediately following those remarks speak of the frogs of letter 222 and relate them metaphorically to Kate. Consequently the remarks about food must refer to the relationship between Emily and Kate. Famine appears to be what Emily hopes Kate is not suffering. At the same time it is what Kate's absence is forcing Emily to suffer.

After frogs, the final paragraph appears at first to be nonsensical. A great many things are spoken of in rapid succession, and read non-symbolically, they have no bearing on one another. However, there is continuity. Foliage, like frogs, refers metaphorically to you. Tops of trees and fields are foliage. Further, beginning with frogs, each item is spoken of as something Emily Dickinson herself has had, wishes to have (or to have again), or feels that she should have. The paragraph ends with "inducements to visit Amherst," which are, in fact, inducements to join her "in the deep sea."

If one considers the sea and riding in a boat to be legitimate sexual symbols, there is another interesting continuity of meaning that relates still other, otherwise disparate or obscure thoughts throughout

the letter. Word definition becomes particularly important at this point. In the 1846 edition of Noah Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language,[61] unnatural means contrary to the laws of nature, contrary to the natural feelings, acting without the inclinations or passions of our common nature. Impotent is weak, lacking power, unable by nature to perform any act, wanting the power of propagation, as males. Considering the earlier use of the word insane in letter 77 to Susan Gilbert ("in thinking of those I love, my reason is all gone from me, and I do fear sometimes that I must make a hospital for the hopelessly insane, and chain me up there such times, so I wont injure you") and the context of insanity in the present letter, it appears that insanity means unnaturalness, abnormality.

Beginning in paragraph two, then, we have: unnatural--Bliss--unnatural--food--insanity--impotent--sea--love--row--other side. When Emily Dickinson goes ashore, it will not be on the side of "sanity" (normality?) and majority, it will be on the other side. The close friendship with Kate Scott Turner ostensibly ended about this time.[62] If the final letter to Mrs. Turner, cited above, has been interpreted correctly, it would appear that she decided for "sanity." This was a mutual relationship and it appears to have ended in rejection. Considering the pattern of Emily Dickinson's earlier behavior toward Abiah

[61] Little, Boston). Emily Dickinson's "Lexicon," according to Charles Anderson, Emily Dickinson's Poetry, p. 35, was the 1847 edition of this work. Hereafter in this study, words of specific sexual connotation will be defined according to the 1846 edition of Webster.

[62] Emily Dickinson is known to have sent several poems to her in the period of the letters cited above; there is a letter of 1866 (II, no. 317); there was a visit of 1877 (Patterson, pp. 283-288, 427; Leyda, II, p. 272.)

Root and Susan Gilbert, and Millicent Bingham's remarks about "disappointment in a too-much-loved woman friend,"[63] it is more than likely that the emotional crisis of the 1860's was directly precipitated by Mrs. Turner's rejection of her. The pattern of these three relationships was not repeated again in the same way. No fourth person was chosen to take Kate Scott Turner's place. There is some suggestion in the later letters that the verbal medium became Emily Dickinson's exclusive means of expressing a sexuality whose preferred object was receding into the impossible. Words were readily available. She was as remarkably successful in dealing with them as she was unsuccessful in dealing with actualities.

Three portions of the late correspondence are pertinent here. First are the usages of nature symbolism, then specific references to various women, some of whom Emily Dickinson had never seen, and finally, the later correspondence with Susan Gilbert Dickinson, most of it comprising messages sent "across the hedge," that is, from one house to the next:

> The lovely flowers embarrass me,
> They make me regret I am not a Bee--
> Was it my blame or Nature's?
> (to Lucretia Bullard, Cambridge,[64] about 1864; III, no. 1047)

> Life of flowers lain in flowers--what a home of dew!
> (to Mrs. Samuel Bowles, 1879?; II, no. 609)

[63]Cited above, pp. 21, 22.

[64]Emily Dickinson stayed in Cambridge with Louise and Frances Norcross twice, for several months, about this time, while receiving medical treatment, presumably for her eyes. The letters written from Cambridge to her sister, Lavinia, suggest that her difficulty was largely emotional.

> I have long been a Lunatic on Bulbs, though screened by my friends, as Lunacy on any theme is better undivulged, but Emerson's intimacy with his "Bee" only immortalized him--[65]
>
> (to Mrs. J. Howard Sweetser, early May 1883; III, no. 823)

> I never pass [a "lily of the field"] without being chagrined for Solomon, and so in love with "the lily" anew, that were I sure no one saw me, I might make those advances of which in after life I should repent.
>
> (to Maria Whitney, May 1883?; III, no. 824)

> Flowers are so enticing I fear that they are sins--like gambling or apostasy.
>
> (III, Prose Fragment no. 74)

Particularly in Emily Dickinson's later years, one of her major contacts with the world was through gifts of flowers, accompanied by messages such as these. In those pre-Freudian days, such messages may have caused half comprehending curiosity; they would have been consciously understood by few.

In each of the passages cited here, flowers are identified as the object of Emily Dickinson's affection, that is to say, feminity is the object of her affection. In the second passage, the Home described is a completely feminine entity. In the first passage, the association of blame with regret that "I am not a Bee" suggests that the poet comprehended her own symbols. The fourth passage reiterates the first, omitting the bee, and introducing the ideas of secrecy, sin, doom, and repentance. In the fifth passage the idea of sin recurs. In the third passage there is secrecy, immortality instead of doom, and insanity instead of sin.

[65] Cf. insanity, above, letter 209, cited above, p. 68.

Similar concepts appear in letters referring specifically to women friends or acquaintances from the 1860's to 1884:

> Upon these winter nights--I have much recollection of evenings passed with you and her--at the "parsonage"--and the fire crackles--still--and her cheek softly reddens--as we talk--and laugh...
> (to E. S. Dwight, mid-December 1861; II, no. 243)

> Emily Dickinson dreamed all night of <u>you</u> (not me) & next day got my letter proposing to come here!! She only knew of you through a mention in my notice of Charlotte Hawes.
> (Thomas Wentworth Higginson to his wife, 16 August 1870; II, no. 342a)

> Perhaps you thought dear Sister, I wanted to elope with you and feared a vicious Father.
> It was not quite that.
> (to Mrs. J. G. Holland, early October 1870; II, no. 354)

> The Parting I tried to smuggle resulted in quite a Mob at last! The Fence is the only Sanctuary. That no one invades because no one suspects it.
> Why the Thief ingredient accompanies all Sweetness Darwin does not tell us.
> (to Mrs. J. G. Holland, early 1877; II, no. 487)

> I have felt so sweet an impatience to write you, that I thought it perhaps inordinate, and to be disciplined, like other unruly wishfulness-- but however you stem Nature, she at last succeeds.
> (to Mrs. J. G. Holland, early 1877; II, no. 487)

> Intrusiveness of flowers is brooked by even troubled hearts.
> They enter and then knock--then chide their ruthless sweetness, and then remain forgiven.
> May these molest as fondly!
> (to Maria Whitney, early 1878?; II, no. 540)

> If you will lift your little Hands I will surely fill them, though not agree to let them go, but to that, your Lovers would not consent--
> (to Mrs. J. Howard Sweetser, early May 1883; III, no. 823)

> The picture of the pretty Home is very warm and vivid, and <u>we</u> half "touch" it too, unless softly forbidden--not with mortal Fingers, but those more tidy, mental ones, which never leave a blot--
> (to Anna Newman Carleton, about 1884; III, no. 925)

The circumstances for such messages as these were most likely slight, but what Emily Dickinson's imagination did with the circumstances is significant. Of the persons receiving these particular messages, only Mrs. Holland was a friend and correspondent for many years, and her position in Emily Dickinson's affections was more motherly than otherwise. Dr. Holland was also Emily's good friend. The mention of elopement was jest, yet it was mention of elopement. It is reminiscent of Emily's eagerness, in the early years, for Susan Gilbert's presence, as for that of an absent lover. The thought of vicious fathers and objecting lovers reiterates Emily's early feelings of rivalry with Austin, and with the "brave dragoon" who finally carried Emily Fowler away. The necessity of discipling unruly wishfulness suggests the early apologies to Abiah Root and Susan Gilbert and the repeated necessity of disciplining unruly desires to see Sue. These messages, like those ostensibly about flowers above, state in concentrated and controlled form those emotions that confronted Emily Dickinson in intense and uncontrolled form in her earlier years.

Such letters, written out of a growing seclusion rarely broken by personal contact, were perhaps a means whereby one could 'half "touch"... --not with mortal Fingers, but those more tidy, mental ones, which never leave a blot--." This was neither truly having nor truly relinquishing. It was not an ideal solution; it was in fact a meager solution, but it may have been the only solution of which Emily Dickinson remained psychologically capable. It would as well have afforded her a very real pleasure in her own artistic ingenuity in stating her position.

The messages sent to Susan Gilbert Dickinson during these later years are particularly interesting:

> for the Woman whom I prefer, Here is Festival--Where my Hands are cut, Her fingers will be found inside--
> Our beautiful Neighbor "moved" in May--it leaves an Unimportance.
> Take the Key to the Lily, now, and I will lock the Rose.
> (Cambridge, about 1864; II, no. 288)[66]

> Do not cease, Sister. Should I turn in my long night I should murmur "Sue"--
> (Cambridge, September 1864; II, no. 294)

> Susan's Idolator keeps a Shrine for Susan.
> (about 1868; II, no. 325)

> I trust that you are warm. I keep your faithful place. Whatever throng the Lock is firm upon your Diamond Door.
> (September 1871; II, no. 364)[67]

> "Egypt--thou knew'st"--
> (Johnson quotes Antony and Cleopatra, III, xi, 56-61 (Anthony)):
> Egypt, thou knew'st too well,
> My heart was to thy rudder tied by the strings,
> And thou shouldst tow me after. O'er my spirit
> Thy full supremacy thou knew'st, and that
> Thy beck might from the bidding of the gods
> Command me.
> (about 1874; II, no. 430)

[66]Johnson makes no editorial suggestions as to the identity of "Our beautiful Neighbor." The fact that "moved" is placed in quotation marks suggests some symbolic meaning for it. Rebecca Patterson suggests that Kate Scott Turner became engaged to John Hone Anthon in June, 1864. It may be that the "beautiful Neighbor" was Kate and the "move" a final choice between Emily and Mr. Anthon. Flowers are feminine genital symbols. In "A Case of Hysteria," Works, VII (1953) pp. 66-67, n. 1; 97, Freud says that keys are phallic symbols.

