

THE PUBLICS OF EMILY DICKINSON

By

TRISHA M. KANNAN

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To Robyn and Mrs. C

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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My dissertation focuses on how the term “public” applies to Emily Dickinson, a poet who for decades was deemed the poet of privacy. I trace the presentation and reception of Dickinson’s work in key historical moments: the printing of Dickinson’s poems during the Civil War; the surviving manuscripts compared to the printed editions of her letters; the first appearance of her work in single-author volumes in 1890, 1891, and 1896; the surviving manuscripts of the fascicles, her “home-made” booklets of poetry; the inception of scholarly publics, which began with the first scholarly edition of Dickinson’s complete works in 1955; and contemporary debates regarding the “true” form of a Dickinson poem. My central argument challenges the image of Dickinson as a safe female poet whose primary concern was her own mind. While others have worked to problematize Dickinson’s position as a “private poet,” I highlight the ways in which Dickinson’s texts have given rise to multiple publics throughout history. Each chapter stresses how “private” is not only an unhelpful term, but a dangerous oversimplification of Dickinson’s creative process and literary contributions. I utilize Michael Warner’s theory in *Publics and Counterpublics* (2002) to situate Dickinson’s poetry and reception within the broader concern of the relation between gender, language, and genius.

The conception of Emily Dickinson as *the* poet of privacy arose during the nineteenth-century, primarily due to the first volume of Dickinson's poetry published in 1890, and the mythology was not challenged, revised, or investigated until the last decades of the twentieth-century. Dickinson scholarship within the past few decades has worked to debunk the myth, and my dissertation's central aim is to take this scholarship a step further by showing how Dickinson explores, blurs, and ultimately rejects the boundary between "public" and "private." Dickinson seems to predict Michael Warner's investigation into the complexity of the terms in *Publics and Counterpublics*. According to Warner,

public and private are not always simple enough that one could code them on a map with different colors – pink for private and blue for public. The terms also describe social contexts, kinds of feeling, and genres of language. So although public and private seem so clearly opposed that their violation can produce a sharp feeling of revulsion, the terms have many different meanings that often go unnoticed. (27)

Contemporary manuscript study elucidates the complexity of Dickinson's investigation into genre, voice, audience, lyric address, and poetic and epistolary approaches. I would argue that Dickinson anticipates Warner's observation of the many meanings of "public" and "private," and her body of work moves within that complexity, experimenting with established notions of publication, communication, and artistic development. The purpose of my dissertation is to explore how Dickinson's enterprise questions the boundaries of public and private spheres, which were rigidly prescribed during the nineteenth-century (as well as our own) according to gender.

CHAPTER 1 DICKINSON AND PRINT

The conception of Emily Dickinson as the poet of privacy arose during the nineteenth-century, primarily due to the first volume of Dickinson's poetry published in 1890, and the mythology was not challenged, revised, or investigated until the last decades of the twentieth-century. Dickinson scholarship within the past few decades has worked to debunk the myth, and this chapter introduces my dissertation's central aim, which is to take recent Dickinson scholarship a step further by showing how Dickinson explores, blurs, and ultimately rejects the boundary between "public" and "private." Dickinson seems to predict Michael Warner's investigation into the complexity of the terms in *Publics and Counterpublics*. According to Warner,

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Despite Dickinson's and Warner's discernment of the complexity of the terms, public and private within Western tradition "have been commonly and sensibly understood as distinct zones. The boundary between bedroom and market, home and meetinghouse can be challenged

or violated, but it is at least clear enough to be spatially distinct” (Warner 26). Three, single-author volumes by Emily Dickinson appeared in the last decade of the nineteenth-century. Dickinson’s poetry prior to the first volume was printed anonymously in periodicals. Beginning in 1890 and continuing throughout the twentieth-century, readers of Dickinson’s poetry approached it as flowing from the “distinct zone” of her “bedroom.” For example, readers understood the poetry as produced by a “shy recluse whom Mr. Higginson so happily has introduced to the world,” as Frederic Lawrence Knowles writes in the 1897 edition of *The Golden Treasury of American Songs and Lyrics* (Gailey 63). “Mr. Higginson” refers to T.W. Higginson, a long-time correspondent of Dickinson’s who Dickinson first wrote to on April 15, 1862. Dickinson included four poems, and asks Higginson if he is “too deeply occupied to say if my Verse is alive?” (L260). According to the letter, Dickinson seeks Higginson because “The Mind is so near itself – it cannot see, distinctly – and I have none to ask –” (L260). Higginson opens his “Letter to a Young Contributor,” which appeared in the April 1862 edition of the *Atlantic Monthly*, by saying that “it seems wrong not to meet your accumulated and urgent epistles with one comprehensive reply, thus condensing many private letters into a printed one” (401). Higginson’s printed letter encourages submissions for publication, explaining that there is no foundation “for the supposed editorial prejudice against new or obscure contributors. On the contrary, every editor is always hungering and thirsting after novelties” (401). Dickinson scholarship has focused on the relation between Higginson and Dickinson, and Ruth Miller in particular details the significance of these first letters to Higginson.¹ Higginson’s influence on

¹ Ruth Miller relays Higginson’s April 17th letter to his editor: “I foresee that ‘Young Contributors’ will send me worse things than ever now. Two such specimens of verse as came yesterday & day before—fortunately not to be forwarded for publication!” (Miller 62). Ruth Miller details Dickinson’s reaction to the “Young Contributor” article as well as the relation between Dickinson and Higginson, before and after the 1890s editions: “In order to take advantage of widespread public interest, a poetry altogether unique was reshaped so that the style might seem more commonplace; the decidedly uneventful life of the poet was distorted in order that the poet might seem altogether unique” (40). Higginson sugar-coats his initial response to Dickinson in 1891, “when the poems were selling well,

Dickinson is clear, but why she chose him as her literary preceptor remains somewhat mysterious and, in some points of view, tragic. Amy Lowell, for example, exclaims in 1930, “Mild, sweet-tempered, sympathetic, and stupid Mr. Higginson! It was an evil moment when Emily chose him for the arbiter of her fate” (Ferlazzo 73). Dickinson’s letter to Higginson implies that she did not always and entirely reject the idea of seeing her poetry in print. In addition, print was a medium with which she was familiar; it was, in fact, her predominant means of understanding the world. Although her own opus investigates the limits of print, as Alexandra Socarides has argued, and “toys with the nonintimate, depersonalizing conventions of print publication,” we can only see this play when we compare the printed poems with the manuscripts (Warner 285). What Dickinson read in her lifetime and the way readers would see her poetry in the 1860s and the 1890s relied upon print publication. If we ignore this aspect of Dickinson’s work, then we miss the radical ways Dickinson explored intimate and nonintimate publication. It seems to me that Dickinson utilized her understanding of literary production to blur the distinction between public and private genres. While manuscript study reveals this aspect of Dickinson’s work, a more complete understanding of Dickinson’s project necessitates an inquiry into the poems that made their way into print. In this chapter, I focus on the *Drum*

and he found himself in the remarkable position of gaining fame as the editor of the ‘effusions’ of his ‘cracked poetess,’” saying that “it is probable that the adviser sought to gain some time a little and find out with what strange creature he was dealing. I remember to have ventured on some criticism which she afterwards called ‘surgery’” (62). Miller reads the stance Dickinson takes in her second letter to Higginson as a “curious mask . . . In this letter there are truths . . . and there are actual distortions of the truth . . . The characterization of herself as a new poet is a pose; her humility is a pretense” (63-64); for complete details, see Chapter Three and Four in Miller’s *The Poetry of Emily Dickinson*. Although I tend to view Dickinson’s choice of Higginson as a mistake, for he did remark of Whitman in *The Atlantic Monthly* (December 1867) that “it is no discredit to Walt Whitman that he wrote ‘Leaves of Grass,’ only that he did not burn it afterwards” (753), I am convinced by Miller’s analysis that Dickinson adopted poses in her relation to Higginson, and that he alone could not have convinced her “to delay to publish” (L265). Dickinson, however, seems to have appreciated Higginson and found his essays to be influential. Richard Brantley notes that “Higginson’s Out-Door Papers (1863) seemed heavenly” to Dickinson, and “Higginson’s chapters on ‘My Outdoor Study,’ ‘April Day,’ ‘Water Lilies,’ ‘The Procession of Flowers,’ and ‘The Life of Birds’ appealed to the poet most” (78). A few of these chapters were printed first as essays in the *Atlantic Monthly*. See, for example, “The Life of Birds” (September 1862) and “Procession of the Flowers” (December 1862). Barton Levi St. Armand traces the parallels between Higginson’s early prose and Dickinson’s poetry; see pages 169, 187, 189-90, 195-204, 211, 220, 228, 252.

Beat publications of 1864 and the first single-author volume of Dickinson's poetry published in 1890.²

Although some scholars began to question the myth of Dickinson "as an icon of femininity" as early as the 1960s, Dickinson's challenge to nineteenth-century notions of public and private was not recognized or explored until quite recently (Gailey 69). Dickinson's extensive workshop has been unveiled through manuscript scholarship, which was aided substantially by R.W. Franklin's publication of Dickinson's fascicles in *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson* in 1981. Manuscript study offers an entry point into Dickinson's poetic process, but nineteenth-century readers could not access Dickinson's workshop in the ways we can now. Prior "violations" of Dickinson's "bedroom" poetry, the "distinct zone" inhabited by "the mythic Emily Dickinson" who "was a shy primitive," operated behind the cloak of anonymity, which occurred with every Dickinson poem printed during her lifetime, and behind the cloak of editorial decisions and procedures, which occurred in the editions printed in 1890, 1891, and 1896 (Ruth Miller 3). While these volumes inaugurated Dickinson into the literary world, they also began the Dickinson myth. Higginson's portrait of Dickinson, particularly that she spent years "without setting her foot beyond the doorstep," cast a shadow on the nineties

² T.W. Higginson and Mabel Loomis Todd edited the 1890 and 1891 editions of Dickinson's poetry. However, Todd alone edited the 1896 volume as well as an 1894 volume of the letters. Caroline Maun argues that Todd's "role as Dickinson's editor altered significantly when she assumed full control of the Dickinson projects with the publication of Dickinson's letters in 1894 . . . When editing the *Third Series* by herself, Todd altered Dickinson's poems in an effort to ensure Dickinson's continued critical acceptance at a time when attention to the poet was waning" (56-57). While Todd's approach is an interesting area of inquiry, it is an area developed by earlier studies, not just Maun's, but Franklin's *The Editing of Emily Dickinson: A Reconsideration* and Klaus Lubbers' *The Critical Revolution*. In order to keep my discussion within a reasonable amount of pages, I choose to focus on the 1890 volume because it introduced Dickinson into the popular domain. While it did not sell the most copies, it clearly made Dickinson's name familiar since the *Second* and the *Third Series* sold well over 10,000 copies. The editing procedures and format of the 1891 volume link it very closely with the first volume. As studies have shown, when Todd takes control the editorial changes become more substantial and exclusionary. The sales indicate that Dickinson remained a popular poet throughout the 1890s, even though Buckingham claims that "the Dickinson rage was largely over" after January 1892 (xiii). However, what he seems to mean is that while the *First Series* was predominantly ignored by "eminent genteel" critics, these reviewers could no longer keep silent about the *Second Series*. Dickinson remained ignored or ravaged by elite critics, but the "widespread noncritical enthusiasm for her work" continued throughout the decade (xiii).

editions as well as the handful of poems that were printed during her lifetime (Buckingham 13). The notion that she wrote everything “absolutely without the thought of publication, and solely by way of expression of the writer’s own mind” became accepted as truth (13). When we deconstruct this “truth,” we discover the subtlety and the radicalism of Dickinson’s opus.