[67]In A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis, trans. Joan Riviere (Liveright, N. Y., 1920), p. 139, and in "The Interpretation of Dreams," Works, V (1953), p. 397, respectively, Freud considers jewels and doors to be feminine genital symbols.

Only Woman in the World, Accept a Julep--
(about 1875; II, no. 447)

To own a Susan of my own--
Is of itself a Bliss--
Whatever Realm I forfeit, Lord,
Continue me in this!
(about 1877; II, no. 531)[68]

Susan knows she is a Siren--and that at a word from her, Emily would forfeit Righteousness--Please excuse the grossness of this morning--I was for a moment disarmed--...
(mid-June 1878; II, no. 554)[69]

The Competition of Phantoms is inviolate--
(about 1881; III, no. 707)

Susan's Calls are like Antony's Supper--
"And pays his Heart for what his Eyes eat, only--"
(about 1883; III, no. 854)

That any Flower should be so base as to stab my Susan, I believe unwillingly--
"Tasting the Honey and the Sting," should have ceased with Eden--Choose Flowers that have no Fang, Dear--Pang is the Past of Peace--
(about 1884; III, no. 911)

Tell the Susan who never forgets to be subtle, every Spark is numbered--

[68]This poem was written at the period of Emily Dickinson's disappointing reunion with Kate Scott Turner Anthon. Cf. the letter to Samuel Bowles, cited above, p. 44.

[69]Johnson's commentary: "In mid-May, 1878, Sue spent a month visiting in the Midwest. She appears to have paid an unexpected morning call on her return," (Letters, II, p. 612).

In Emily Dickinson's Home, Bingham writes, "To some natures suppression is a challenge up to a point. Emily was always trying to get her heart "under" (p. 431).

The farthest Thunder that I heard
Was nearer than the Sky--
And rumbles still--
Though torrid Noons--
Have lain their Missiles by--
(about 1884, III, no. 914)

Most immediately notable in these passages is a repeated effort on the part of Emily Dickinson to assure Sue that she, and not another woman, holds a supreme position in Emily Dickinson's affections. With the too-much-loved woman friend of 1859-1862 gone, Emily would very much have needed to feel secure in her relationship with Sue. Also it may be that Emily was trying in this way to convince herself that the other woman was no longer important. Whether or not that is the case, it appears that Sue liked idolatry well enough to become jealous when it was removed to another object.[70] After the relationship with Kate failed, Emily kept her emotions tightly in check. This meant that Sue, reinstated to something like her former position with Emily, could be the object of Emily's adoration without having the bother of Emily's former intensity. Nonetheless Emily's disappointment over Kate in 1877 was a forfeiture, and the "Competition of Phantoms" remained inviolate.

Besides Emily's assurances that Sue was once more the "Only woman in the World," two other major factors appear to be working in most of these passages, namely the use of sexual symbolism and Sue's evident

[70]Citing Mary Lee Hall, Bingham says of Sue's jealousy, " [Vinnie] told me Sue had been cruel to Emily and herself and they each had suffered keenly from her insincerities, her insane jealousies, as well as her intentional deceit" (Ancestors' Brocades, p. 374). Higgins comments, "It was [Sue's] habit to "collect" rare personalities. Emily, though unseen by Sue's guests, was the prize of the collection. Sue regarded her sister-in-law as a strange blossom, almost a personal possession, whom she alone had the right to exhibit" (p. 201).

comprehension of Emily's position. In letter 288, the stated preference for Sue, the dismissal of a "beautiful Neighbor" as inconsequential, and the suggested mutual exclusiveness indicate Sue's awareness.

The relationship between letter 911 and letter 914 seems to suggest the same thing. The situation in letter 911 may well be that sue has pricked her finger on a thorn. The second paragraph, however, makes no sense in that respect: when is Eden in reference to picking flowers? If one considers the symbolic identification of flower with woman, the message has meaning. Eden is that distant-past time when love for a woman friend had some physical actuality for Emily Dickinson (compare "Come slowly, Eden," below, page 105). Honey is love; Sting and Fang are love's ability to hurt, or perhaps more specifically, the flower's ability to hurt. Pang is a period of suffering, now in the past. In letter 914, Thunder is love, and rumbling still, the memory of love; that is Thunder is equivalent to Honey. Torrid Noons is equivalent to Eden; Missiles is equivalent to Fang. Letter 914 retells the story told in letter 911. The mention of Susan's unfailing subtlety here suggests a continuing dialogue between the two women rather like that between Emily Dickinson and Samuel Bowles discussed on page 44, above. Yet in such dialogue with Sue, there would have been a quality of seduction and enthrallment absent in that with Bowles. The late messages to Sue, in fact, suggest that there was.

The final chapter in the emotional biography of Emily Dickinson would appear to be her love for Judge Otis Lord. Patterns in the emotional biography of any individual tend, in some way, to repeat themselves throughout the lifetime of that individual. There is a progression

in the biography when a new pattern begins to emerge out of the preceding one.

In 1874, Emily Dickinson's father died. In 1875-1882, Emily Dickinson found the mother she had never previously felt that she had, when in her own words, her mother became her child. In 1878-1883, she was in love with Otis Lord. These three events could not, most likely, have happened in any other order: the death of her father made possible the discovery of her mother; the possession of her mother made possible the discovery of her father--in the person of Otis Lord.

Traces of the old pattern remained. On December 3, 1882, Emily Dickinson wrote to Otis Lord:

> You said with loved timidity in asking me to your dear Home, you would "try not to make it unpleasant." So delicate a diffidence, how beautiful to see! I do not think a Girl extant has so divine a modesty.
> You even call me to your Breast with apology! Of what must my poor Heart be made?
> (III, no. 790)

CHAPTER III

POEMS: THE TOO-MUCH-LOVED WOMAN FRIEND

Emily Dickinson was a more consciously autobiographical poet than most. Although it will probably be found one day that in many of the poems she is obscuring her own trail, autobiography was for her a major poetic purpose. She wrote both to record and to gain release from her emotional struggles. She drew on paper the self she strove to conceal, and finally to abdicate, in actual life. The tension between being and seeming was one of the forces that made the poetry necessary. It was the force that made it necessary to reserve the privilege of poetic fame until after her own lifetime:

> The Martyr Poets--did not tell--
> But wrought their Pang in syllable--
> That when their mortal name be numb--
> Their mortal fate--encourage Some--
>
> The Martyr Painters--never spoke--
> Bequeathing--rather--to their Work--
> That when their conscious fingers cease--
> Some seek in Art--the Art of Peace--
> c. 1862 (544) 1935

Miss Dickinson has received far more biographical than critical attention; the poet and the poetry have in fact been the objects of a tremendous amount of biographical conjecture, the primary aim of which has been identification of the lover who inspired the poems. The conjectural approach has involved a great deal of manipulation and selectivity inappropriate to true biographical exploration.

There are love poems, apparently addressed to a man, that according to T. H. Johnson's chronology place the affair in the first half of the 1860's. There are other love poems, addressed to a woman, that according to Johnson's chronology place the affair in the first half of the 1860's. Hence the logical premise: if Emily Dickinson had only one love affair in the early 1860's, it was with a woman, and the poems addressing a man were deliberately disguised.

The stories about Charles Wadsworth and Samuel Bowles (and several others in the earlier days) have been constructed around the poems addressing a man. Apparently working from something like the above premise, Rebecca Patterson (see Patterson, pages 8-9) used both homosexual and apparently heterosexual poems, along with a copious amount of other material, in proof of a sexual attachment to Kate Scott Turner. This is the only study of the poet's love life approaching truth, yet it has been considered to be unfounded and untrue.

It is the purpose of the present chapter to single out the homosexual poems and examine them in detail. The chapter is biographical in that it chooses autobiographical poems to interpret, associates them with the poet's letters, and seeks to confirm Patterson's biographical reconstruction by providing in concise form the sound internal evidence for such a reconstruction. It is critical in that it interprets a neglected segment of Emily Dickinson's poetry and in so doing works toward fuller comprehension of the total body of poetry.

The first poem to be discussed is a statement of disdain for women of social standing and good breeding (for women of Emily Dickinson's own social class), yet it is more than that:

What Soft--Cherubic Creatures--
These Gentlewomen are--
One would as soon assault a Plush--
Or violate a Star--

Such Dimity Convictions--
A Horror so refined
Of freckled Human Nature--
Of Deity--ashamed--

It's such a common--Glory--
A Fisherman's Degree--
Redemption--Brittle Lady--
Be so--ashamed of Thee--
c. 1862 (401 1896

In stanza one any sexual interest that one might have in such Gentlewomen as these is negated by the qualities of their femininity: they are as soft as plush and as other-worldly as cherubs or stars.

Yet these qualities are not tender yielding femininity and unearthly beauty. They are rather flimsey meaningless convictions and cold inhuman goodness, amounting to empty-headedness and want of substantial thought (possibly implying a greater interest in dimity than in thought), a kind of religious horror of freckled human nature, and even sanctimonious shame of the divine nature of love. This is the delicacy of pseudo-femininity and moral inflexibility.

The first two lines of the final stanza may be read in several ways. The "common Glory" seems clearly to be sexual fulfillment, which from the speaker's point of view would be the fruition of aggressive sexual impulses like those suggested and negated in stanza one. However if one considers freckled human nature, of which these Gentlewomen are so horrified, to be human sexuality per se, these lines may be a repudiation by the Gentlewomen of any "glory" so common that fishermen may possess it. On the other hand, the speaker may be expressing con-

tempt for a glory dependent on such Gentlewomen, as in stanza one she expressed contempt for the Gentlewomen themselves. If one considers freckled Human Nature to be some blemish or irregularity in Human sexuality, the Gentlewomen's scruples are apparently directed toward Lesbian love, and the common Glory, seen from the speaker's point of view, is a degree granted to even the lowliest man but withheld from her.