The cloak of anonymity during Dickinson’s life, combined with editorializing after her death, regulated Dickinson’s poetry to the “bedroom,” and made it easy for readers and scholars to believe Dickinson had no regard or concern for the world around her. Karen Dandurand’s article, “New Dickinson Civil War Publications” (1984), combined with Shira Wolosky’s book, *Emily Dickinson: A Voice of War* (1984), which is to date the only book-length study on the topic of Dickinson and the Civil War, marked a new era in Dickinson scholarship, which focused on how Dickinson participated in the social, political, and literary spheres surrounding her. Wolosky’s contextualization of Dickinson’s work within an era of war elucidates the poetry in a new way. Wolosky shows that Dickinson’s portrayal in many poems and letters “of the world as an uncertain and treacherous place” stems at least in part from the Civil War: “Dickinson’s preoccupation with anguish and loss need not be seen as the product of an individual and morbid imagination” (36).³

³ For an overview of Dickinson criticism centered on the Civil War, see Faith Barrett’s essay, “Public Selves and Private Spheres: Studies of Emily Dickinson and the Civil War, 1984-2007.” See also Faith Barrett’s and Cristanne Miller’s anthology of Civil War Poetry, which contains nineteen Dickinson poems. For an overview of Dickinson’s literary connections, see Jack Capps’s *Emily Dickinson’s Reading*. See also the *Emily Dickinson Journal’s* special issue on Emily Dickinson’s reading (Spring 2010; Volume 19, Issue 1). The *Dickinson Periodicals Project*, an online archive started in 1993, “aims to study the religious, philosophical, and social debates that were represented in Emily Dickinson’s periodical reading (1844-1886)” (“Welcome,” para. 1). Similarly to Shira Wolosky’s conclusion, the editors of the *Periodicals Project* remark that Dickinson “was responding as much to social debates as she was to her own personal or metaphysical crises. Her poems on the mind, madness and death are often cited as evidence to her own psychological state but these topics were also frequently discussed in the periodicals” (“Welcome,” para. 2). It is clear to me that arguments regarding Dickinson’s disregard for and isolation from the events of her time are unfounded.

The Drum Beat Poems

Prior to 1984, the general assumption was that Dickinson “gave up hope of being published because her poems, too advanced for the time, were rejected by editors” (Dandurand 17). While contemporary scholarship has unveiled the complicated layers contributing to and resulting from Dickinson’s “delay to publish” (L265), earlier scholars over-simplified the issue, and assumed Dickinson feared rejection and thus feared submitting her poems to be printed.⁴ One “recorded complaint [exists] about the rendering of any of her poems in print” (Franklin 1). Dickinson’s comment appears in a letter to Higginson following the 1866 publication of “A Narrow Fellow in the Grass.” According to Franklin, the poem was published on February 14, 1866 under the title “The Snake” in the *Springfield Daily Republican* with an added question mark that is not present in the 1865 or 1872 manuscript versions:

You may have met Him – did you not [?]
His notice instant is,

Dickinson writes to Higginson, “Lest you meet my Snake and suppose I deceive it was robbed of me – defeated too of the third line by the punctuation. The third and fourth were one – I had told you I did not print – I feared you might think me ostensible” (L316).⁵ Despite Dickinson’s anger at being “robbed,” “at least ten of her poems came before the public in her lifetime, each of them

⁴ For Martha Nell Smith’s discussion of the distinction Dickinson drew between “print” and “publish,” see Chapter One of *Rowing in Eden*.

⁵ In Johnson’s 1955 variorum, he claims that the *Republican* had printed the poem as three 8-line stanzas and had rendered the third and fourth lines

You may have met him – did you not,
His notice instant is.

Johnson also notes that Bianchi and Hampson’s 1924 *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* renders the lines as

You may have met him, – did you not?
His notice sudden is.

Johnson reports that there are only two fair copies (712-714), while Franklin’s 1998 edition says there are three fair copies (one lost) (951). According to Franklin’s variorum, the 1891 version of *Poems* renders line three with a comma after “him” and after “not.”

anonymously, chiefly in newspapers. These random appearances “were acts of admiration, love turned to larceny, as Susan Dickinson, her sister-in-law and Amherst neighbor, described them in her obituary of the poet” (Franklin 1). While Dickinson agreed to “delay to publish” in 1862, “she acquiesced to an appeal for aid to the sick and wounded Union soldiers” in 1864, although she escaped fame by submitting anonymously (Dandurand 27). In 1864, “five poems appeared in New York City and Brooklyn . . . Two of the poems were reprinted in Springfield and one in Boston. Within two months, five poems made a total of ten separate appearances in four cities” (17). Although Higginson may have encouraged Dickinson not to publish due to her eccentricity, or for being “Wayward” (L265), the reprints in 1864 indicate that editors across various cities and publications recognized the value of Dickinson’s work, and while Dickinson was forced to relinquish editorial control, she “acquiesced” in this case, perhaps to assist in the only way to she knew how, which coincides with her normal formula of sending poems as gifts:⁶

Three poems appeared in a wartime fund-raising paper called *Drum Beat*. Thirteen issues of this newspaper were published in conjunction with the Brooklyn and Long Island Fair to raise money for the United States Sanitary Commission, the civilian charity providing medical care and supplies to the Union Army. (Dandurand 18)

The three *Drum Beat* poems were: “Blazing in Gold and quenching in Purple” (Fr321B), which appeared on February 29; “Flowers – Well – if anybody” (Fr95A), which appeared on March 2;

⁶ Over the course of her lifetime, “more than six hundred manuscripts, representing a few over five hundred poems, had been sent to others” (Franklin 29). Dickinson’s general formulation was to send her poems along with or embedded in letters, an activity which will be explored in Chapter Two, and these poems often arrived to celebrate a happy occasion, such as “One Sister have I in our House” (Fr5A), which was sent to Sue, perhaps for her twenty-eighth birthday (L197), and Fr1191, which was sent “To Sue with flowers on her [fortieth] birthday” (L356). More often, however, Dickinson gave poems to console during times of crisis, such as: “It is not dying hurts us so, –” (Fr528), which was sent to Louise and Frances Norcross after the death of their father (L278); “Unable are the Loved – to die –” (Fr951), which Sue received after the death of her sister (L305); and three poems were presented to Sue after the death of her son, Gilbert, in 1883: “Pass to the Rendezvous of Light” (Fr1624), “Climbing to reach the costly Heavens” (Fr1626), and “Expanse cannot be lost –” (Fr1625).

and “These are the days when Birds come back” (Fr122B), which appeared on March 11th.⁷ Franklin estimates that Dickinson copied “Blazing in Gold” into Fascicle 13 in early 1862; “Flowers” into Fascicle 4 about summer 1859; and “These are the days when Birds come back” into Fascicle 6 in late 1859.

Unfortunately, the autograph originals on which the printed poems were based no longer exist, and thus we cannot see how Dickinson presented the poems she may have sent to Richard Storrs, the editor of *Drum Beat*.⁸ Dandurand contends that Dickinson “undoubtedly introduced variations in mechanics when, possibly as much as five years after entering the poems in fascicles, she made the copies that were the source of the poems published” (21). Like all of Dickinson’s poems printed before T. H. Johnson’s 1955 variorum edition,⁹

one might conclude that the *Drum Beat* editor substituted commas for most of the dashes. However, this impression is not confirmed by comparison with the Fascicle 6 manuscript, reproduced in *Manuscript Books*, where most of the marks rendered by Johnson as dashes look as much, or more, like commas angled downward to the right, or like indeterminate dots. (21)

Dandurand’s point about Dickinson’s “indeterminate” handwriting touches upon a central issue of Dickinson scholarship, which debates whether or not we can decipher Dickinson’s grammatical intentions, and whether or not manuscript study offers “truer” versions of

⁷ The fourth 1864 publication discovered by Dandurand is “Success is counted sweetest” (Fr112), which appeared on April 27 in the Brooklyn Daily Union. Prior to Dandurand’s article, the first print appearance of “Success is counted sweetest” was assumed to be in *A Masque of Poets*, 1878.

⁸ For “Flowers,” Franklin records that there are two manuscripts “(one lost), about 1859. The lost manuscript was the source for publication on 2 March 1864 in *Drum Beat*” (132). For “These are the days,” there are five manuscripts (one in part, two lost) “about 1859 and 1883” (155). Dickinson may have sent a pencil copy of the poem to Susan Dickinson “about autumn 1859,” and Franklin again notes that “one of the lost manuscripts was the source for publication on 11 March 1864 in *Drum Beat* . . . About 1883 Dickinson made a pencil copy of the first two stanzas, a copy which she retained” (155-157). There are “two fair copies, about 1862 and 1866, and one or two now lost” of “Blazing in gold.” “The earliest one extant, from about early 1862, is in Fascicle 13 . . . A copy now lost was the source for publication on 29 February 1864 in *Drum Beat*” (338-339). Franklin’s variorum includes the *Drum Beat* version for each of the poems.

⁹ Johnson’s 1955 edition is the first scholarly, complete edition to bring together all of Dickinson’s poems and to present them as close to the manuscript versions as possible.

Dickinson's work. I will address this discussion in later chapters. My focus here is Dandurand's important conclusion:

we cannot assume that in printing commas Storrs [the *Drum Beat* editor] was deliberately altering the punctuation. In any event, none of the poems is 'defeated' by punctuation so placed as to change the sense of the lines . . . The three poems in *Drum Beat* were Dickinson's contribution to the war effort, not something of which she had been robbed. (22)

Dandurand explains that copies of the poems "may have been provided by Dickinson specifically for publication, but if the *Drum Beat* editor published poems already in his possession he would have first asked her permission" (23).

Nineteenth-century readers would bring to *Drum Beat* "the mass-mediated self-understanding" of the Civil War (Warner 270). Northern civilians would access the war through accounts printed in periodicals such as *Harper's New Monthly*, *Scribner's*, and the *Atlantic Monthly*. For example, "Panic Terror," an October 1861 article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, attempts to console readers by arguing that other nations have survived similar wars and so will America, despite the Union retreat following the First Battle of Bull Run, which occurred in July:

The civil war which ours most resembles is that which was waged in England a little more than two centuries ago, and which is known in English history as 'The Great Civil War' . . . shameful exhibitions of fear, flights of whole bodies of troops, and displays of terror panic were very common things with our English ancestors who fought and flourished. (496-497)

Following the essay is an unsigned poem dedicated to "Our Country": "O Land, the measure of our prayers, / Hope of the world in grief and wrong, / Be thine the tribute of the years, / The gift of Faith, the crown of Song!" (506). Dickinson's *Drum Beat* poems continue this theme of hope, as do other poems in the *Atlantic Monthly*, despite the procession of years. Oliver Wendell Holmes's poem in the February 1864 edition of the *Atlantic Monthly* continues the optimism of "Our Country," but does so, it seems, to recruit: "Now, men of the North! Will you join in the strife / For country, for freedom, for honor, for life? / The giant grows blind in his fury and spite,

– / One blow on his forehead will settle the fight!” (244). Within this declaration of a soon-to-come Union victory, notably titled “The Last Charge,” there is a clear sense of necessity—the North *must* win, or else “we must submit to be considered cowards; and we shall deserve to be so held, if, with our superior numbers, and still more superior means, we cannot maintain the Republic against the rebels” (“Panic Terror” 506). While assurance for a Union victory is clear, in order to win, “The life-drops of crimson” must be shed, but are done so “for liberty” (Holmes 244). The *force* of hope is muted in Dickinson’s poems, as is the presence of death, although the effect of death plays a role, and the *Drum Beat* readership could not ignore nor forget this aspect of the war.

After the battle of Antietam, for example, readers could find numerous accounts of war’s violence. In the *Springfield Republican*, “correspondents referred to Antietam variously as ‘the largest and most destructive battle of the whole war’; ‘the bloodiest field of this most bloody war’; and ‘the greatest battle ever fought on this continent’” (Hoffman 8). New Yorkers could even “see” the battle through “Matthew Brady’s October 1862 Broadway photographic exhibit entitled ‘The Dead at Antietam’” (Hoffman 12).¹⁰ In contrast to “The name – of it – is ‘Autumn’ –” (Fr465), which Tyler Hoffman notes is scarred by “graphic violence” (7), Dickinson’s contributions to the Union cause portray hopeful narrators, who recognize death and see in nature too much “pathos” (Fr95A), but who also look forward to the “sacrament of summer days” (Fr122B). Dickinson’s poetry is undoubtedly from the point of view of a civilian, who is unable “to identify fully with the experience of war, to be wholly integrated into its frame of violence” (Hoffman 1). While other Dickinson poems are more “graphic,” her *Drum Beat*

¹⁰ Tyler Hoffman’s article offers a detailed listing of different newspaper accounts of the battle.

publications are from a civilian, Northern perspective—for both the poet and the *Drum Beat* readers, the war is very far away, yet also capable of creeping into the drawing room.