The last two lines of the poem address a specific Gentlewoman as the primary offender. Brittle things break under pressure <u>because of</u> their own rigidity. This Brittle Lady, then, is at once as hard and cold as a star and less substantial than plush or dimity, or dimity convictions. As such she is the supreme object of contempt, yet these lines appear to retaliate against the Lady's inability to love the speaker: the redemption that could be found in love, were the Lady not so brittle, is as ashamed of her as she is ashamed of love. The emotional content suggests that the <u>speaker</u> is that ashamed of her.

The next poem is about a lady who is more truly feminine than the Brittle Lady and yet is aggressive in her love for the speaker:

> Her face was in a bed of hair,
> Like flowers in a plot--
> Her hand was whiter than the sperm
> That feeds the sacred light.
> Her tongue more tender than the tune
> That totters in the leaves--
> Who hears may be incredulous,
> Who witnesses, believes.
> ? (1722) 1945

Emily Dickinson repeatedly uses flowers to symbolize woman. Here she relates them metaphorically to a woman lover. <u>Sperm</u> oil lamps were common in Emily Dickinson's day, and <u>sacred light</u> suggests the sacred fire which the vestal virgins were to keep perpetually burning, in honor

of Vesta, the goddess of the hearth and the symbol of the home,[1] in the Roman religion. However the sexual definition of sperm has changed since this poem was written only in that it is now stated more precisely. Both meanings are present in the poem, and the sacred light, which for the speaker burns in honor of the hand that feeds it, is the sacred fire of love, or the vagina and sexual passion. The essence of a tune tottering in the leaves is delicacy, like feminine tenderness in love-making. This poem describes and celebrates the love of Her in sexual terms.

Perhaps the apology in the next poem is directed toward those who hear without understanding:

> Apology for Her
> Be rendered by the Bee
> Herself, without a Parliament
> Apology for Me.
> c. 1864 (852) 1945

Here again the beloved woman appears to be equated with a flower--for it is the bee who renders her apology.[2] Herself is the only apology the speaker needs.

In another poem the speaker is the flower, doomed when plucked, but rejoicing in that doom because it means perishing in the hand of the lady:

> Be Mine the Doom--
> Sufficient Fame--
> To perish in Her Hand!
> c. 1864 (845) 1945

[1]Cf. references to Home throughout this study.

[2]But cf. repeated instances in which Emily Dickinson identifies with the bee, hence the possibility that the meaning here is "I am the apology for Her": letter no. 1047, above, p.73, and poems 211, 869, 916, and 1220, below, pp.105, 106 respectively.

"To perish in Her Hand" connotes a valid psychological association between sex and thoughts of death and calls to mind "Her hand was whiter than the sperm" in "Her face was in a bed of hair," but the poem means far more than that. In this poem the speaker, and so it seems the poet,[3] elects the love of Her as her destiny, though that love means death.[4] No fame is needed other than the privilege of such a death.

In another poem the sex of the loved person is not named, but the date of composition is one year after "Apology for Her" and "Be Mine the Doom" and the meaning of "Be Mine the Doom" is almost exactly repeated, now in the past tense:

'Twas my one Glory--
Let it be
Remembered
I was owned of Thee--
c. 1865 (1028) 1945

Another group of poems deals more concretely with a homosexual relationship than these in that it forms a sequence that explicates such a relationship from beginning to end, from anticipation to defeat. The first poem is about cautious pursuit that at once anticipates success

[3]Cf. another poem in which the speaker identifies with the flower:

If it had no pencil
Would it try mine--
Worn--now--and dull--sweet,
Writing much to thee.
If it had no word,
Would it make the Daisy,
Most as big as I was,
When it plucked me?
c. 1864 (921) 1945

[4]Cf. the last two stanzas of "Like Eyes that looked on Wastes" (458), below, p.91-92.

and defeat:

Not probable--The barest Chance--
A smile too few--a word too much
And far from Heaven as the Rest--
The Soul so close on Paradise--

What if the Bird from journey far--
Confused by Sweets--as Mortals--are--
Forget the secret of His wing
And perish--but a Bough between--
Oh, Groping feet--
Oh Phantom Queen!
c. 1862 (346) 1935

The improbability of success produces the speaker-pursuer's extreme caution. Heaven is almost possessed; with the slightest error in movement, it will be lost. This suggests that as long as the speaker advances at a proper distance, Heaven appears attainable; but she fears that at the moment she attempts to touch it, it will vanish. She sees this Heaven at once as genuine possibility, illusion, and tease.

In stanza two, fear of error in movement, compounded by the confusion of desire, or perhaps by the distraction of other Sweets, threatens to become exactly that clumsiness that will insure the error, and consequently the loss of Heaven.

This stanza pictures a bird nearing the end of a long journey to reach his nest. Exhaustion and confusion may cost him his ability to fly, and so his life, just before he touches home.[5] The entire poem pictures human pursuit. The "soul so close on Paradise" is a timorous aggressor. Her cautious hesitation is like that of "Finding is slow, facilities for losing so frequent in a world like this, I hold with

[5]Cf. "Out of sight? What of that?" (Poem 703, not cited in this study), in which the bird confidently pursues a bashful Heaven.

extreme caution, a prudence so astute may seem unnecessary, but plenty moves those most dear, who have been in want" (letter 222, cited above, page67). The particular kind of error in movement anticipated is "A smile too few--a word too much," it is error in emotional advancement toward an object that responds with feminine subtlety to the nuances of smiles and words,[6] and just may reject her utterly. That object is depicted as Heaven[7] Paradise, Sweets, and finally Phantom Queen.[8]

The emotional content of the poem suggests that the journey far, for the human pursuer, may be not only emotional advancement toward this particular person, but the lifelong search for such a Heaven as

[6]Cf. "Forget the secret of his wing" with "I am not much of a sailor...and I am not much of a mermaid..." (letter no. 69, cited above, p.51), in which a figurative journey through space toward Abiah Root is actually an emotional maneuver toward her.

[7]Cf. "So sweet and still, and Thee, Oh Susie, what need I more, to make my heaven whole?" (Letter no. 88, cited above, p.55), and a poem in which Heaven, or Paradise, is as unattainable as in "Not probable":

"Heaven"--is what I cannot reach!
The Apple on the Tree
Provided it do hopeless--hang--
That--"Heaven" is--to me!

The Color on the Cruising Cloud
The interdicted Land
Behind the Hill--the House behind--
There--Paradise--is found!

Her teasing Purples--Afternoons--
The Credulous--decoy--
Enamored--of the Conjuror--
That spurned us--Yesterday!
c. 1861 (239) 1896

(for symbolic analysis, see below, p. 109).

[8]Cf. "Kate, Distinctly sweet your face stands in its phantom Niche" (letter no. 222, cited above, p.67).

this,[9] and the confusion by Sweets, a lifelong confusion involved in the search.[10] Hence an explanation of the speaker's caution, her extreme fear of failure, and her tremendous uncertainty as to the nature of the person pursued. This time, after a life full of starts and stops, anticipations and defeats, she may be pursuing an attainable Heaven; this person may return her love; the Phantom Queen may prove to be a long-cherished dream come true.

In another poem the beloved woman is a bride, and the dream is finally a real experience:

> Her sweet Weight on my Heart a Night
> Had scarcely deigned to lie--
> When--stirring, for Belief's delight,
> My Bride had slipped away--
>
> If 'Twas a Dream--made solid--just
> The Heaven to confirm--
> Or if Myself were dreamed of Her--
>
> With Him remain--who unto Me
> Gave--even as to All--
> A Fiction superseding Faith--
> By so much--as 'Twas real--
> c. 1862 (518) 1945

Yet as soon as the Bride has become a bride, she departs. When the speaker, stirring to assure herself of the Bride's actual existence, finds that she is absent, the night together, and even the fact of the relationship begins to take on the illusory qualities of dream. If it

[9] Cf. "Sue--I have lived by this. It is the lingering emblem of the Heaven I once dreamed..." (letter no. 173, cited above, p. 62).

[10] Cf. "You astounded me in the outset--perplexed me in the continuance--and wound up in a grand snarl--I shall be all my pilgrimage unravelling..." (to Abiah Root, letter no. 31, cited above, p. 49).

was a dream, the speaker is uncertain whether she dreamed the Bride or the Bride dreamed her; only God is capable of determining that. If it was the speaker's dream, it was dream made solid in order to confirm the existence of Heaven.[11] If it was the Bride's dream, the speaker (who existed only in the dream) yet possessed a God-given fiction[12] surpassing Faith by that amount that it was real. Here it is possible to read Faith as religious faith, yet it is more plausible to consider it as closely associated with the Belief and the Heaven described in the poem, that is, as faith in the existence of love. Having love, even if it is so brief as to become confused with dream, surpasses dreams of love.

In this poem the love relationship, portrayed as marriage, is its own religious belief and its own heaven.

In the next poem the marriage appears to have become established, but the dream has turned to nightmare:

> Like Eyes that looked on Wastes--
> Incredulous of Ought
> But Blank--and steady Wilderness--
> Diversified by Night--
>
> Just Infinites of Nought--
> As far as it could see--
> So looked the face I looked upon--
> So looked itself--on Me--
>
> I offered it no Help--
> Because the Cause was Mine--
> The Misery a Compact
> As hopeless--as divine--

[11] Cf. Heaven, this study, passim.

[12] Cf. "and wonder what I am and who has made me so" (letter no. 172, cited above, p. 61), and "It was given to me by the Gods--" (poem 454, not cited in this study).

Neither--would be absolved--
Neither would be a Queen--
Without the Other--Therefore--
We perish--tho' we reign--
c. 1862 (458) 1945

The first two stanzas describe a look in someone's eyes; the last two explain it.