Although the poems printed in *Drum Beat* are few, I agree with Dandurand that the *Drum Beat* poems were “Dickinson’s contribution to the war effort.” The significance of this contribution should not be underestimated. The three poems reveal a specific moment when Dickinson converted her process of sending poems as gifts in letters to intimate acquaintances into a gift-giving process that is mediated by mass print publication. *Drum Beat* readers could not help but see the poems within the context of war—war was everywhere within the periodical, and interpretations of the poems would be marked by this unavoidable context. Because of this, the poems in *Drum Beat* addressed a public that is no longer in existence. We see the poems differently than *Drum Beat* readers since the poems are most often read today *without* the Civil War or the periodical to provide context. However, revisiting the context provides some sense of a public addressed by these texts. It is not necessarily a public for which they were written, but it is a specific public determined by the time, the periodical’s circulation, and the Civil War:

Although short lived, the *Drum Beat* was an important newspaper. It was published daily except Sunday from 22 February to 5 March, with an ‘extra issue’ on 11 March. Professionally edited, illustrated and printed, it included poetry and prose by leading writers, and had a circulation of six thousand copies daily. (Dandurand 19)

Despite the specificity, the *Drum Beat* public is not a “concrete audience,” which is “a crowd witnessing itself in visible space, as with a theatrical public” (Warner 66). The *Drum Beat* public is text-based, and although we can determine some of its features due to information about the periodical’s circulation, “it is a space of discourse organized by discourse. It is self-creating and self-organized; and herein lies its power, as well as its elusive strangeness” (68-69). The *Drum Beat* public is not an isolated, concrete, clearly-determined totality that we can see; in fact, it is a public that has vanished. However, thanks to scholarly interest and advances in

technology,¹¹ *Drum Beat's* public continues to create itself in new and various ways. It may have once been an “open-ended” public that reached about six thousand. But subscribers could leave the newspaper on a public bench or give it to a neighbor; its public would be constantly fluctuating and indeterminate. Now, too, “its boundaries and its organization” are set “by its own discourse rather than by external frameworks” (73-74). Richard Storrs, the editor of *Drum Beat*, and Dickinson herself could never have predicted that the periodical would be read or discussed in the twenty-first-century. The fact that it *can* reveals that the periodical, then and now, “addresses people who are identified primarily through their participation in the discourse and who therefore cannot be known in advance” (74). Locating Dickinson’s three texts within *Drum Beat* represents an important moment for Dickinson studies. *Drum Beat's* 1864 public offers an entry point into how Northerners who were removed from the violence would have accessed the war, and Dickinson’s poems within this periodical speak to her perception of a world in which a “civil,” fratricidal war was not just necessary, but, as some argued, ordained by God. We should not forget, however, that two of the poems were most likely written before the war began, and thus the context shows more about how the poems may have been interpreted during the time period than it does about how Dickinson felt in particular about the Civil War. Dickinson’s letters and letter-poems show, as I will detail in the next chapter, that she does draw a distinction between a poem *written* for a particular purpose and a poem *given* for a particular purpose.

¹¹ Dandurand does not specify how she read Dickinson’s poetry within *Drum Beat* and the periodical is not available on any online databases that I could find. However, the Library of Congress appears to have had a copy of it that went missing on 2-15-2005 (call number: E632.D79). While this is very unfortunate, of course, it does oddly illustrate Warner’s claim that discursive publics are open-ended and unforeseeable.

The first Dickinson poem, titled “Sunset” (Fr321B),¹² appeared in *Drum Beat*’s second week of publication. Rather than Dickinson’s common quatrain, the poem is an octave. With alternating lines of pentameter and tetrameter and an identifiable rhyme scheme, one would categorize this as an example of a more traditional poem, although the rhyme is not typical: *abcbdc*. (In this scheme, I consider lines 3, 6, and 8, ending with *horizon*, *barn* and *gone*, to be slant rhymes, although it is a stretch.) As the given title implies, the poem describes the setting sun. After “Blazing in gold, and quenching in purple,” the sun, “Then at the feet of the old horizon,” can be seen “Laying her spotted face to die.” While the poem closes by personifying the sun in a happy way (“And the Juggler of Day is gone!”), *Drum Beat* readers would not have missed the image of death. Rather than a celebration of dawn, which may have been out of place in a newspaper dedicated to helping those ravaged by war, the poem celebrates the sunset, which is typically associated with the end of life. In this case, however, the sunset could be seen as hopeful – for the end of the war, rather than linked to the end of life – although the sun “Laying” down “to die” links both the poem and the sun with death in an unusual way. While not explicit in the poem, hope could exist in the fact that the sun will rise tomorrow and bring the country one day closer to the end of war.

Two days later, another Dickinson poem appeared entitled “Flowers” (Fr95A). This poem is Dickinson’s variation of a sonnet with tetrameter lines that roughly follow a rhyme scheme of *ababbcdc* decede, although many of the slant rhymes are again a stretch. The octave idolizes the way “With which flowers humble men,” and the narrator offers “all the Daisies / Which upon the

¹² Unfortunately, since the manuscripts from which the printed versions derived are missing, we cannot know if Dickinson submitted the poems with the titles or if they were given by the editor. Dandurand notes that “Success is counted sweetest” (Fr112), which was published in the *Brooklyn Daily Union* on April 27th 1864, most likely without Dickinson’s consent, “is the only known Dickinson poem published in her lifetime without a title” (25). The typical editorial approach for printed editions, including the 1890s editions, was to add titles to nearly all of the poems.

hill-side blow” to whomever “Can the ecstasy define.” The sextet argues that there is “Too much pathos in their faces / For a simple breast like mine!” The poem ends by transferring the inability to “define” the power of flowers to the “system of esthetics” of “Butterflies,” which is “Far superior to mine!” On the surface, the poem embodies innocence: the narrator goes into raptures over flowers and butterflies, admitting that language fails to describe their power over men. But flowers are characteristic at funerals, and “Daisies” in particular invoke the grave.¹³ Men are humbled before flowers in the poem, and the narrator sees “Too much pathos in their faces.” The context of the Civil War would not be ignored by *Drum Beat* readers, and the poem subsists on more than just a blissful account of flowers and butterflies. Men are also humbled before death, and the narrator cannot withstand the pathos in their “faces,” which refers to the faces of the flowers, but also invokes the faces of men—more specifically, the wounded soldiers that *Drum Beat* is designed to aid. The narrator’s “simple breast” may be unable bear the amount of sadness and sympathy arising out of so much death. Dickinson writes to Higginson in February 1863 while he is stationed in South Carolina, “War feels to me an oblique place . . . I found you were gone, by accident, as I find Systems, or Seasons of the year, and obtain no cause – but suppose it a treason of Progress, that dissolves as it goes” (L280). For Dickinson, “the violence of a fratricidal war would indeed be difficult to fathom” (Wolosky 37). The narrator of “Flowers” feels humbled amidst the power of nature, but this is a nature infused with death, just as the “Sunset” is more than just an ordinary sunset—it is when the sun lays down “to die.”

¹³ A number of other poems portray “Daisies” as synonymous with death, such as “When we with Daisies lie” (Fr36), “Indolent housewife – in Daisies – lain!” (Fr238), “Whom none but Daisies, know –” (Fr319), and “Here, where the Daisies fit my Head” (Fr985). In Fascicle 13, where Fr319 is found, the poem ends with the line, “Whom none but Daisies, know –”, and directly below “Daisies,” Dickinson writes “Beetles –”, a much more gruesome image of “life” beyond the grave. Only two other poems use “beetles” in this manner: Fr1068 and Fr1150.

Dickinson's *Drum Beat* publications begin with a typical symbol of death, although a hopeful note could be unearthed from "Sunset," followed by an account of nature's power that seems to be rapturous, but is also mournful and displays nature's incoherence—the narrator cannot "define" the "ecstasy" and cannot endure the "pathos." The presence of Dickinson's poetry ends on March 11th with "October" (Fr122B). Contemporary readers lack the assistance of a title, and it may be difficult to decipher what "days" are being referred to in the opening line: "These are the days when the birds come back." The poem's narrator yearns for true summer, rather than the current "fraud": "Oh, sacrament of summer days, / Oh last communion in the haze, / Permit a child to join! / Thy sacred emblems to partake, / Thy consecrated bread to take, / And thine immortal wine!" Presumably, the narrator speaks about a day in October when the "skies resume / The old, old sophistries of June, – / A blue and gold mistake." In the narrator's memory, summer becomes so holy that the narrator imagines a scene of communion with summer's "immortal wine." The true summer seems long, long ago (June's arguments, now specious, are old, old), and while the "fraud" "cannot cheat the bee," the narrator is "Almost" "Induce[d]" to believe in the "plausibility" that summer has returned. Since "October" appeared in March, *Drum Beat* readers did not have long to wait before summer's approach, when "A very few, a bird or two," will "take a backward look." While the poem's opening portrays the return of birds, and contemporary readers may not find any substance for symbolism, the context of the Civil War adds a darker significance to the returning of "A very few."¹⁴ In addition, Dickinson associates summer with the war's end and Higginson's return: "Should there be other Summers, would you perhaps come?" (L280). As Wolosky and other scholars have noted, Dickinson's use

¹⁴ Of course, due to the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, contemporary readers may very well see invocations of war in these poems. Part of the recent interest in Dickinson and the Civil War, according to Faith Barrett, stems from "U.S. foreign policy and the current political climate [which] have also served as the impetus for a wide-ranging scholarly conversation not only about representations of violence, but also about the nationalist and religious loyalties that fuel war-time ideologies" (102).

of martial imagery, especially to describe the appearance of nature, reflects Dickinson's reaction to her climate.¹⁵ The association between autumnal landscapes and the war would have been familiar to Dickinson, just as it would be to nineteenth-century readers, which may be why the title "October," rather than "Autumn," was chosen.

While "October" seems at first more hopeful than the previous two, Dickinson's choice of communion, since wine symbolizes the blood of Christ, and the invocation of the immortal sphere again reveal an allusion to death. In fact, the poem can be read as a

'slant' commentary on or response to the notion (expressed, in the white heat of the moment, by many of Dickinson's contemporaries) that the ongoing Civil War was to be interpreted as a great purgative sacrifice of blood-offering demanded of an erring nation by an angry God. (Cody 25-26)¹⁶

The obliqueness of war for Dickinson, which she sees as a causeless "System" or "a treason of Progress, that dissolves as it goes" (L280), requires her to battle with the comforting power and the frightening incoherence of nature.

The implication of death can be found in all three poems, but it remains very subtle, perhaps because Dickinson deemed insinuation rather than force more appropriate; she could have sent, for example, "The name – of it – is 'Autumn –' / The hue – of it – is Blood" (Fr465), which Franklin dates as late 1862. And compared to Dickinson's understanding of death in her letters, these poems are very subtle and hopeful indeed: "Perhaps Death – gave me awe for friends – striking sharp and early, for I held them since – in a brittle love – of more alarm, than

¹⁵ For example, Wolosky reads "They dropped like Flakes" (Fr545), a poem previously cataloged by Thomas Ford as a war poem, as a "comparison of battle to snow and wind," which "far from making the death of soldiers seem more natural, makes nature seem sudden and frightening" (37). In "Whole Gulfs – of Red" (Fr468), "the violence of war is a figure for nature" (38). Wolosky also notes a number of poems in which sunsets or storms are described as battles: Fr182, Fr629, Fr752, Fr1146, Fr1164, Fr1418, Fr1501, Fr1618. While "The name – of it – is 'Autumn'" (Fr465) has been associated with "one of the most bloody and traumatic periods in our national history—the season that John Greenleaf Whittier referred to as the 'Battle Autumn' of 1862," David Cody notices the sacrificial meaning within the battlefield imagery (Cody 25).

¹⁶ See Wolosky's Chapter Two for more on the Civil War and the rhetoric of apocalypse.

peace” (L280). Whether Dickinson chose these particular three, or Storrs already had them in his possession and asked or assumed Dickinson’s permission, the readership of *Drum Beat* was most likely taken into account. In March of 1864, both sides had been ravaged by three years of war and the end was not yet in sight. There was no need to hide the image of death, and yet a bold reminder of “Blood” may have seemed unnecessary. In all three, death intertwines with hope—the sun will rise again no matter what occurs on the battlefield, flowers will continue to grow, and the birds will come back. The violence of war necessitates a re-evaluation of nature, yet these three poems rely upon nature’s ability to offer solace, and they are given to a newspaper responsible for raising funds to aid the Union army. While Wolosky argues the Civil War results in a world that Dickinson found “overwhelmingly threatening, cruel, and chaotic,” the *Drum Beat* poems are not wholly pessimistic—they are poems printed in a periodical developed solely as a charitable contribution (Wolosky pg?). Whether or not they were written for the Union cause, the *Drum Beat* poems represent objects of beauty during a specific, violent moment in U.S. history given with the hope of re-writing nature into something palpably charitable for those fighting a war Dickinson could not, and would never, fully comprehend.

The 1890s Volumes

Due to recent manuscript scholarship, which remains an integral aspect in understanding Dickinson’s re-visioning of genre and the public/private distinction, contemporary scholars and readers may view the 1890s editions of Dickinson’s poetry as “wrong.” In fact, single-author volumes of poetry written by women represent objects that Dickinson read the least:

As far as we know, while Dickinson owned single-author volumes of male American poets—Emerson, Longfellow, Holmes, and Bryant, for instance—and those of select British women poets—such as the Bronte sister’s 1846 *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton* and Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Last Poems*—she did not own any single-author volumes of poems by an American woman poet other than Jackson’s 1870 *Poems*. She encountered the poems of women like her in periodicals and anthologies. (Socarides 5)

Willis Buckingham's *Emily Dickinson's Reception in the 1890s* (1989) was compiled in part to complicate the approach of twentieth-century Dickinson criticism, which "has been a history of mischaracterizing the nineteenth-century reception (as mostly unfavorable) for the purpose of writing against it" (xii). While some of the 1890s "genteel" critics viewed Dickinson's poetry as perversion, Dickinson's Civil War publications challenge "the assumption that Dickinson's casual use of religious imagery seemed sacrilegious to her contemporaries" (Dandurand 21). Buckingham writes that "the nineties reviewers" were Dickinson's "contemporaries or near contemporaries, and their horizon of expectations could not have been wholly un presupposed by her. Whether she shared or rejected those literary attitudes, they shaped her projection of an ideal reader" (xii). Despite the manipulation of Dickinson's first editors, the 1890s editions do reveal Dickinson's understanding of a reading public—one which her poems addressed as she experimented with materiality, poetic addressee, and genre boundaries within the manuscripts.

After Dickinson's death, her sister-in-law, Susan Gilbert, who has been established by recent scholarship as an active member in Dickinson's workshop, continued sending individual poems to periodicals "one at a time. Only the stature of the journal had increased, while the need for anonymity was gone" (Franklin 2). Apparently, Lavinia, Dickinson's sister, grew impatient with Sue and sought out T.W. Higginson and Mabel Loomis Todd, Dickinson's brother's mistress, without Sue's knowledge: the 1890 volume "must have come as a bitter surprise, for she did not learn of it until near the end, not knowing before late September that her husband's mistress was co-editor" (Franklin 2). T.W. Higginson and Mabel Loomis Todd made editorial decisions that one could argue devalue Dickinson's unconventionality, but I see these volumes and the responses to them as an important component in understanding Dickinson's work. While several studies aim to discover Dickinson's intentions with regard to print and publication, I

explore the 1890s volumes and the reviews, notices, and prefaces because the volumes addressed publics in a different way than Dickinson's manuscript, letter, and letter-poem publics. Ignoring printed editions and versions of the poems because one deems them "wrong," it seems to me, subsumes the toying with medium, genre, and voice that Dickinson's entire body of work reveals.

While the single-author volumes of poetry would be familiar to nineteenth-century readers, the 1890s editions are strange but necessary objects to consider within Dickinson's body of work—they exemplify what she was working with and against in her manuscripts; they represent the standards of the time, and reveal the accepted, popularized, regularized, and simplified notions of what poetry must be. The editors introduced "the Poetess" as much as, and often more than, the poetry itself, and the poems chosen and presented gave a far from accurate picture of Dickinson's work. Despite Susan Gilbert's role in Dickinson's workshop, Higginson and Todd became Dickinson's primary editors. However, Lavinia had turned first to Sue as the editor after Dickinson's death (Franklin 2). Sue was clearly involved before this, and "was the first to introduce it to Mabel Loomis Todd, for in 1882 the latter records in her diary: 'went in the afternoon to Mrs. Dickinson's. She read me some strange poems by Emily Dickinson. They are full of power'" (Smith 155). One of Samuel Bowles 1864 letters also supports the idea that Sue was active in Dickinson's workshop: "Speaking of writing, do you & Emily give us some gems for the 'Springfield Market,' & then come to the Fair" (Smith 156). Martha Nell Smith details the ways in which Sue may have been the one sending Dickinson's poems out for publication, and the few surviving letters from Sue to Dickinson indicate Sue was attempting to publish both

Dickinson's and her own poetry during Dickinson's lifetime: "Has girl read Republican? / It takes as long to start our / Fleet as the Burnside" (Smith & Hart 96).¹⁷

Dickinson's 1890s editions were cleverly marketed since an unknown name and an unconventional style risked a lack of sales: "Late in 1890, in time for the Christmas trade, Roberts Brothers of Boston issued a delicately pretty book of poems by a deceased and unknown writer named Emily Dickinson" (Buckingham xi). *Poems* by Emily Dickinson was "edited by two of her friends," with the first series appearing in 1890 and the second in 1891. The fascicles were dismantled. The simplest poems were often chosen, and then regularized and categorized to simplify them even further. Higginson's 1890 Preface describes Dickinson's "verses" as "belong[ing] emphatically to what Emerson long since called 'the Poetry of the Portfolio,' – something produced absolutely without the thought of publication" (Monteiro iiv). Higginson also presents the "Poetess" to the world by describing her as "a recluse by temperament and habit, literally spending years without setting her foot beyond the doorstep" (iiv). To reinforce this image of the poet/recluse, the following poem represents the book's "Prelude":

*THIS is my letter to the world,
That never wrote to me, –
The simple news that Nature told,
With tender majesty.*

*Her message is committed
To hands I cannot see;
For love of her, sweet countrymen,
Judge tenderly of me! (Monteiro? 9)*

Emily Dickinson becomes a letter-writer to an unaware world, and here for the first time in print before a wide reading public, Dickinson asks from beyond the grave to be judged "tenderly."

¹⁷ Smith and Hart's focus in *Open Me Carefully* is to return Sue to her rightful place as Dickinson's mentor. See also Martha Nell Smith's *Rowing in Eden*, particularly Chapters One, Two, Five, and Six, for Sue's pivotal role in Dickinson's workshop.

The marketing strategy for this unknown poet seems rather clear—she is toned-down, regularized, and conveniently packaged. And this strategy worked. In 1890, the *First Series* went through numerous reprints with sales totaling 9,460. The *First Series* also came out in London in 1891 and sold 9,960 copies. In America in 1891, the *Second Series* sold 14,300. The *Third Series*, which Todd alone edited and was published in 1896, sold 19,980 (Buckingham 557-558). While some reviewers noted the strategies and effects of the editors, as I will discuss in more detail later, most rehashed what was written in the Preface, or what Higginson and Todd wrote in their own reviews and notices. While Dickinson’s sister-in-law, Susan Gilbert, was much more a friend and a literary confidant than Higginson or Todd, readers in general seemed to accept that Dickinson’s poetry is “introduced to the world by her friends, by two people who knew and appreciated her genius, and who have selected and arranged her verse with much critical, as well as with loving, judgment” (Buckingham 24).

The 1890 edition contains one hundred and fifteen poems, which are divided into four categories: Life, Love, Nature, and Time and Eternity. Helpful titles, such as “In a Library,” “Dawn,” “A Book,” and “The Bee,” are often added. In addition, Higginson aligns her with poets who would be familiar to readers. Higginson mentions Emerson in the first line of the Preface, and attempts to defend Dickinson’s originality by describing it as “suggestive of the poetry of William Blake . . . flashes of wholly original and profound insight into nature and life . . . often set in a seemingly whimsical or even rugged frame” (Monteiro v). “Success is counted sweetest / By those who ne’er succeed” (Fr112), which opens the edition, contains an editorial note: [Published in “A Masque of Poets” at the request of “H.H.,” the author’s fellow-townswoman and friend.] (13). Readers would recognize H.H. as Helen Hunt Jackson and may recognize the poem itself. If they had not read it in “A Masque,” then the editorial note suggests

that certain poems have been good enough for prior publication; therefore, one should keep reading.

Higginson writes the poems “are here published as they were written, with very few and superficial changes” (v). R.W. Franklin, Dickinson’s most recent and most significant editor, explains Higginson’s and Todd’s “superficial changes”: they “adjusted texts to public standards of spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, and altered them in the interests of conventional usage and of clarity in rhyme, rhythm, and meaning” (Franklin 3). More drastic, long-lasting, and subtle “changes,” however, are reflected in Higginson’s claim that Dickinson “was as invisible to the world as if she had dwelt in a nunnery,” and the inclusion of poems to support this claim (Monteiro v). For example, the Love section, which is the briefest, opens with an exclamation: “MINE by the right of the white election! . . . Mine, by the grave’s repeal / Titled, confirmed, – delirious charter!” (43). While Higginson may have viewed the changes in each poem to be “very few and superficial,” his and Todd’s construction of the edition lead to the perception of Dickinson as a reclusive spinster who sought to be part of “the white election.”

The section’s second poem, “Bequest,” explains:

YOU left me, sweet, two legacies, –
A legacy of love
A Heavenly Father would content,
Had He the offer of;
You left me boundaries of pain
Capacious as the sea,
Between eternity and time,
Your consciousness and me. (44)

Readers may have concluded that love in Dickinson’s life consisted of a passionate, excited devotion to God because she could find only rejection and pain on earth.

While the volumes printed in the 1890s were familiar literary objects, the readers at the end of the nineteenth-century would have approached Dickinson’s poetry differently than we do

today. Dickinson's poems are for the first time presented in a mass medium with her name attached, and they are made to fit the nineteenth-century mold:

The poems chosen for publication in the nineties are among her least difficult. Her editors knew there was little enthusiasm at the time for poems as riddles . . . The editors also did what they could to reduce the oddity of the poems they did choose. . . . Another reason Dickinson found so much acceptance is that her work was experienced as fulfilling many of the common reader's religious and sentimental expectations for poetry. If it is surprising to learn that two of Dickinson's erotic poems were chosen for the first and second editions, "My river runs to thee" [Fr219] and "Wild nights, wild nights" [Fr269], it is not astonishing that each was mentioned, among hundreds of reviews, only once. (Buckingham xv-xvi)

The regularization and choice of poems by Higginson and Todd enabled the volume to be accessible, but the popular enthusiasm for Dickinson can also be attributed to her rejection of "proper rhyme and rhythm" since readers were "accustomed to reading verses in good form . . . but filled with platitudes of thought—worn-out ideas re-dressed, re-arranged and re-served" (Buckingham 10). Mabel Loomis Todd wrote the above statement in November 1890 in *Home Magazine*, a women's monthly in Washington D.C. that Todd worked for as a book columnist (10). Higginson also used his literary status and his position as Dickinson's "friend" to prepare readers for a poet who, "curiously indifferent to all conventional rules, had yet a rigorous literary standard of her own" (13). Higginson's Preface to the 1890 edition, according to Buckingham, was repeated more than any other comment during the decade, and published opinions often reiterate the confusion arising from "flashes of wholly original and profound insight into nature and life" being presented in a "whimsical or even rugged frame" (14). For example, a November review in *St. Joseph Daily News* remarks,

in the depth of sentiment and sweetness of note that characterizes the majority of these poems one forgets entirely whatever may be lacking of the rhyme and metre that conventionality has stamped as the signia of poesy. . . . In the face of the subject matter of the verse, a criticism on matters of poetic formula, grammar or such details would be out of place. (Buckingham 26)

Another review in the *Boston Budget*, which Mable Loomis Todd's scrapbook attributes to Lilian Whiting, describes the poems as "almost a new language," and wonders "what results would have been insured had the author subjected herself to careful study of poetic ideals, – had she learned to chip and polish the marble. It might be that such work as hers would lose in strength rather than gain in melody by such revision" (28).