Territory uninhabited by human beings, pathless wastes, barren, desert places, everlasting expanses of nothingness: this is a region capable of supporting only death. To look steadily on such a sight, with only darkness to interrupt it, and to look on it as though the world contains nothing else, is indeed to be in a state of everlasting nightmare, a state of hell on earth. To see a person in such terms is to see that person as devoid of love, devoid of life and life-giving qualities, perhaps as the giver of death, and yet as all one's world can hold.

Stanzas three and four delineate this as a confrontation between two women, whose relationship is both love and hatred, or rather, it is the hatred that love can become. In a love "As hopeless--as divine--" each has become the other's misery, in fact the other's demon. It is the death-embrace of love, in which neither can help the other, and from which neither can escape because neither will extricate herself, neither will submit, neither will exercise her power over the other, and yet neither will relent. The love relationship, its own religious belief and its own heaven in "Her sweet weight on my Heart a Night," has become its own hell in this poem.

It may be that in addition to portraying the death-embrace of love, the poem as well suggests its cause. The speaker of the poem, who is

seen as the embodiment of Wastes, Wilderness, and Nought, emerges as an other-than-human individual; in Wastes and Wilderness there is some implication of wildness and lawless existence: hence the individual stigmatized by her sexual deviation, the criminal, the outcast of humanity. Nineteenth Century American morality would certainly have supported such a view.

The next poem, which appears to have been written later than these, unites the symbols of marriage and royalty:

> Ourselves were wed one summer--dear--
> Your Vision--was in June--
> And when Your little Lifetime failed,
> I wearied--too--of mine--
>
> And overtaken in the Dark--
> Where You had put me down--
> By Some one carrying a Light--
> I--too--received the Sign.
>
> 'Tis true--Our Futures different lay--
> Your Cottage--faced the sun--
> While Oceans--and the North must be--
> On every side of mine
>
> 'Tis true, Your Garden led the Bloom,
> For mine--in Frosts--was sown--
> And yet, one Summer, we were Queens--
> But You--were crowned in June--
> c. 1862 (631) 1945

The two persons who "were wed one summer," according to the first line of the poem, are identified as Queens in the next-to-last line.

The death of the second Queen, as Rebecca Patterson suggests (page 126), is not an actual death; it appears to be a rejection of the first Queen who is the speaker of the poem: "Ourselves were wed---Your little Lifetime failed---You had put me down---Our Futures different lay."

"And overtaken in the Dark--/....By Some one carrying a Light--/ I--too--received the Sign--" may mean that both parties became involved

with other love objects;[13] if the "sign" is the stigmata, and the person carrying the light, Christ, as Patterson suggests (page 126), it is retreat into religion. Whichever the case, the speaker appears to have been unaffected by receiving the sign.

The futures of the two Queens were different because their natures proved different. Cottage is a feminine genital symbol. One cottage faced the sun, a phallic symbol. The other must be surrounded on every side by oceans, that is, it remained in a position like that of child in the mother's womb,[14] or in the phallic sexual position. Apparently the second Queen came to prefer heterosexual love and the first Queen did not.[15]

To be surrounded by "Oceans--and the North" is to be surrounded by frigid waters, hence to be entrapped with one's frustrated sexual desires. Facing the sun then appears also to mean finding warmth and

[13]Cf. "How sick--to wait in any place--but thine--" Poem 368, not cited in this study), in which the symbolism identifies the person addressed as feminine, as here, and in which a second love object is repudiated.

[14]Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams," in Works, V, pp. 399-400.

[15]Cf. stanzas three and four of this poem with "Aside from this dear Katie, inducements to visit Amherst are as they were.--I am pleasantly located in the deep sea, but love will row you out if her hands are strong, and don't wait till I land, for I'm going ashore on the other side--" (letter no. 209, cited above, p.68 , and discussion, pp. 71-72).

The poem was written later than the letter. The dates given both, however, are questionable. For the letter, see footnote 58, above, p. 68. For the poem, see footnote 18, below, p. 95.

sexual fulfillment. Garden, like Cottage, is a feminine genital symbol.[16] The Garden that "led the bloom," having been fecundated by the sun, proliferated and prospered and outshone itself in Bloom. The one that was sown in Frosts was doomed as it was planted, apparently by the second Queen who, in turning to normal sexuality and attaining fulfillment, left the first Queen to frigid waters and killing frosts.

Both "Your Vision--was in June--" in the second line of the poem and "But You--were crowned in June--" in the last line appear to refer to the betrothal or marriage of the second Queen.[17] The placement of "Your Vision was in June--" immediately before "And when Your little Lifetime failed" suggests that the second Queen's symbolic death is more than rejection of the first Queen; it is betrothal to someone else, that categorically involves that rejection.[18]

Two other poems, written about a decade after these, appear to be

[16]Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams" in Works, V, pp. 346, 348.

[17]Rebecca Patterson thinks it alludes to Kate Scott Turner's betrothal to John Anthon, which occurred in spring or early summer of 1864 (Patterson, pp. 126, 240). This does not correspond with Johnson's placement of the poem (1862), yet it is probably correct (see footnote 18).

[18]As stated in note 15, above, p.94, Johnson's dating of "Ourselves were wed one summer--dear--" is questionable. If the poem is about the same relationship as the others, it could hardly have been written in the same year: the delineation of different futures in this poem suggests a time lapse not allowed for by Johnson. It most likely was written at least as late as 1865.

Further, Johnson dates the extant letters to Kate Scott Turner in 1859-1860, does not date one of the poems in the present chapter, dates several others in 1864-1865, and dates all of the rest in 1862. Either the poems are about two different relationships, succeeding that with Kate Turner, or as is more likely, all or part of these materials are somewhat incorrectly dated and/or the relationship described in them began in 1859 and continued sporadically until 1864-1865 when Mrs. Turner decided to marry John Anthon. (see Patterson, p. 180). Cf. also letter no. 288, cited above, p. 77.

about the same relationship:[19]

Frigid and sweet Her parting Face--
Frigid and fleet my Feet--
Alien and vain whatever Clime
Acrid whatever Fate

Given to me without the Suit
Riches and Name and Realm--
Who was She to withhold from me
Penury and Home?
c. 1874 (1318) 1945

The subject here is again the termination of the love relationship by the beloved woman, but the departure is more specifically described than in the previous poems.

When this poem was written frigid meant essentially what it means today: cold, forbidding, impotent. The lady's parting face expresses responsiveness, and possibly incapacity to act on that response, yet it appears to announce cold refusal. The speaker is benumbed by this rejection, but gets herself rapidly away.

There are several possible interpretations for the rest of the poem. It may be that the lady rejected the speaker because she felt that this

[19]And cf. another poem, written about the same time as these two, that bears directly on "Her face was in a bed of hair" (see above, p.85):

Long Years apart--can make no
Breach a second cannot fill--
The absence of the Witch does not
Invalidate the spell--

The embers of a Thousand Years
Uncovered by the Hand
That fondled them when they were Fire
Will stir and understand--
c. 1876 (1383) 1945

love would make every clime alien and vain. It would alienate them from friends and countrymen, and would in fact make exiles of them no matter where they went. Any change of place would be useless, any happiness penurious. The vast destiny they now envisioned their love to be would end as acrid fate. In this case the speaker is saying that the gift of the lady's love was equal to riches and name and realm; to live with her would have meant both actual penury and the emotional penury involved in exile and alienation, it yet would have been the possession of Home, worth all the cost.

On the other hand, the speaker may be saying that without the lady's love any place amounts to exile, any removal to another clime useless, any destiny bitter. The lady gave the wealth of love without its even being asked, why then should one have supposed she would withhold penury and Home, the last gifts of her love (emotional isolation as poverty and seclusion at home as exile)?

Finally the speaker may be saying, as above, that without the lady's love any place has become as exile, any fate a doom, compared with which the poverty and even the sense of being cut off from outside emotional resources involved in living with her would have seemed small evil. In her love she gave riches and name and realm;[20] why then did she choose to withhold the gift of penury and Home[21] that living with her would

[20]Cf. references to "king feeling," kingdom, power, and glory, etc. chapter II, above, passim, and the word Queen as used in poems of the present chapter.

[21]Cf. "And that dissolves the days/Through which existence strays/ Homeless at home" (poem 1573, cited in letter 815, above, p. 39, in reference to the death of Emily Dickinson's mother); "Her heart is fit for home" (poem 84, cited above, p. 44); "Oh Susie, I would nestle close to your warm heart, and never hear the wind blow, or the storm beat, again, Is there any room there for me, or shall I wander away all homeless and alone?" (letter 74, cited above, p. 54).

have been?

Rebecca Patterson says that in the other late poem Emily Dickinson accuses Kate Anthon[22] of treason in love, that Kate's cruelty is the cause of her seclusion (pages 3-4, 204, 224-225, 399):

> I shall not murmur if at last
> The ones I loved below
> Permission have to understand
> For what I shunned them so--
> Divulging it would rest my Heart
> But it would ravage their's--
> Why, Katie, Treason has a Voice--
> But mine--dispels--in Tears.
> c. 1877 (1410) 1945

The seclusion is the subject of the poem. The cause of seclusion and the factor of treason are both central concerns of the poem, yet the cause of seclusion is not named within the poem and the mention of treason does not appear to be an accusation.

The cause of seclusion is the nameless thing that cannot be divulged, the explanation that cannot be given. The poem does not state that Kate has committed treason; neither does it mention cruelty. Treason appears rather to be associated with the voice that dispels in tears. If there has been an accusation of treason, Kate has accused Emily, yet the poem does not say that either. Poet-speaker says that although she would be relieved if she could explain her seclusion to those she loves, she will not tell within her lifetime, and so she will never betray Katie. The

[22]Johnson concurs with the opinion that the person addressed in the poem is Mrs. Anthon (Poems, ff. no. 1410). It was written in the year of Mrs. Anthon's last known visit to Amherst during Emily Dickinson's lifetime.

causes of the seclusion then involved both the loss of Kate and the poet's own feelings of alienation and guilt.

Finally it might be interesting to consider briefly a poem that nowhere suggests a woman:

> Up Life's Hill with my little Bundle
> If I prove it steep--
> If a Discouragement withhold me--
> If my newest step
> Older feel than the Hope that prompted--
> Spotless be from blame
> Heart that proposed as Heart that accepted
> Homelessness, for Home--
> c. 1865[23] (1010) 1945

First there is an exhausting and lifelong burden, as in "I shall not murmur if at last." Then there is the declaration of blamelessness for "Heart that proposed as Heart that accepted" as in "Apology for Her" and in the repeated references to blame in the letters. Finally there is the thing proposed and accepted: "Homelessness, for Home--, which is inextricably associated with the concepts of doom and love, perish and reign, exile and realm, penury and home, sometimes stated as accepted, sometimes stated as rejected, but reiterated again and again in the homosexual poems.

[23]Cf. the poems of this chapter and their dates of composition with Millicent Todd Bingham's commentary in Emily Dickinson's Home, cited above, p. 23.

CHAPTER IV

POEMS: SEXUAL SYMBOLISM

Much of Emily Dickinson's poetry employs sexual symbolism. Sometimes the symbols only confirm or clarify meaning that is already accessible or has become accessible through other methods of analysis; in other poems they clear up obscurities or provide additional levels of meaning. Most important, they serve to interpret poems that otherwise remain enigmatic, incomprehensible, or even nonsensical.

This first poem may be interpreted without symbolic analysis, yet the symbols clarify the meaning of the poem:

Is Bliss then, such Abyss,
I must not put my foot amiss
For fear I spoil my shoe?

I'd rather suit my foot
Than save my Boot--
For yet to buy another Pair
Is possible,
At any store--

But Bliss, is sold just once.[1]
The Patent lost
None buy it any more--
Say, Foot, decide the point--
The Lady cross, or not?
Verdict for Boot!
c. 1862 (340) 1896

Bliss is a commodity so rare that it may be purchased once a lifetime, or perhaps once a world, yet it is as well a muddy slough in the street through which the Lady speaker must cross if she is to reach the

[1]Cf. "I asked no other thing--/No other--was denied--/I offered Being--for it--/The Mighty Merchant sneered--..." (Poem 621, dated 1862).

store where it is sold. In suiting her foot, which desires to make the purchase, the lady would of course be suiting herself. In crossing through the mud, which might just be an abysmal slough, she would apparently spoil only her boots which are readily replaceable. Ladies, however, stay indoors or ride in carriages, and they are fastidious in their attire. They don't walk through muddy streets. The indecision appears to be between what is proper for a Lady and what is desirable to the particular person that the lady happens to be. The Lady decides in favor of propriety.

Since the Bliss is both bliss and besmirching influence, it is apparently sexual bliss. The foot is a part of the lady and expresses her real feelings; the shoe is something she wears and must keep clean. This suggests that the foot represents her sexual desires and the shoe, introjected moral virtues.

The indecisive foot is much like the "Groping feet" of "Not probable--The barest Chance--": there is the same incertitude in movement toward the Bliss here as toward the Heaven there. Here "Bliss, is sold just once," there the slightest error in movement will cause the bird to perish--but a Bough between--" and the human pursuer to lose the Phantom Queen.

Applying Freudian analysis to the present poem, one finds that the foot represents woman's penis, the shoe, the feminine genitalia.[2] Both belong to the Lady speaker. The Abyss, which is both the Bliss and the muddy road that the speaker must cross to reach it, is inherently sug-

[2]Freud, "The Acquisition and Control of Fire," in Works, VII, p. 155.

gestive of the vagina. On the symbolic level then, the speaker wishes to fulfill her apparently homosexual desires, but is afraid of damaging her own femininity in gaining bliss through sex with another woman.[3] She decides not to run the risk.

The next poem is very much like both this one and "Not probable--The barest Chance" (poem 346, cited above, page 88):

> 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!
> c. 1861 (251) 1945

The speaker is a little girl and the object is a patch of strawberries, yet the situation is the same as in the other two poems. There is the same indecisiveness in action. There is the suggested fear of incapacity, as in "Not probable"; the fence like the bough in that poem appears to be actual physical obstruction, yet it could be climbed. The larger problem is "stain[ing] my Apron," just as in "Is Bliss then, such Abyss" it is "spoil[ing] my shoe." The apron, like the shoe, is extrinsic. It is worn to keep the speaker clean and must be kept clean itself. Like the shoe it symbolizes femininity; it is in fact the only thing in the present poem that identifies the speaker as feminine. Again it is the moral question: whether to do what is both decent and proper for a clean, apron-clad little lady or to satisfy the desires of the real

[3] Cf. "Bliss is unnatural" (letter no. 209, cited above, p. 68).

child and possibly besmirch the little lady's apron. Any decision in favor of the real child is certain to meet God's disapproving eye, yet "I guess if He were a Boy..."

Taken as it stands, the poem is almost ridiculous: Berries are nice---stained my Apron---God would scold---Oh, dear. Yet if the similarities to other poems discussed in the paragraph above are valid, it is not quite that. It is the child-mask, which renders adult dilemma into child--getting my apron dirty terms. Strawberries are, according to Wilhelm Stekel, a vaginal symbol.[4] This clarifies the dilemma, the use of the child-mask, and the similarity to "Not probable..." and "Is Bliss then, such Abyss."

The following poem is the only one in the present study whose eroticism and inverted symbolism have been subjects of critical attention for many years, yet in 1960 Charles Anderson discredited the "reversal of the lovers' roles" (see above, pp. 25-26):[5]

Wild Nights--Wild Nights!
Were I with thee
Wild Nights should be
Our luxury!

Futile--the Winds--
To a Heart in port--[6]
Done with the Compass--
Done with the Chart!

[4]Frigidity in Women, 2 vols. (Liveright, N. Y., 1926), I, p. 145.

[5]Thomas Wentworth Higginson, saying that people "might read into it more than Emily Dickinson ever intended," hesitated to publish the poem, but did so (Johnson commentary, Poems, ff. no. 249).

[6]Cf. lines 1-6 with "I would nestle close to your warm heart, and never hear the wind blow, or the storm beat, again" (letter no. 74, cited above, p. 54).

Rowing in Eden--
Ah, the Sea!
Might I but moor--Tonight--
In Thee![7]

Being a "Heart in port" is synonymous with mooring "in Thee." Sea is generally considered to be either a feminine symbol or a symbol of sexual activity; here it appears to be both. Rowing suggests sexual activity from the masculine point of view, but is a less violent activity than swimming or diving. "Rowing in Eden" is rowing in the sea, and it leads logically to mooring "in Thee." As Charles Anderson remarks, Eden is for Emily Dickinson a "recurring image...for the paradise of earthly love" (page 190).

The second stanza of the poem is particularly significant in several respects. What appears to be violent action proceeding to peaceful inaction is as well protection from violent forces, perhaps suggesting protection from the male. "The "Heart in port" has found both necessary protection and the bliss of paradise.[8] Yet seen in a different way the winds are simply those deterrent conditions of the voyage which may

[7]Cf. "I am on the blue Susquehanna paddling down to you; I am not much of a sailor, so I get along rather slowly, and I am not much of a mermaid, though I verily think I shall be, if the tide overtakes me at my present jog. Hard-hearted girl! I don't believe you care, if you did you would come quickly and help me out of this sea..." (letter no. 69, cited above, p. 51). Cf. "I am pleasantly located in the deep sea, but love will row you out if her hands are strong, and don't wait till I land, for I'm going ashore on the other side" (letter no. 209, cited above, p. 68, dated 1859 by Johnson but probably written somewhat later--see footnote no. 58, above, p. 68).

[8]Cf. the relationship between feminine love and protection from the male, discussed above, pp. 41-43, and references to bliss, paradise, etc., passim. throughout this paper.

stagger a ship, blow it off its course if it is poorly navigated, and consequently cause it to miss its destination. Here compass and chart have been used to prevent such a misfortune, the port is reached, and they are put away. It is or was a triumphant journey.

Yet the last stanza brings us back to the present, the situation of longing which recalls to mind poems such as those just discussed, in which circumstances do intervene, the speaker is staggered, and the chance of obtaining bliss appears as slight at the end of the poem as at the beginning.

In a poem using bee--flower symbolism, the speaker identifies with the bee and Eden is synonymous with the flower:

> Come slowly--Eden!
> Lips unused to Thee--
> Bashful--sip thy Jessamines--
> As the fainting Bee--
>
> Reaching late his flower,
> Round her chamber hums--
> Counts his nectars--
> Enters--and is lost in Balms.
> c. 1860 (211) 1890

The bashful speaker and the fainting Bee that reaches late his flower bring particularly to mind the cautious, hesitating speaker and the Bird that perishes "but a Bough between" in "Not probable," yet here both Eden and flower appear to be successfully possessed.

Two other bee--flower poems reiterate this one, but in them it seems again to be a matter of longing for rather than having:

> Oh, for a Bee's experience
> Of Clovers, and of Noon!
> c. 1864 (916) 1890
>
> Of Nature I shall have enough
> When I have entered these
> Entitled to a Bumble bee's
> Familiarities.
> c. 1872 (1220) 1945

In another poem the speaker's objective is simply to be near a very human beloved:

> Because the Bee may blameless hum
> For Thee a Bee do I become
> List ever unto Me.
>
> Because the Flowers unafraid
> May lift a look on thine, a Maid
> Alway a Flower would be.
>
> Nor Robins, Robins need not hide
> When Thou upon their Crypts intrude
> So Wings bestow on Me
> Or Petals, or a Dower of Buzz
> That Bee to ride, or Flower of Furze
> I that way worship Thee.
> c. 1864 (869) 1945

She longs to openly worship the beloved; as bee because the Bee is blameless, as flower because the Flower is unafraid, as robin because the Robin need not hide.