The 1890s reviews and reactions, definitely influenced by Higginson's and Todd's comments regarding Dickinson's lack of desire to publish, seemed to see Dickinson as writing only for herself; thus, she was unconcerned with and unaware of poetic rules. While many noted the power of this lack of conventionality, the "New England literati," according to Buckingham, had a different point of view. Rather than positing that Dickinson intentionally ignored and altered poetic conventions, Arlo Bates, a well-known poet, novelist, critic, and editor, assumes,

she is not so much disdainful of conventions as she seems insensible to them. . . . There is evidence that Miss Dickinson was not without some vague feeling for metre and rhythm, yet she was apparently entirely unconscious that her own lines often had neither and constantly violated the canons of both. (29)

Even within Bates' overall dissatisfaction, he admits, "there is hardly a line of her work, however, which fails to throw out some gleam of genuine original power, of imagination, and of real emotional thought. There is real poetic motive here" (29). Bates' appreciation is fleeting, and he surmises incorrectly that Dickinson's power "will delight the few," but will not endure "to the end of time," although he does contend that her poetry could have done so if she had "possessed the aptitude and the will to learn technical skill" (33). While the establishment critics of the first edition in general reflect the wish that Dickinson had followed tradition, many of the general reviews not only appreciated Dickinson's lack of technical skill, but aligned her verse with that of Emerson.

The alignment between the two poets was not left entirely to chance, as Higginson writes in the first line of the Preface that Emerson would have considered Dickinson's verses as "belong[ing] emphatically" to "the Poetry of the Portfolio" (Monteiro iv). Two of Dickinson's poems were widely attributed to Emerson until the 1890 edition rectified the situation: "I taste a liquor never Brewed" (Fr207) appeared anonymously as "The May-Wine" in the *Springfield Daily Republican* (4 May 1861) and the *Springfield Weekly Republican* (11 May 1861), and "Success is counted sweetest" (Fr112) appeared anonymously in the *Brooklyn Daily Union* (27 April 1864), and as "Success" in *A Masque of Poets* (1878). "Success" and "I taste a liquor never Brewed" are both categorized under Life, the first section of the 1890 edition. Charles Goodrich Whiting, one of the establishment critics who speaks highly of Dickinson and ignores the "obsessive hand-wringings over faulty technique," writes in the November 16, 1890 *Springfield Republican* that "her poems in their apparent willfulness of intonation often recall Emerson's, but also as much by the character of their thought, for she was a transcendentalist by native essence, and her intuitions were her reasons" (Buckingham 15-16). Whiting quotes "I taste a liquor never brewed" in full, suggesting that "Emerson's 'Humble Bee' may have had some share in [the poem] and which in its childlike quaintness recalls Blake" (17). Higginson invokes the link to Blake in the Preface, yet a review in *Hartford Courant* remarks, "Emerson will be more in the thought of the general reader" (22). While numerous reviews simply re-state (and accept as fact) that Dickinson wrote only for herself, seeing the poems "as the outpouring of a somewhat lonely, meditative mind," reviewers also aligned Dickinson with Emerson: "The true poet, we know, need not of necessity give his or her feelings vent at all, so they are but felt; and true poetry breathes from each of these verses" (26). In contrast to the more morbid, pathological views of Dickinson during the early and mid-twentieth-century, 1890s readers seem

to see Dickinson's reclusiveness as a choice that followed Emerson's prescription for "true poetry" in "The Poet":

O poet! . . . Thou shalt leave the world, and know the muse only. Thou shalt not know any longer the times, customs, graces, politics, or opinions of men, but shalt take all from the muse. . . . The world is full of renunciations and apprenticeships, and this is thine; thou must pass for a fool and a churl for a long season. This is the screen and the sheath in which Pan has protected his well-beloved flower, and thou shalt be known only to thine own, and they shall console thee with tenderest love. (Porte and Morris 197) ¹⁸

The *Hartford Courant* reviewer, who notably adds "her feelings" to be possible in a true poet while Emerson's diction is decidedly masculine, designates what Dickinson must have seen as the "mission of her volume" by quoting "If I can stop one heart from breaking" (Fr982):

If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain. (Buckinham 26)

This poem encapsulates the restorative power of poetry as well as the ideal role of one's awareness of Nature. Emerson writes in "The Poet" that "it is dislocation and detachment from the life of God, that makes things ugly, [and] the poet re-attaches things to nature and the Whole, – reattaching even artificial things, and violations of nature, to nature, by a deeper insight" (Porte and Morris 189). The speaker seeks to "cool one pain" or "help one fainting robin" back into his nest and these tiny actions will result in a life not lived "in vain." While Dickinson's point of view about what makes a worthy life may not be as simple as aiding only one robin or only one life, the reviewer sees "the mission of her volume" in this statement.¹⁹ The perceived mission of

¹⁸Charles Whiting writes that the "uncommon book" represents "the special and serious revelation of a soul apart, by its own choice, but yet vividly sympathetic with its kind, and cognizant of human experience by its intuitive revelations" (21).

¹⁹ A contemporary reader reaches the same conclusion regarding how Dickinson saw herself and the mission of her poetry. Reverend Bruce A. Bode writes in a 2001 sermon that "although Emily Dickinson struggled with the ultimate questions of existence and the divine level of things, struggled with her faith in the goodness of creation

Dickinson's poetry, even if contextualized within the sublimity of Emersonian thought, subsists in simplicity. Even if we now more fully understand the complexity of Dickinson's workshop and poetic project, the 1890s readers saw her poetry in its most simplified form, and appreciated it for that simplicity, particularly since it contrasted with the poems' "daring expression, their insight into life, love and nature" (Buckingham 26).

Dickinson's familiarity with Emerson's work is beyond debate. The Dickinson family owned thirteen different volumes of Emerson's prose and poetry, as well as *The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1883) and Oliver Wendell Holmes' 1885 biography of Emerson. In an 1876 letter to Mrs. T. W. Higginson, Dickinson describes *Representative Men* as "a little Granite Book you can lean upon" (L481). In addition, her initial letter to Higginson, when she asks whether or not her "Verse is alive," references Emerson's "The Poet": "For it is not metres, but a metre-making argument, that makes a poem, – a thought so passionate and alive, that, like the spirit of a plant or an animal, it has an architecture of its own, and adorns nature with a new thing" (Porte and Morris 186). Although Dickinson did not seek out, and actually avoided, Emerson, she may have taken to heart his claim that "metres" alone do not make a poem. Higginson seems to restate Emerson in his explanation of Dickinson's work in the Preface to the 1890 edition: "After all, when a thought takes one's breath away, a lesson on grammar seems an impertinence" (Monteiro vi). Dickinson's poetry was perhaps too "new" "a thing" to adorn nature as Emerson wanted the poet to do, but Dickinson is aware of, if not explicitly heeding, Emerson's advice; even in the regularized form of the 1890s editions, Dickinson's poetry "has an architecture of its own."

and its power, ultimately she came through and found a way to contribute to the world. . . . I can imagine the poet asking, 'What good am I in the world? . . . I can't make myself believe as others believe. . . . But what I can do is 'stop one Heart from breaking' by offering the thoughts, feelings, and words of my poetry and thus 'not live in vain'" (Mackenzie and Dana 46).

Despite the connection to Emerson that Higginson in particular yearns to make explicit, Dickinson is still a poetess, and thus her literary and physical proximity to “H.H.” takes center stage, which is exemplified in the editorial note for the first poem. The yoking of Dickinson’s daring originality with a simple, pretty presentation represents the expectations for a female poet. Dickinson’s daringness stems not from her lack femininity, but from a freedom that could only result from such a cloistered, nun-like existence. Higginson, once again, puts forth this idea in his Preface, where the “seclusion of the portfolio” parallels the seclusion of the poet, who was “so secluded that she lived literally indoors by choice for many years . . . who shrank even from the tranquil society of a New England college town, and yet loved her few friends with profound devotedness, and divided her life between them and her flowers” (Buckingham 4).²⁰ A gloss of the first fifty reviews reveals the repetition of key terms that offer an understanding of how readers saw the poetry. The object itself is often described in detail: “The cover and binding of this little volume are well fitted to its contents. The design of flowers in silver upon a white ground, with the letters at the top in gold, is in the best possible taste” (24). It is “a pretty volume” (15), “which is beautifully bound, with an ornament of the Indian pipe upon the cover, a typical flower in this case” (22). The volume is “very beautiful” (22) and “very dainty” (25); it “is daintily bound and beautifully printed, making a handsome gift book” (26). Despite observations of Dickinson’s “vigorous intellect” (3), the descriptions of the verses are often reductive: the stanzas are “charming” (9, 19, 31), “modest,” piquant,” and “spirited” (10), “magical” (19), “delightful” (30), and “touching” (31). Reviewers often do not include complete

²⁰ Mabel Loomis Todd writes that “the life of the author was intensely picturesque, and at the same time perfectly simple” (Buckingham 11). Todd also incorrectly implies that Dickinson “dressed always in white” (11). Numerous reviewers parrot these facts throughout the 1890s and well into the twentieth century. For example, “Emily was naturally of a retiring nature, and except for a very few friends, was as invisible to the world as if she had dwelt in a nunnery” (24).

poems, but offer “lovely fragments” (10) and “marvelous brevities” (17). Far more than Emerson, readers invoke Helen Hunt Jackson, a successful and familiar female poet, Dickinson’s “intimate friend” and “a warm admirer of her poetry” (3). In a September essay in the *Christian Union*, where Higginson “seeks to prepare an audience for the volume of Dickinson’s verse,” Higginson writes that “in dealing with Nature she often seems to possesses – as was said of her fellow townswoman, Helen Jackson (‘H.H.’) – a sixth sense” (5-6). Numerous other reviews then repeat the apparent opinion of Helen Jackson and her friendship with Dickinson to align the first volume with an established poet: “‘H.H.’ was a great admirer of the poetry of Emily Dickinson” (10); Dickinson’s “intimate acquaintance of ‘H.H.’ That remarkable woman knew her as well as any one could, and it was due to H.H. that a few of her poems saw print” (15); “The poem called ‘Success,’ that forms the heading to the literary reviews of today, was a favorite of the author’s friend and townswoman, Helen Hunt” (27). Again, while general readers seem to delight in Dickinson’s “brilliant shinings of beauty’s inspiration” (19), Arlo Bates, a representative of the establishment critics, reads Dickinson’s supposed simplicity as

a certain rude and half barbaric naiveté. . . . They show the insight of the civilized adult combined with the simplicity of the savage child. There is a barbaric flavor often discernable, as if this gentle power had the blood of some gentle and simple Indian ancestress in her veins still in an unadulterated current. (29)

For Bates, Dickinson’s “new species of art” is not gentle enough, and he apparently seeks to explain her lack of “technical skill” (33) by invoking the strange idea that her “savage,” yet “gentle and simple,” innocence is due to an “Indian ancestress.”

Bates’ point brings up another interesting facet of reactions to the first volume. Due in part to the portrait of a recluse drawn by Higginson and Todd, people who were Dickinson’s loving friends and were thus supposed to know, certain responses wonder how Dickinson could have known about what she writes:

What Emily Dickinson says of love has a peculiar interest, and it can hardly be forbidden that the reader should wonder what experience of her own she might have had to produce so exceptionally personal utterances as some of these voices of imagination seems to be. (17)

Charles Whiting wonders how Dickinson, who was supposedly a nun-like recluse, could have written “songs” in which “one feels that passion should have throbbled to speak so” (18). He does not develop this idea further or offer any suggestions, saying only that “we may not enlighten the reader” (17). While the reviews often indicate an awareness of the editorial influence, such as “there is no ‘purple’ clover, as the editor has mistakenly called it in the title” (19),²¹ reviewers often accept as fact Higginson’s description of Dickinson’s life²² and then wonder how she could have experienced enough to write so powerfully about life and love. Higginson remarks that Dickinson has a “sixth sense,” and then explains that “most of her poems grapple at first hand . . . with the very mysteries of life and death” (6). Higginson includes “I died for Beauty” as his evidence for Dickinson grappling “first hand,” following it with the comment that “the conception is weird enough for William Blake” (6). In contrast to Whiting’s view of the “exceptionally personal utterances,” Higginson writes that the poems are “strangely impersonal,” although “here and there we have a glimpse of experiences too intense to be more plainly intimated” (8). And despite the oft-repeated description of Higginson and Todd as Dickinson’s intimate, loving friends, Higginson does not hide the fact that almost all of his experience with Dickinson is via correspondence: “she sent her poems with gifts of flowers or – as in my own case – to correspondents whom she had never seen” (9). Readers did not miss this

²¹ Higginson writes, “the title being here, as elsewhere, my own, for she herself never prefixes any” (4).

²² Quite often, however, mistaken accounts of Dickinson’s life are given. Some are minor, such as moving Dickinson’s date of death from May 15th to May 1st, 1886 (Buckingham 26). Others, however, are rather severely mistaken, such as an anonymous review in the *Philadelphia Press*, which takes twenty years off her life and makes her an invalid: “Miss Dickinson, daughter of the Hon. Edward Dickinson, of Amherst, Mass., died in 1886 at the age of 36. She was an invalid who seldom emerged from the retirement of her home; not oftener than once a year” (25).

detail: “he gives an interesting picture of the secluded life of Miss Dickinson [in his preface]. . . . Although Col. Higginson had corresponded with her for many years he saw her but twice face to face” (9). Interpretations of the poems as simultaneously “exceptionally personal” and “strangely impersonal” are not caused merely by the Dickinson myth, but by Dickinson’s meticulous effort to create non-referential poetry. While the printed versions alone subsume this meticulousness, we can see Dickinson’s efforts if we take the manuscripts into consideration, and I explore this issue in the next chapter.

The general marketing approach makes sense. Dickinson is aligned with familiar traditions, such as transcendentalism, and authors, particularly Helen Hunt Jackson, and her powerful, original thoughts are couched within the safety of portraying Dickinson as an unstudied recluse whose inspiration came from within. But the volume is also portrayed as Dickinson’s “letter to the world,” which Higginson remarks is “probably the utterance of a passing mood only” (9). Readers brought to the “pretty volume” a mass-mediated understanding of what poetry should be and what a poet working in the transcendental tradition would choose to write about. Readers were also given an unknown poet, introduced to the world for the first time by an established, well-known, and trusted literary critic and a recognized female co-editor who was presented as a loving expert of Emily Dickinson. The *Drum Beat* printings align with Dickinson’s habit of sending her poems as gifts, normally to intimate acquaintances, of course, but not always, as her early letters to Higginson, a correspondent “whom she had never seen,” make clear. Dickinson most likely did not write the *Drum Beat* poems for the Union cause or to be printed in that particular periodical, but contextualizing the poems shows how the texts, regardless of Dickinson’s intentions, create open-ended, discursive publics. The *Drum Beat* public relays information to twenty-first-century readers about how the war was accessed by

those physically detached from the violence, and our ability to access nineteenth-century periodicals reiterates the open-ended, indeterminate, self-contained, and self-creating nature of discursive publics.

But the 1890s editions addressed publics in a new way for Dickinson. Although she read the work of poets in objects similar to Higginson's and Todd's 1890s creations, she predominantly was interested in something more experimental and varied, and she most often accessed the work of female poets in contexts created by the anthology or by the surrounding text of a periodical. Within her manuscripts, she plays with materiality and visuality in ways that print will always obscure, no matter how meticulous the editor may be. Dickinson clearly realized this. While I do not think publishing was truly "foreign" to her "thought" (L265), the necessities of print publication were a hindrance to her project. However, this is not to say that the 1890s editions are simply wrong and should be ignored; rather, they represent an integral aspect of Dickinson studies. What Higginson and Todd did in order to package and market Dickinson shows us what Dickinson was working with and reacting against. Without objects such as *Drum Beat* and the 1890s editions, twentieth- and twenty-first-century criticism would be less able to understand Dickinson's opus. When we compare the manuscripts with the print possibilities open to her and the presentation that her printed poems took, then we see Dickinson's commitment to blurring the distinction between public and private forms of communication and publication.

CHAPTER 2 THE POET AS LETTER WRITER

In Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay, "New Poetry," which was published in the October 1840 edition of *The Dial*, he asks, "is there not room then for a new department in poetry, namely, *Verses of the Portfolio*?" (221). While Higginson will write in the 1890 Preface that Dickinson's work belongs "emphatically to what Emerson long since called the 'Poetry of the Portfolio,'— something produced absolutely without the thought of publication," Emerson's definition of this new poetry is not so simplistic (Buckingham 13). Emerson argues that the "democratical tendencies" of America created a "revolution in literature" that gives "importance to the portfolio over the book." This "revolution" is "a more liberal doctrine of the poetic faculty than our fathers held . . . [who] denied the name of poetry to every composition in which the workmanship and the material were not equally excellent" (220). New poetry consists of "verses of society," rather than "the festal and solemn verses which are written for the nations" (220). While Emerson does contend such verses are "not written for publication," the defining characteristic is the lack of "finish which the conventions of literature require of authors."

However,

though we should be loath to see the wholesome conventions, to which we have alluded, broken down by a general incontinence of publication, and every man's and woman's diary flying into bookstores . . . when a writer has outgrown the state of thought which produced the poem, the interest of letters is served by publishing it imperfect, as we preserved studies, torsos, and blocked statues of the great masters. (221)

Verses of the portfolio are not simply written without any thought toward publication; rather, they are "confessional" poems written as "unpremeditated translation[s]" of one's "thoughts and feelings into rhyme," and then *not* edited and polished to fit traditional poetic conventions (220).

The important point is that print does not necessarily indicate merit, and although the portfolio verses can be published "imperfect," there still must be poetic excellence for these

verses to be enjoyed. Emerson refers to portfolio poetry as “a certain private and household poetry,” contrasting it with work by men of genius, and yet “we are sure that some crude manuscript poems have yielded us a more sustaining and a more stimulating diet, than many elaborated and classic productions” (223). The flashes of insight that one writes down as quickly as possible are just as valid for Emerson, perhaps even more so, than the printed, solemn, studied works of conventional poetic perfection. One can draw “greater pleasure from some manuscript verses than printed ones of equal talent” (221). The verses of the portfolio testify that “the writer was more man than artist, more earnest than vain,” and all “the faults, the imperfect parts, the fragmentary verses, the halting rhymes, has a worth beyond that of a high finish” (221). Dickinson’s work exemplifies a commitment to writing poems that would fall under Emerson’s category of “new poetry.” Although 1890s readers believed Dickinson to be “unstudied,” we know now that she was a dedicated, meticulous, and extremely well-read devotee of poetry and prose. It seems safe to assume that the apparent lack of “a high finish” speaks of an intentional toying with genre and conventions, as opposed to the “cluelessness” that high-brow critics assumed. The 1890s editions show that popular readers appreciated Dickinson’s “imperfect” poetic constructs; in fact, several reviewers referred to her poetry as “a new species of art,” rather than just a new “department” (Buckingham 29).

However, editorial decisions, selections, and mythologies did much to make Dickinson’s work appear written “absolutely without the thought of publication,” and her workshop also reveals a production of poems that were the *opposite* of portfolio verses. Her meticulous attention to diction, line-breaks, grammar, and capitalization is revealed only in the manuscripts. Her efforts to re-write stanzas to better suit Susan were not seen in the nineteenth-century. The fascicles, which Franklin refers to in 1981 as “manuscript books,” disprove the idea that

Dickinson's poetry consisted only of "unpremeditated" translations of fleeting thoughts and feelings to which she never returned or revised.¹ While Dickinson's work can be considered portfolio verses as Emerson describes them, her poetry fits too with the work of "men of genius," for whom

to act on the public is always a secondary aim. They are humble, self-accusing, moody men, whose worship is toward the Ideal Beauty, which chooses to be courted not so often in perfect hymns, as in wild ear-piercing, or in silent musings. Their face is forward, and their heart is in this heaven. (222)²

After Dickinson's death, her sister, Lavinia, found the "forty bound fascicles and enough unbound fascicle sheets for several others – plus the worksheets, indeterminate drafts, and miscellaneous fair copies Mabel Todd called 'scraps'" (Franklin, *Manuscript Books*, x). The worksheets and indeterminate drafts can be seen as "unpremeditated." They are often random stanzas, typically in pencil and written on whatever Dickinson had available—envelopes, shopping lists, or irregular scraps of paper that had apparently been discarded.³ Dickinson's fascicles represent more "finished" poems—they are copied in ink "on sheets of letter paper

¹The fascicles are a relatively recent area of study within Dickinson scholarship, and I will discuss their significance in Chapters 4 and 5. Despite Franklin's efforts in re-establishing the fascicle sequence in 1981 with the publication of *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson*, he believes the fascicles are a means of keeping order and does not see them as booklets of poetry. The early fascicles had very few "unresolved readings," but by "Fascicle 9, in early 1861, they would have been unsuitable for circulation. The transcription, though in ink, was less careful, and the texts, now with unresolved readings, were not intended for others" (20). However, my final chapters show how I and others see the fascicles as the center of Dickinson's project. Franklin notes that Dickinson's "workshop did have rules for destruction, though their purpose was orderly preservation. The primary one was that when working drafts were copied to a later form, such as a fascicle, the drafts were destroyed. Thus, none of them survives for the twenty-seven poems in Fascicle 1, with one exception, a rare one since it is the only worksheet for a poem in the forty fascicles" (11).

²Emerson's use of the term "wild" predicts what he writes in "The Poet," an essay from *Essays: Second Series*, which we know Dickinson owned. Jack Capps notes that "I taste a liquor never brewed –" correlates to Emerson's statement, "the poet knows that he speaks adequately then only when he speaks somewhat wildly . . . not with intellect alone but with the intellect inebriated by nectar" (115). In the Dickinson's family copy of *Essays: Second Series*, "this portion of the discussion of symbolism in 'The Poet' has been marked: . . . We are far from having exhausted the significance of the few symbols we use. We can use them yet with a terrible simplicity. It does not need that a poem be long. Every word was once a poem. Every new relation is a new word" (116). Dickinson's meticulous, laborious attention to diction fits with Emerson's description here, as well as the deceptive simplicity of her "new species" of poetry.

³For the most detailed study of Dickinson's later writings, drafts, and fragments, see Marta Werner's *Open Folios*.

already folded by the manufacturer to produce two leaves” (x). Dickinson’s opus of fascicles and “scraps” represent the two opposing approaches to poetry that Emerson outlines in “New Poetry,” yet I cannot be sure that Dickinson’s process was influenced by this specific essay.⁴ More importantly, however, Dickinson would have gathered Emerson’s opinion regarding the relation between women and authorship from his other essays. For example, in “Beauty” from *Conduct of Life*, Emerson describes “a beautiful woman” as “a practical poet, taming her savage mate, planting tenderness, hope and eloquence in all whom she approaches” (*The Complete Writings* 611). In “Success,” which explores the accomplishments of Americans, Emerson writes,

we have seen an American woman write a novel of which a million copies were sold, in all languages, and which had one merit, of speaking to the universal heart, and was read with equal interest to three audiences, namely, in the parlor, in the kitchen and in the nursery of every house. (707)

Even though “of all American authors whom she read, Emily Dickinson can be most closely associated with Ralph Waldo Emerson,” she remains a *poetess* and thus incapable of being “the man of genius” and the Poet for America Emerson sought (Capps 113).⁵ It seems to me that the fascicle poems represent more finished products than what is found in the rest of her workshop, but Dickinson also manipulated genre, voice, and audience within her letters and letter-poems,

⁴My research thus far has not revealed whether or not Dickinson read *The Dial*. There is no record of the Dickinson family’s subscription to it, and I could not find the essay reprinted in any of the periodicals we know the Dickinson family read, such as the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper’s*, and *Scribner’s*. I have been unable to locate whether or not Emerson defines “verses of the portfolio” in his later work; at this point, it seems the essay only appeared in *The Dial*. However, it may have been common knowledge at the time since Higginson’s simplistic definition of “The Poetry of the Portfolio” is repeated throughout the 1890s reviews.