Birds, like bees, are phallic symbols.[9] The speaker's ability to see herself at once as bee, flower, or robin in worship of the beloved suggests a dual sexual identity.[10]

The following poem, like "Over the fence--," appears to place the speaker in pursuit of something non-human but very much desired:

> "Heaven"--is what I cannot reach!
> The Apple on the Tree--
> Provided it do hopeless--hang--
> That--"Heaven" is--to me!

[9]Freud, "New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis and other works," in Works, XXII, 1964, p. 190.

[10]See Gelpi's discussion of the poem, cited above, p. 33.

The Color, on the Cruising Cloud--
The interdicted Land--
Behind the Hill--the House behind--
There--Paradise--is found!

Her teasing Purples--Afternoons--
The Credulous--decoy--
Enamored--of the Conjuror--
That spurned us--Yesterday!
c. 1861 (239) 1896

Yet in the present poem that something appears at first to be many things: Apple, Cloud, Land, and House behind the Hill. If each is pursued, perhaps that is why none can be reached. But that is not quite the case: the difficulty has to do with the conjury, and Apple, Cloud, Land and House behind the Hill are components of one picture. The Apple tree is in the foreground, and the "Cruising Cloud" and "teasing Purples" serve both to obscure and to enhance the whole scene. The poem may be interpreted as love for nature, love that in fact desires to possess nature, yet loves it more for the fact that it cannot be possessed.

Yet Nature is the Conjurer and the picture she conjures is Heaven on Earth, the Earthly Paradise which has been prohibited since man was shut out of the Garden of Eden. The Apple is the forbidden fruit,[11] fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the House behind the Hill, which appears to be the center of desire, may be equated with the interdicted tree of life. Further, Emily Dickinson did not believe

[11]And cf.:

Forbidden Fruit a flavor has
That lawful Orchards mocks--
How luscious lies within the Pod
Pea that Duty locks--
c. 1876 (1377) 1945

in the possibility of Heaven in Heaven.[12] As in the Garden of Eden, what is the most desirable is the most forbidden and it is more desirable for the fact that it is forbidden. It is called Paradise because it is forbidden, "Heaven" because it is impossible.

In investigating relationships to other poems, one recalls that both Heaven and Paradise mean Phantom Queen in "Not probable." Paradise and the further implications of the Garden of Eden in the poem associate it with "Come slowly--Eden!" and "Wild Nights"; defining Paradise as a place of bliss suggests "Is Bliss then, such Abyss." In each of these poems the paradise symbol represents something intensely desired and as cautiously sought after, and the thing sought after is feminine and earthly. In three of the poems it is specifically a woman. The interdiction placed on Paradise in the present poem suggests "Over the fence--." Finally the relationship between the speaker and the Conjurer is like that between the speaker and the Phantom Queen in "Not

[12]As she says in the following poem:

> That it will never come again
> Is what makes life so sweet.
> Believing what we don't believe
> Does not exhilarate.
>
> That if it be, it be at best
> An ablative estate--
> This instigates an appetite
> Precisely opposite.
> ? (1741) 1945

And cf. "More than the Grave is closed to me--" (Poem 1503, not cited in this study).

probable."

Analyzing symbolically one finds that the apple represents the breast.[13] Emily Dickinson has used the tree elsewhere to represent the female body.[14]

> The interdicted Land--
> Behind the Hill--the House behind--
> There--Paradise--is found!

might be compared to a dream interpretation by Freud: "...the female sexual organs are symbolized by a landscape with a chapel, a mountain and a wood...The part of the body called in the dream "a mountain" is similarly termed in anatomy the mons veneris."[15] The House is not a chapel; the Hill is not a mountain; yet the similarities are marked.

"Cruising Cloud" and "teasing Purples" together connote flirtation, yet it is more truly provocation-repulsion, which amounts to being a decoy, a deception, jugglery, a conjuration. Prohibiting what one invites comprises spurning. The behavior of the Conjurer corroborates the God-given interdiction and is like the suggested behavior of the Phantom Queen in "Not probable," who also holds the credulous hopelessly enamored.[16]

Albert Gelpi has remarked that the next poem symbolizes "the incendiary energies of 'my volcano' within" (page 136):

[13]Freud, General Introduction, p. 139.

[14]Letter no. 69, cited above, p. 51.

[15]Freud, General Introduction, p. 172.

[16]Cf. "It is not Nature--dear, but those that stand for Nature" (letter no. 333, not cited in this paper).

On my volcano grows the Grass
A meditative spot--
An acre for a Bird to choose
Would be the General thought--

How red the Fire rocks below--
How insecure the sod
Did I disclose
Would populate with awe my solitude.[17]
? (1677) 1914

Those incendiary energies are hidden beneath the semblance of something quite the opposite. This volcano appears to be a peaceful hillside that birds would choose for a resting place, a place inviting tranquil contemplation and refuge from strife. The subterfuge is fragile; the Fire rocks below, suggesting not dormancy but the state of activity immediately preceding eruption.

Volcano is an extremely powerful phallic symbol; Grass symbolizes pubic hair.[18] Bird is a phallic symbol;[19] "Meditative spot" suggests passivity, "An acre for a Bird to choose," femininity. The speaker's subterfuge, the image projected--apparently to shape the General thought--is femininity.[20] Since the subterfuge is weak, solitude serves as double

[17]Cf. Bingham's mention of "those volcanic changes which marked the steps of progress in Emily Dickinson's stern and simple life," cited above, p. 23.

[18]Cf. woods, thickets in Freud, General Introduction, p. 139.

[19]Freud, "The Acquisition and Control of Fire," in Works, VII, p. 190.

[20]Cf. Griffith's view of ED's childish primness, dislike of exposure, etc., cited above, p. 31.

security for the masculine self-identity.[21]

Disclosure would not end the solitude; it would populate it with awe. None would dare to come near; everyone would be in attendance.

Clark Griffith uses another poem dominated by the phallic symbol in his argument for Emily Dickinson's dread of masculinity:

> In Winter in my Room
> I came upon a Worm--
> Pink lank and warm--
> But as he was a worm
> And worms presume
> Not quite with him at home--
> Secured him by a string
> To something neighboring
> And went along.
>
> A Trifle afterward
> A thing occurred
> I'd not believe it if I heard
> But state with creeping blood--
> A snake with mottles rare
> Surveyed my chamber floor
> In feature as the worm before
> But ringed with power--

[21]Cf. disclose--solitude in this poem with shunned--divulge in "I shall not murmur if at last" (poem 1410), cited above p. 98 but compare another volcano poem in which the speaker is not the volcano, but sees herself a babbler contrasted with the "reticent volcano":

> The reticent volcano keeps
> His never slumbering plan--
> Confided are his projects pink
> To no precarious man.
>
> If nature will not tell the tale
> Jehovah told to her
> Can human nature not survive
> Without a listener?
>
> Admonished by her buckled lips
> Let every babbler be
> The only secret people keep
> Is Immortality.
> ? (1748) 1896

The very string with which
I tied him--too
When he was mean and new
That string was there--

I shrank--"How fair you are"!
Propitiation's claw--
"Afraid," he hissed
"Of me"?
"No cordiality"--
He fathomed me--
Then to a Rhythm Slim
Secreted in his Form
As Patterns swim
Projected him.

That time I flew
Both eyes his way
Lest he pursue
Nor ever ceased to run
Till in a distant Town
Towns on from mine
I set me down
This was a dream.
? (1670) 1914

Griffith interprets the visit of the worm-snake as sexual fantasy in which three important attitudes of the speaker are fear, contempt, and envy. She secures the worm by a string to defend her womanhood, to retaliate, and to own for herself an object she finds splendid and powerful.[22] Griffith feels that the marvel is quite equal to the fear and the dread (pages 177-183), and remarks that the marvel, the envy, and the attempt to secure for herself "may bring us very close indeed to the true intentions of the text"--that the poem is about penis-envy (pages 286-287).

[22]Cf. "and as I sit here Susie, alone with the winds and you, I have the old king feeling even more than before for I know that not even the cracker man will invade this solitude..." (letter no. 77), and ED's remark that she prefers power, "for Power is Glory, when it likes, and Dominion, too--" (letter no. 292, in footnote 34), cited above, p.54-55.

A significant addendum to Griffith's analysis is the fact that the town to which the speaker flees (last stanza) is according to Freudian analysis a feminine genital symbol.[23] There is no suggestion within the poem of ever having returned from that "distant Town/ Towns on from mine."

There is another poem similar enough to be considered a companion piece:

Alone and in a Circumstance
Reluctant to be told
A spider on my reticence
Assiduously crawled

And so much more at Home than I
Immediately grew
I felt myself a visitor
And hurriedly withdrew

Revisiting my late abode
With articles of claim
I found it quietly assumed
As a Gymnasium
Where Tax asleep and Title off
The inmates of the Air
Perpetual presumption took
As each were special Heir--
If any strike me on the street
I can return the Blow--
If any take my property
According to the Law
The Statute is my Learned friend
But what redress can be
For an offense nor here nor there
So not in Equity--
That Larceny of time and mind
The marrow of the Day
By spider, or forbid it Lord
That I should specify.
c. 1870 (1167) 1945

[23]Freud, General Introduction, p. 145.

By saying that the offense of the spider "is of a kind with other of Emily Dickinson's externally caused violations" (page 229), Clark Grifftih appears to be implying that this poem as well concerns a sexual encounter. Beyond this he interprets the poem metaphysically; the situation is outside "the compass of ordinary human experience," an offense nor here nor there is "a transgression of such magnitude that it must be spiritual and must have originated with God," the "second malefactor" of the last two lines is God Himself (pages 230-231).

There is considerable evidence elsewhere in Emily Dickinson's poems and letters to suggest that she would hold God more or less blameworthy, yet there does not appear to be a "second malefactor" in the final two lines of this poem; they seem rather to suggest that the spider is not a spider. According to Freudian analysis, it is a symbol of the phallic female, and "the fear of spiders expresses dread of mother-incest and horror of the female genitals."[24]

The first two lines of the poem state the existence of a circumstance that, like the concealed factors in "I shall not murmur if at last" and "On my volcano grows the Grass," is not to be told, yet as in those poems the reluctance to tell is not struggle against any external insistence at all, but struggle against the speaker's own need to tell, to divulge, to disclose. It works within this poem as within those to focus attention on the circumstance not to be told.