⁵ While Emerson was a powerful influence on Dickinson, her most coveted authors were British women, such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, for whom she wrote three elegies, George Eliot, and the Brontës. With regard to female poets in America, Cheryl Walker writes, “by mid-century the dominant members in this women’s tradition must have seemed to younger women poets like an Establishment . . . Poetry had become so inbred that only an outsider like Emily Dickinson could revitalize it . . . Though we don’t know to what extent she admired American women’s poetry, one thing is certainly clear: she ignored its stylistic conventions. However, she did not ignore the type of the poetess as a cultural phenomenon. She couldn’t, because as a woman interested in literature, she had to come to terms with this model” (87).

and she uses this particular space to experiment because it was deemed an appropriate form of female writing.

In *Publics and Counterpublics*, Michael Warner isolates the lyric as a mode of address that contrasts with public address. While “the address of public speech is both personal and impersonal,” lyric conventions require that we “regard [the voice in a lyric poem] as transcendent. Though it could only be produced through the displacement of writing, we read it with cultivated disregard of its circumstance of circulation, understanding it as an image of absolute privacy” (76, 81). By “transcendent,” Warner means timeless, as opposed to the way Emerson describes “Transcendancy” in “Poetry and Imagination”: “The solid men complain that the idealist leaves out the fundamental facts; the poet complains that the solid men leave out the sky” (*The Complete Writings* 749). Warner argues that when we read lyric poetry, the voice of the poem is read as the voice of the poet, but we must separate this voice from the poem’s initial circumstance and circulation. While we understand that this voice is “produced through the displacement of writing,” lyric poetry transcends time and space. We read the poem as the disembodied voice of the poet speaking to the reader. In lyric poetry, the poem’s “I” is understood to be the poet speaking to a “you,” which refers to the individual reader. This is, of course, impossible. We can only read a poem as a lyric if we approach “it with cultivated disregard of its circumstance of circulation” (81). Warner decides that the lyric can be “understood as timeless overheard self-communion” (82). Warner’s description here correlates with the long-held perception of what Dickinson’s poetry was: written for herself, without any thought towards publication; poetry stolen from her a few times during her life, but overall poetry that remained in a locked box. For decades, Dickinson’s poems exemplified “timeless overheard self-communion.” Well into the twentieth-century, readers perceived Dickinson’s

poems as a conversation with herself since, for mysterious biographical and psychological reasons, she did not want to talk to anyone else. However, Warner argues that Walt Whitman's poetry compromises the typical "lyric transcendence" since Whitman's work must "embrace its scene of address" (82). Whitman's poetry does not "simply fictionalize either the speaker or the scene of address"; rather, it produces a tension between the addressee and the "scene of address." In "To a Stranger," for example, "the speaker himself indicates the genericizing conventions of print publication" (286). For Warner, Whitman plays with the "communicative medium of intimacy" in "a way that toys with the nonintimate, depersonalizing conventions of print publication" (285). When we take into account Dickinson's body of work, including the letters, letter-poems, fascicles, and the materiality of her workshop, rather than just an isolated poem in its print form, then we see that Dickinson's primary mode of address is the lyric, yet her poetic project encompasses and utilizes letter-writing, which is a genre associated with "absolute privacy" more prevalently than lyric poetry. Less explicitly yet no less radically than Whitman, Dickinson plays with the boundaries between intimate and non-intimate means of communication. While Whitman's poetry fictionalizes its "own discursive status" and refuses to "suspend awareness of the publication context," Dickinson concentrates on non-print publication in order to fictionalize "particularity" (288).

In Whitman's "To a Stranger," the tension arises because we recognize the speaker's "difficulty simultaneously as (a) his personal commitment to me, whom he loves; and (b) his attempt to acknowledge our anonymity, our mutual nonknowledge, our mediation by print" (286). Dickinson's printed poems, particularly those in the 1890s editions, enact a simpler fictionalization than Whitman does in "To a Stranger." In two poems from the 1890 edition, for example, the narrators are dead: "Because I could not stop for Death, / He kindly stopped for

me” (Fr479) and “I died for beauty, but was scarce / Adjusted in the tomb, / When one who died for truth was lain / In an adjoining room” (Fr448). In these poems, we know that Dickinson is not explaining a moment when *she* “died for beauty,” yet we still feel as though the poet/narrator talks directly to us. Since Dickinson died in 1886, 1890s as well as contemporary readers may be enticed into believing it is Dickinson speaking to us from beyond the grave, even though we know the poem is “addressing the in-principle anonymous and indefinite audience of the print public sphere” (286). However, Dickinson did not focus on the “audience of the print public sphere” in the way Whitman did, and her poems printed in the nineteenth-century read as the poet speaking to the reader because they were packaged that way. The placement of “This is my letter to the world / That never wrote to me” as the Prelude, combined with Higginson’s description in the Preface of Dickinson’s extreme reclusiveness, helped to make every “I” read as “I, Emily Dickinson.” Of the 115 poems in the 1890 edition, sixty-four are written in the first person. In her entire body of work, Dickinson uses “I” more than any other word—1,682 times (Rosenbaum 865). Instead of toying with audience and addressee in the “print public sphere,” Dickinson manipulates epistolary conventions to explore the limits of genre and the boundaries between poetry and prose, public and private, and print and manuscript.

Cristanne Miller’s first chapter in *A Poet’s Grammar* investigates Dickinson’s “Letters to the World,” arguing that “letters and poems appear to be complementary forms of the same kind of communication for the poet” (10). Dickinson’s approach to poetry is remarkably similar, often seamless, to her approach to letter-writing:

In some letters Dickinson changes from prose to verse in mid-sentence, as if both were the same medium. . . . In other letters Dickinson lifts lines from finished poems and incorporates them into her prose. . . . More often, however, the poet lapses into verse to express what she cannot say in prose. (10-11)

Mabel Loomis Todd's 1894 volume represents the first edition of Dickinson's letters, which Todd apparently approached "with something almost like dread . . . lest the deep revelations of a peculiarly shy inner life might so pervade them that in true loyalty to their writer none could be publicly used" (xxv). Although Todd claims the concern was unwarranted, since "Emily kept her little reserves, and bared her soul but seldom, even in intimate correspondence," the common approach to the letters is as an entry-point into the mind of the mysterious recluse (xxvi). However, recent re-evaluations reveal Dickinson's manipulation of genre as something far more complicated and innovative than has been previously acknowledged. Marietta Messmer, for example, investigates how Dickinson's "'poems' and 'letters' become complementary modes of writing that participate in a radically experimental, gendered critique of specific discursive formations" (26). Dickinson's letter-writing can be contextualized within nineteenth-century epistolary culture, which deemed letter-writing a proper endeavor for women of Dickinson's status and class, yet Dickinson's choice to be a poet and her manipulation of a womanly duty reveal a desire to blend the boundaries between public and private communication. While Dickinson coveted personal communication, and was weary of innovations that purported to connect people, such as the train and the telegraph, she also manipulated the accepted nineteenth-century genres of prose and poetry—her letters are not simply a means to keep in touch with friends; her lyrics, even in the simplified, regularized formats of the nineteenth-century printings, are not simply the singular voice of the poet speaking to an ideal reader. The poems result from Dickinson's experimentation within her workshop, and the poems are often meticulously designed to seem personal and impersonal. Equally to the poetry, and perhaps even more so, the letters, since they are an accepted female occupation and a genre that is not *art* but simply a means of intimate communication, experiment with addressee and voice, and blur the distinction

between prose and poetry, public and private. Marietta Messmer describes Dickinson's process as a "third space," while Cristanne Miller remarks that Dickinson manipulates distance as well as intimacy (15).⁶ I would add that Dickinson consciously works with the established notions of public and private during the nineteenth-century, although these notions remain prevalent in the twenty-first, and uses the assumed simplicity of the distinction to develop prose and poetry with a new architecture. And, as Ellen Louise Hart and Martha Nell Smith show in *Open Me Carefully*, Dickinson did not, and could not, complete this endeavor on her own.

Susan Gilbert moved to Amherst in 1850, and became engaged to Austin, Dickinson's brother, in November 1853. They were married in July 1856 and moved next door to Dickinson (Johnson 939). We know of only one letter that Dickinson wrote to Sue in 1850. It opens, "Were it not for the weather Susie – my little, unwelcome face would come peering in today – I should steal a kiss from the sister" (L38). Dickinson's first letter to Sue occurs about five months after the death of Sue's sister, Mary, and Dickinson invokes the new world of sisters to which Sue now belongs: "I miss one angel face in the little world of sisters – dear Mary – sainted Mary – Remember lonely one – tho, she comes not to us, we shall return to her!" (L38). While necessities of print and the assumptions of readers' expectations result in poems separated from the letters, the poet's literary approach was quite different. According to Hart's and Smith's *Open Me Carefully*, by the mid-1850s Dickinson's "writings to Susan expand from conventional

⁶ For additional ways of reading Dickinson's letters, see *Reading Emily Dickinson's Letters: Critical Essays*, edited by Jane Donahue Eberwein and Cindy MacKenzie. There are also several articles that focus on Dickinson's letters. For example, see Sarah Wider's "Corresponding Worlds: The Art of Emily Dickinson's Letters"; Paula Bennett's "'By a Mouth that Cannot Not Speak': Spectral Presence in Emily Dickinson's Letters"; Ellen Louise Hart's "The Elizabeth Whitney Putnam Manuscripts and New Strategies for Editing Emily Dickinson's Letters"; Erika Scheurer's "'Near, but remote': Emily Dickinson's Epistolary Voice"; and Lori Lebow's "Woman of Letters: Narrative Episodes in the Letters of Emily Dickinson." In contrast, Alexander Street Press has made Todd's two-volume 1894 edition of Dickinson's letters available online, introducing the database, *North American Women's Letters and Diaries*, as including "the immediate experiences of 1,325 women and 150,000 pages of diaries and letters" (<<http://solomon.nwld.alexanderstreet.com/>>).

letters to what Susan refers to as ‘letter-poems’ as she later compiles her book of Emily’s writings. These ‘letter-poems’ are letters that look and sound like poems; they are also poems addressed to Susan that read like letters, or messages” (65). Dickinson’s process of sending poems to Sue begins in the late 1850s, and “Dickinson’s poems, letters, and letter-poems to Susan give us a rare glimpse into the poet’s process of writing and revising. They also indicate that Susan, herself a published writer of poems, reviews, essays, and stories, was Emily’s primary reader, the recipient of both drafts and finished poems” (xii). Dickinson’s format of sending poems as letters began as early as 1850, when Dickinson sent an unsigned valentine “to Elbridge G. Bowdoin, then 30 and practicing law with Edward Dickinson” (Franklin 49). These very early poems⁷ were written for “Valentine Week,” which was a custom Dickinson participated in while at Mount Holyoke.

⁷One of the manuscripts of Dickinson’s second valentine, “Sic transit gloria mundi” (Fr2B), was sent to William Howland, and appeared in the *Springfield Daily Republican* on February 20, 1852. The manuscript for the other version of the valentine, Fr2A, has been lost, but was copied into a commonplace book belonging to Eudocia Converse, a first cousin of Dickinson’s mother (Franklin 51). One of Dickinson’s valentine letters (L34) was printed unsigned in *The Indicator* (7 February 1850), which was published by a group of students at Amherst College (Johnson 93). While Johnson prints the letter as prose, remarking that “this valentine letter, dated ‘Valentine Eve,’ is typical of the nonsense Dickinson could evoke for such occasions,” one can detect the subtle mixture of prose and poetry that Dickinson will continue to develop. The first sentence, for example, rings of her typical hymn quatrain: “Sir, I desire an interview; / meet me at sunrise, or sunset, / or the new moon – / the place is immaterial” (Johnson 92-93). According to Johnson, the letter was printed in the “Editor’s Corner” and “preceded by a comment in which the editor says: ‘I wish I knew who the author is. I think she must have some spell, by which she quickens the imagination, and causes the high blood ‘run frolic through the veins’” (93). L33, which Johnson estimates was sent to William Cowper Dickinson about February 1850, illustrates another approach to a valentine letter:

“Life is but a strife –
T’is a bubble –
T’is a dream –
And man is but a little *boat*
Which paddles down the stream”

Johnson explains, “although the spirit of this verse seems removed from that of the usual valentine, it seems to have been sent as such. It is illustrated with small cuts clipped from old books and papers” (91).