The actions of the spider involve physical contact with the speaker

[24]Freud, "New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis," in Works, XXII, p. 24, citing Abraham, "The Spider as a Dream Symbol," in Selected Papers on Psycho-analysis (London, 1927), chapter xix.

of the poem. Its slow yet diligently attentive movements are suggestive of sexual activity whose power is in its own continuance, not in the exercise of virile force. "On my reticence" suggests "On my volcano..."[25] and implies hesitance to participate, even deliberate dormancy or latency, which more nearly amounts to struggle against one's own tendencies than struggle against the spider.

The speaker's flight, which is an escape like that in the worm-snake poem, leaves the spider in sole possession of its appropriated Home, yet the speaker returns armed with what is clearly a legal declaration of ownership. If this involves an intention to remove unwanted visitors as it seems to be, the conditions the speaker now encounters render it useless.

The spider has been replaced by what appears to be a multitude of tiny creatures who have transformed the "late abode" into a Gymnasium, dwell there as though it were the special property of each,[26] and either are in some way, or presume to be heirs. Since they are in fact only continuing the spider's unlawful possession of the room, it follows that these are its offspring.[27] The fact that they appear <u>already</u> to have inherited the room may presuppose the spider's death.[28] Whether the spider is dead or simply departed, the movement of the poem sug-

[25]"On my volcano grows the Grass," and cf. "The reticent volcano keeps."

[26]cf. <u>lawful</u>, which is a manuscript variant of <u>special</u>.

[27]and cf. <u>special</u> as pertaining to a <u>species</u>.

[28]Cf. "when Your little Lifetime failed..." in "Ourselves were wed one summer--dear--."

gests that the "inmates of the Air" are in fact the fantastically conceived offspring of the union between spider and speaker, born of the spider in the speaker's absence. This is a strange reversal considering the aggressiveness of the spider and the reticence of the speaker.

These "inmates of the Air" are quiet gymnasts, numerous tiny spiders on numerous tiny spiderwebs dangling and swinging about the room, paying no tax to the rightful owner and negating her articles of claim if in fact she continued bold enough to serve them. The spider-lover's presumption has finally become an anarchist take-over in which there can be no right of possession and no governing faculty.

The deadly qualities of this abode as it now exists, inhabited by a lone woman and a company of tiny spiders who are apparently the offspring of her union with a now absent or deceased spider-lover, call to mind both the region envisioned in "Like Eyes that looked on Wastes," a poem about two women in the death-embrace of love, and the fate foreseen in a poem about the departure of the beloved woman, "Frigid and sweet Her parting Face."

Yet the "inmates of the Air" in the present poem may not be quite as they seem; the expression as readily suggests illusions or phantoms. This creates a somewhat different situation that serves to interpret the remainder of the poem. Perhaps these are phantasmagoria of the mind that are at once reduplications of the now absent or deceased spider-lover[29] and imaginary offspring of the union with that lover, and this

[29]Cf. Phantom Queen in "Not probable" and "You do not yet 'dislimn,' Kate, Distinctly sweet your face stands in its phantom niche--I touch your hand--my cheek your cheek--I stroke your vanished hair, Why did you enter, sister, since you must depart?" (letter no. 222, cited above p. 67).

place is a gymnasium-asylum inhabited by a solitary near-lunatic individual[30] and the uncontrollable acrobatics of her own mind.

Then it may be that the "late abode" is both room and mind of speaker[31] and the inmate-heirs, who seem to inhabit the room, inhabit only the mind of the speaker. In this case her hurried withdrawal is loss of identity and escape from consciousness, and her return with "articles of claim" an unsuccessful attempt to repossess mind and identity, ending in mere rehabitation. The "Larceny of time and mind/The marrow of the Day" is quite literally the prolonged lawless possession of the speaker's mind by first the spider's self and then her own horrified imaginings of the spider.

In the last part of the poem when the speaker names the injustice done her, the sexual aggression of the spider receives only secondary mention; the real offense is the Larceny, which would have ended with the death of the spider, but for the stirring of the speaker's own dormant nature.[32]

Hence there may be some implication that this offense is "nor here nor there/ So not in Equity" because Equity would not necessarily consider the victim to be a victim, yet there is a simpler explanation:

[30]Cf. "and I do fear sometimes that I must make a hospital for the hopelessly insane, and chain me up there" (letter no. 77, cited above, p. 55).

[31]Cf. "One need not be a Chamber--to be Haunted--" (poem 670, not cited in this study).

[32]Cf. "You astounded me in the outset--perplexed me in the continuance--and wound up in a grand snarl--I shall be all my pilgrimage unravelling" (letter no. 31, cited above p. 49).

"Larceny of time and mind/ The narrow of the Day" is neither Grand nor petty larceny; it is the theft of intangibles, of everything and yet of nothing, and it is not in Equity.

The poem ends as this interpretation began: the spider is not a spider, or not simply a spider. This is the deliberately symbolized account of a sexual encounter between two women which ends in the death or departure of one and the near insanity of the other,[33] or like the worm poem it is nightmare (or nightmarish fantasy) turned into poetry. It is most likely something of both. Whatever the case, its subject is the fascinating face of horror that may just be the face of love seen in reverse.

Another spider poem symbolizes sexual union between two women as Home given, not Home stolen, and so is perhaps the true face of love:

> The fairest Home I ever knew
> Was founded in an Hour--
> By Parties also that I knew
> A spider and a Flower--
> A manse of mechlin and of Floss--[34]
> c. 1877 (1423) 1945

Both the spider and the flower are feminine sexual symbols. The "fairest Home" is the most beautiful, the most desirable, and it is so because it is constructed by and of two feminine identities; in the use of manse in the last line of the poem there is even the suggestion that

[33]Cf. "Ourselves were wed one summer--dear--" (poem 631, cited above, p. 93).

[34]Cf. "Life of flowers lain in flowers--what a home of dew!" (letter No. 609, cited above, p. 73); Home in "Frigid and sweet Her parting Face--" (poem 1318, cited above, p. 96), and in note 21, above p. 97.

it is the fairest Home ever known, not seen, identifies it as a Home in which the speaker of the poem lived; the biblical sense of the word know further clarifies her position as one of the partners building the Home. The last line of the poem apparently written from the viewpoint of the flower, who sees the Home as built for her by the spider, serves both to identify the speaker as the flower, the foundation on which the spider builds the home, the passive party in the sexual relationship (compare "Alone and in a Circumstance"), and through the delicacy of its symbolism to restate the feminine identity of the spider. Floss is the thread from which the spider spins its fragile web; mechlin, a dainty Flemish lace, is the web-structure itself, woven out of the spider's self, in the flower's likeness, in the spider's own likeness.

A longer poem, which begins by echoing the phraseology of this one, brings together the qualities of both the spider poems:

> The only Ghost I ever saw
> Was dressed in Mechlin--so--
> He wore no sandal on his foot--
> And stepped like flakes of snow--
>
> His Gait--was soundless, like the Bird--
> But rapid--like the Roe--
> His fashions, quaint, Mesaic--
> 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!
> c. 1861 (274) 1891

More immediately notable, however, is the peculiar person of the Ghost. First of all, as in "Alone and in a Circumstance," one may consider this poem to be either a symbolized account of a confrontation be-

tween two human beings or a poetic transcription of a dream (or waking vision); it is strangely suggestive of both. Citing Freud, one finds that "Robbers, burglars, and ghosts of whom some persons are frightened before going to bed, and who sometimes pursue their victims after they are asleep, all originate from one and the same class of infantile reminiscence. They are the nocturnal visitors...[to] children... in their sleep....In every case the robbers stood for the sleeper's father, whereas the ghosts corresponded to female figures in white nightgowns."[35] The Ghost is both Emily Dickinson's insubstantial and inapproachable mother and the Phantom Queen who became the major object of pursuit in an almost life-long search for a more substantial and approachable mother.[36]

This interpretation seems at first to be precluded by the fact that this Ghost is identified as masculine. Yet his gown is made of mechlin, the dainty Flemish lace of which the spider in the last poem constructed its Home, and his every movement is womanly. Dressed in lace, he steps like the most exquisite and fragile of laces--like the gay, ephemeral dance of snowflakes. He is as soundless as the bird, as rapid as the female deer, and as shy of human contact as bird, deer, or snowflake.

His manner is quaint, old fashioned, even ceremonious, and governed by an air of religious propriety, as one pictures the behavior of Moses or the Druids to have been. "Haply, Mistletoe" may suggest the custom

[35]"Interpretation of Dreams," in Works, V, pp. 403-404.

[36]Cf. "Not probable--The barest Chance."

of the kiss which is essentially all that remains of the old Druidic ceremony of the mistletoe: hence the Ghost's, the mother's, or the Phantom Queen's kiss, perhaps as the happen-so of custom.

Unlike the Bird and the Roe, but like the Phantom Queen in "Not probable," this Ghost relates, however distantly, in human terms to his human interviewer. He talks seldom and his laughter, which is as light and delicate as the breeze, or the laughter of a quiet woman, dies away into an attitude of gentle pensiveness.[37]

The speaker's attitude toward the Ghost is actually a strange admixture of attitudes. In the last two lines of the poem, she appears to view the Ghost's visit as a terrifying, even incapacitating experience, yet nowhere before these lines does she seem even frightened of it. She seems rather to be cautiously alert, like one dealing with a bird or a roe, regretting its inapproachability and longing for closer contact, yet loving the wild creature <u>because</u> it is wild and cannot be touched with human hands. The story is told like a dearly cherished memory, the emotions suggested throughout are tenderness and fascination, and regret

[37]Cf. stanza three with a poem of the same period:

> 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 upon the Twig,
> Convulsive, while the Music broke--
> Like Beads--among the Bog--
> c. 1862 (514) 1935

for the Ghost's shyness and the transience of the interview.[38] One is left uncertain as to what made the day appalling. It seems to be the horror of seeing a ghost, yet it seems not to be that at all.

The interview was transient apparently because the Ghost was shy of the speaker, yet the Ghost has pursued, and in that sense sought interview with the now terrified speaker ever since. "God forbid I look behind--" means both "God keep me from remembering that horrible day" and "God prevent me from looking back at the horror that pursues me still since that Day."[39] On another level of meaning this is a statement of temptation to remember, to turn and have interview with the pursuer, and on this level the poem, like "Alone and in a Circumstance," expresses a human truth that we are pained to acknowledge: We court these horrors that in their more beautiful counterparts we would have loved to caress. We are pursued by only those horrors that our minds will not consent to let go. The poem does not say so but the consummation of this lifelong pursuit would be to turn and embrace the shy, forbidden, and ever-pursuing Ghost of love repudiated.

Another more widely known poem appears to belong with these, and in fact loses its obscurities when it is examined with them:

> The Soul has Bandaged moments--
> When too appalled to stir--
> She feels some ghastly Fright come up
> And stop to look at her--

[38]Cf. the brevity of the marriage in "Her sweet Weight on my Heart a Night" and "Ourselves were wed one summer--dear--," and yet as well the transience of the spider visitation in "Alone and in a Circumstance."

[39]Cf. the "perpetual presumption "that amounts to perpetual haunting by the inmate-heirs in "Alone and in a Circumstance."

Salute her--with long fingers--
Caress her freezing hair--
Sip, Goblin, from the very lips
The Lover--hovered--o'er--
Unworthy, that a thought so mean
Accost a Theme--so--fair--

The soul has moments of Escape--
When bursting all the doors--
She dances like a Bomb, abroad,
And swings upon the Hours,

As do the Bee--delirious borne--
Long Dungeoned from his Rose--
Touch Liberty--then know no more,
But Noon, and Paradise--

The Soul's retaken moments--
When, Felon led along,
With shackles on the plumed feet,
And staples, in the Song,[40]

The Horror welcomes her, again,
These, are not brayed of Tongue--
c. 1862 (512) 1945

First of all, the poem is about a Soul, a Goblin, and a Lover. Clark Griffith says that the Lover is God, "the only appropriate lover of the soul" and the Goblin is the creature of darkness, the thought of physical molestation, and the thought of death (page 217), hence a kind of cosmic triangle in which the Soul prefers God, but is more legitimately at home with the creature of darkness, and thoughts of violation and of death, hence the "thralldom of the human Soul to horror" (page 219), and what essentially amounts to a concept of life as the dark night of the human soul. All of this is close to being true, except that the real situation is more complex and the "only appropriate lover of the soul" is not God in the poetry of Emily Dickinson. In "Not probable--The

[40]Cf. the Soul identified with the bird in "Not probable--The barest Chance."

barest Chance--" the appropriate lover of the "Soul so close on Paradise" is a Phantom Queen; there are many suggestions within the present poem that this is again the case.

Second, the poem is about agony and ecstacy, and these are states as complex as the circumstances that inscribe them.

The Soul's "Bandaged moments" are moments when the Soul is injured or sick with fear and/or moments when the Soul is so in terror of the ghastly Fright that she stands blindfolded in order not to see it, and so only feels its presence (Griffith, 216-217). Yet the Soul's progression from "Bandaged moments" to "moments of Escape" to "retaken moments" suggests that the "Bandaged moments" are as well moments of imprisonment and the bandage, bonds like the shackles in the Soul's "retaken moments." Or the bandage may be the blindfold worn by the Felon led along to meet his ghastly fate.

The Soul's Lover is very much like the Ghost that in fact hovered shyly and momentarily in "The only Ghost I ever saw," and brings to mind the spider building its fragile Home in "The fairest Home I ever knew" and the Bride who stayed a single night (and departed, seemed to be the substance of dream) in "Her sweet Weight on my Heart a Night."

The Goblin who succeeds the lover as lover is the Horror and the ghastly Fright, hence it would seem, the ghostly visitor, now become an appalling, pursuing horror in the last lines of "The only Ghost I ever saw." This brings to mind the spider in "Alone and in a Circumstance," who is the horrible counterpart of the spider Lover in "The fairest Home," the inmate-heirs who are the fantasied successors of the spider as horror in "Alone and in a Circumstance," and finally the reigning Queen become demon-Lover and bringer of destruction in "Like Eyes that looked

on Wastes."

The Goblin then is the Lover, or the thought of the Lover, transformed into the Horror that pursues and in fact both embraces and enslaves the Soul that in this poem the Lover failed to embrace. It is as well the "thought so mean" that however unworthily accosts not just the Soul bereft of its Lover, but the "Theme--so--fair--," which is love itself. If the Lover is a woman, as seems to be the case, and the love, homosexual love, the "thought so mean" and so unworthy, that is at once the bandage, the shackles and the Horror, is the Soul's distorted and incapacitating vision of the Lover as hideous fiend, love as perversion and damning evil, and itself as wicked Felon. The "thought so mean" is the reverse face of the "Theme--so--fair," as the Goblin is the reverse face of the Lover; it brings the Soul's agony as the "theme so fair" brings the Soul's ecstacy.

The Soul's "moments of Escape" may be seen as moments when the Soul somehow frees itself from its Goblin-vision, "dances like a Bomb, abroad," and is reunited with the actual Lover, as the Bee is reunited with the Rose. They may be seen simply as moments of positive self-identity. Clark Griffith says "To burst all the doors has the ring about it of casting off every limitation on selfhood. To dance like a Bomb, abroad implies that the self, as a free spirit, has mastered life. To swing upon the Hours suggests a dominance over time, and beyond that, an insight into the timelessness of Eternity" (page 218). This is all true, except perhaps the very last part. The same passage, analyzed in another way, is a statement of the psychological dynamics involved in such ecstatic freedom for this particular Soul. To "burst all the doors" is to

cast off those moral interdictions that will not let the self be a self; it as well suggests bursting the doors of the female genitals.[41] To "dance like a Bomb, abroad" and to swing upon the Hours" suggests erection and sexual activity freely and deliriously engaged in, from the point of view of the masculine party: hence the Rose, Liberty, and Paradise. To "swing upon the Hours" is to live triumphantly within time, which as Emily Dickinson believed, is the only time allotted the Soul for Liberty and Paradise.

The Soul's "moments of Escape" then are moments of release from the Goblin-vision that is love distorted by moral condemnation, love become the death of love and, almost, of life: the Horror and the agony (instigated, sanctioned, and unacknowledged by moral man) with which the Soul must dwell enslaved.

Out of this particular personal vision the following poem as well was most likely created:

> For each ecstatic instant
> We must an anguish pay
> In keen and quivering ratio
> To the ecstasy.
>
> For each beloved hour
> Sharp pittances of years--
> Bitter contested farthings--
> And Coffers heaped with Tears!
> c. 1859 (125) 1891

[41]Freud, General Introduction, p. 139.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

From the beginning Emily Dickinson has been hailed as the mysterious maiden lady of American literature, and much of Dickinson scholarship has concentrated on solving the mystery. We looked to the image of the male lover, believing this to be the key. Yet Charles Wadsworth was not the impetuous kind of preacher who would have carted the lady away with him, but that she was too good to go. Samuel Bowles, who did have an eye for the ladies, would more easily have filled the lover's role, but that he was preoccupied elsewhere and his interest in Emily Dickinson appears to have been brotherly comradeship tempered by a rather sardonic pity. External fact consistently contradicted the presence of a real male behind the image, and the image itself gradually came to be considered rather thin.

Then it began to be reasoned that Emily Dickinson was too much the perfect spinster, too prim, too eccentric, too fearful a female to have had a real love affair. It was an affair of the poet's imagination, the lover was created by her fantasies, and the fantasies used to make the poems. It may have been done in the name of Wadsworth or of Bowles, but neither would have recognized himself in the poems.

We have examined the mask of the poet, thinking it to be the poet's self, and impressing ourselves with her lack of substantiality. It may be that we have as well occupied ourselves with a male image that was really the mask of the beloved woman. The "Master" letters and the poems addressing a man may or may not have involved a man. If they did,

Emily Dickinson's emotions were doubly involved during the 1860's, the two situations ran concomitantly and ended similarly. A psychological study of these letters and poems might give us more answers than the biographical proofs have.

Whether or not there was a real male, there was a beloved woman, her relationship with the poet was sexual, and her presence in the poems seems to coincide with real life. Further it is supported by lifelong tendencies of the poet traced through developing emotional patterns in her letters and consistently reflected in the attitudes of her family, her editors, and her critics.

Emily Dickinson herself was neither the pale white nun nor the supplicating child that we have seen. Beneath the semblance of extreme timidity was a woman who likened her own existence to a volcano about to erupt, trying to conceal itself. Beneath the mask of the child was an adult wrestling with moral problems which for some years of her life destroyed her psychological bearing. She was incapable of living within the restrictions God or man had set for her, and yet unable to break her own bondage to those restrictions. On losing her love (or one of her loves) she "withdrew" from life to conceal and to harness complex and "wrong-minded" emotions and to fight with the demon-possessed madness that love had become. Though possessing a beloved woman was heaven on earth, and forbidden to her, she found that creating poetry was salvation from hell on earth, and available to her.

Most important, in a very real sense she withdrew <u>from</u> life <u>into</u> poetry. She withdrew not from the dangers of sensuous life into the safety of metaphysics or mysticism, but from the dangers of acting out

into the safety of writing down, and in that safety she found the freedom to create her own salvation. Her life and her poetry, as Millicent Bingham suggested, are inextricably related. One cannot look for long at the poetry without seeing the poet. The more accurately we see the poet, the more clearly we are able to see the poetry. Knowledge of Emily Dickinson's homosexuality serves effectively in working toward critical comprehension of the poet and the poetry.

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