Aside from the valentines, the first poem Dickinson dispatches is addressed “Susie,” and sent to Susan Dickinson in March 1853 when she was in Manchester, New Hampshire (Franklin 57):

Write! Comrade, write!

On the wondrous sea
Sailing silently,
Ho! Pilot, ho!
Knowest thou the shore
Where no breakers roar –
Where the storm is o’er?

In the peaceful west
Many the sails at read –
The anchors fast –
Thither I pilot *thee* –
Land Ho! Eternity!
Ashore at last!

Franklin numbers the above poem as Dickinson’s third poem overall. A later copy, slightly altered from the one sent to Sue, appears in Fascicle 1, which Franklin dates as about 1858 (*Manuscript Books 2*). This format continues throughout her life, and “more than six hundred manuscripts, representing a few over five hundred poems, had been sent to others” (Franklin 29). This includes poems as letters, such as the above example, which is a letter to Sue as well as a poem Dickinson copied into a fascicle, and poems sent along with letters, such as the enclosures Dickinson sent in her first letter to Higginson.⁸ But even Dickinson’s early letters blend poetry and prose, both by including quotes or paraphrase from the works of others and by collapsing the distinction between her own prose and poetry. In a September 1845 letter to Abiah Root, for example, Dickinson writes, “but as long as I don’t [know how to cook], my knowledge of

⁸ Franklin writes, “one cannot say exactly how many manuscripts she produced for these 1,789 poems,” which is to date the amount of poems Dickinson wrote if only one version is counted for each poem, “but the number may have been twice what we know, as many as 5,000 manuscripts, instead of 2,500” (28-29). For details about who received which poems, see Franklin’s Appendix Seven, 1547-1557.

housekeeping is about as much use as faith without works, which you know we are told is dead.

. . . Since I wrote you last the summer is past and gone, and autumn with the sere and yellow leaf is already upon us” (L8). Johnson notes,

this is the earliest known letter in which Dickinson paraphrases lines from the Bible and from Shakespeare, the two sources to which she returns again and again throughout her life for quotation or allusion. . . . The scripture source for the first is James 2.17: “faith, if it hath not works, is dead.” The second is from *Macbeth* V, iii, 22-23: “My way of life / Is fall’n into the sere, the yellow leaf.” (23)

One of the earliest letters that Johnson argues contains a prose-poem is an October 1851 letter to Austin:

Don’t think that the sky will frown so the day when you come home! She will smile and look happy, and be full of sunshine *then* – and even *should* she frown upon her child returning, there is *another* sky ever serene and fair, and there is *another* sunshine, tho’ it be darkness there – never mind faded forests, Austin, never mind silent fields – *here* is a little forest whose leaf is ever green, here is a *brighter* garden, where not a frost has been, in its unfading flowers I hear the bright bee hum, prithee, my Brother, into *my* garden come! (L58)

Johnson explains, “the poem at the end of the letter is printed here, as Dickinson wrote it, in prose form” (150). Franklin does not list this as one of Dickinson’s 1,789 poems, although it does appear in Appendix Thirteen of the 1998 variorum: “Some prose passages in Emily Dickinson’s early letters and notes exhibit characteristics of verse without being so written” (1577). Franklin lists eight of these “prose passages,” including the one from L58 above, and he records the verse as beginning with “there is *another* sky.” The passage was published as prose in Todd’s 1894 version of the *Letters* and as poem number two in Thomas H. Johnson’s 1955 version of the *Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1578).

Until quite recently, Dickinson’s letters have been read to discover the events of her life and the inner workings of her mind. Even T. H. Johnson’s scholarly edition, which did not exclude any known letters, treated the letters as a separate, distinct genre of writing that served to provide biographical contexts for the poetry. Johnson notes that his volume of letters (1958)

brings “to its conclusion” “the task of editing the poetry and prose of Emily Dickinson” (xi). Of the letters, Johnson remarks, “they are the expression of her unique personality. . . . Though she never wrote about herself after adolescence, the letters nevertheless are always self-portraits, written by one who has observed herself frankly and with no self-pity or regrets” (xxi). In the nineteenth-century, Dickinson’s focus on interiority had already been established by 1890s prefaces and reviews, and Mabel Loomis Todd’s 1894 edition of the letters aimed to offer Dickinson’s prose to “the lovers of Emily Dickinson’s poems [who] have been so eager for” it (xxv).⁹ Todd desires for the letters to dispel the conception of Dickinson as a darkly mysterious poet:

Emily Dickinson’s verses, often but the reflection of a passing mood, do not always completely represent herself,—rarely, indeed, showing the dainty humor, the frolicsome gayety, which continually bubbled over in her daily life. The sombre and even weird outlook upon this world and the next, characteristic of many of the poems, was by no means a prevailing condition of the mind. (xxv)

Todd’s intent with the letters is to show more of Dickinson so readers will not think her as “weird” as the poems seem to indicate. Todd exacts a distinction between the letters and the poems, aligning the letters with journal-writing: “As she kept no journal, the letters are the more

⁹ Mabel Loomis Todd edited the *Letters of Emily Dickinson*, which was published in 1894, eight years after Dickinson’s death. According to Buckingham’s study, the two volumes of letters totaled 2,500 sales for that year. In the Preface to a 1931 version of the *Letters*, Todd writes that “Austin, Lavinia, and I collected her letters, which they entrusted to me to edit and publish . . . I tried, always, to comply with those still living in 1894 who wanted their identity disguised, or reference to their personal sorrow omitted” (ix). Todd writes that the second edition (of 1931) is “much enlarged” but “contains everything which appeared in 1894” (x). Essentially, Todd collected letters from anyone who would give them to her, but was initially inspired to do so when a schoolmate of Dickinson at Amherst Academy approached Todd at a talk at Westfield, Massachusetts that Todd was giving about Dickinson. The schoolmate “asked *where* might she read some of Emily’s prose?” But Dickinson’s sister, Lavinia, had not found any prose, so Todd replied that she hoped that “some of her letters might be rescued . . . She responded eagerly . . . that she possessed a large number of letters . . . and that nothing would delight her more than to send them to me,— which she promptly did” (xv-xvi). In a 1931 reprint and enlarged edition of the 1894 *Letters*, Mabel Todd writes in the Preface, “now, after thirty-seven years [after the 1894 publication of the letters], the Emily legend has assumed a shape unrecognizable to one who knew her. Her life is revamped to suit the taste of the times, and Emily herself has all but vanished in the process. And so it seems advisable to return to sources, and to publish a second edition, much enlarged, of the original volumes of *Letters*” (x).

interesting because they contain all the prose which she is known to have written” (xxv). In contrast to the letters as Dickinson’s biography, Marietta Messmer observes,

Dickinson is able to transfer the letter from the sphere of (womanly) duty to the realm of (male-dominated) literary production. At the same time, by endowing her ‘poems’ with epistolary properties, she is able to legitimize a genre primarily reserved for men (poetry) through the use of the (for women) socially acceptable epistolary format. (48)

However, despite this realm of propriety,¹⁰ many of the letters, the full scale of which can only be guessed, have been destroyed, lost, or blotted out because, as Sue puts it, they were “too personal and adulatory to be printed” (Hart and Smith 77). Ruth Miller investigates T.W. Higginson’s role in the creation of the Dickinson myth, while Hart and Smith attribute much of the manuscript mutilation to Mabel Loomis Todd, who may have “entirely inked over” poems within the fascicles. For example, in the case of “One Sister have I in our house” (Fr5B),

the fascicle version of this poem was entirely inked over. It is quite possible that someone (probably Mabel Loomis Todd) found this poem’s unabashed expression of affection offensive and tried to blot it out. This mutilation parallels those in the earlier letters, as well as the erasure of “Sue” as the addressee of erotic verses such as “Her breast is fit for pearls.” (77)¹¹

The Dickinson myth, at least in part, subsumed attention to Dickinson’s letter-writing and poetic innovations. Another detracting factor, according to Hart and Smith, is the assumption that nineteenth-century female relationships consisted of passionate intimacy that was “patently not sexual . . . As this correspondence [in *Open Me Carefully*] shows, however, Emily and Susan’s

¹⁰ Dickinson mocks established notions of female propriety in an 1848 letter to her brother, Austin Dickinson. She explains her reaction when she first received his last letter, telling him she debated whether to read the letter or continue her study of “the history of Sulphuric [sic] Acid.” She writes, I concluded “to open it with moderation, peruse its contents with sobriety becoming my station, & if after a close investigation of its contents I found nothing which savored of rebellion or an unsubdued [sic] will, I would lay it away in my folio & forget I had ever received it. Are you not gratified that I am so rapidly gaining correct ideas of female propriety & sedate deportment?” (L22).

¹¹Hart and Smith write, “When the Dickinson fascicles were turned over to Mabel Loomis Todd, Susan’s crucial position as primary audience for Emily’s poetry became an inconvenient and irrelevant piece of information that did not jibe with the popular image of a nineteenth-century poetess. To editors of the time, the most marketable image of Dickinson the poet was that of the eccentric, reclusive, asexual woman in white . . . Loomis Todd was therefore willing to play up this ‘solitary spinster’ characterization of Emily Dickinson in her editorial productions” (xv).

relationship surpasses in depth, passion, and continuity the stereotype of the ‘intimate exchange’ between women friends of the period” (xiv). While Dickinson sought out Higginson and routinely sent poems to Samuel Bowles, another prominent editor, as well as to numerous other friends and relatives, the “sheer volume, duration, and diversity” (148) of correspondence sent to Sue convinces Hart, Smith and myself, among others, that Sue represents Dickinson’s “primary reader,” and the two sustained “an ongoing literary dialogue” for more than thirty years (xii).

Dickinson’s “intimate letters” to Sue convince Hart and Smith, as well as other scholars,¹² that Dickinson saw Sue as “the beloved,” rather than as only a sister-in-law and literary confidant: “we can only assume that a love poem sent to the beloved has a very different impact from a version of the same poem sent to a friend or an editor” (148). While we cannot know, of course, how certain poems impacted Susan, a twenty-first century reading of an isolated poem will be altered if the same poem is put in another context. However, as Cristanne Miller deduces,

Dickinson’s practice of mailing the same poem in more than one letter is related to her practice of posing. This serves as a warning to her twentieth-century readers that poems mailed in letters may be deceptively personal; they were not conceived solely in the light of a single friendship . . . a poem seems to be occasional, referring to particular events and the private relationship between writer and reader. . . . Just as one cannot assume the detail of Dickinson’s poetry is autobiographical, one cannot trust that she will represent herself fully or accurately in a letter. (13)

For example, Miller discusses what appears to be a “highly personal” message to Samuel Bowles: “Dear Friend / If you doubted my Snow – for a moment – you never will – again – I know” (L792). Dickinson includes the poem, “Through the strait pass of suffering – / The Martyrs – even – trod” (Fr187). Miller explains,

¹² Cristanne Miller, for example, writes, “that Dickinson loved Susan seems beyond debate. The character of that love included strong romantic and erotic components” (190n15). Judith Farr notes, “eight years before she died, she equated Eden with Sue, in one of the scores of notes, letters, and provocative lyrics that establish the fact of her lasting and troubled love for her sister-in-law” (100).

the poet made a fair copy of this poem for herself before she mailed it to Bowles, however, and she mailed another copy of the same poem to Sue. The multiple copies suggest that the poet's primary intent in writing the poem was not to present herself as a martyr to Bowles or to point to any single occasion, whatever the impetus for sending him the poem might have been. In the letter to Sue, the poem would seem to have a different reference and perhaps significance. The poem expresses a truth that Dickinson values and finds useful. Like any poem, it allows her to share her emotional present without revealing its events and detail. (13-14)

While Franklin's variorum offers the background information for each poem, including all manuscript and print information available, his edition invariably simplifies the nature of Dickinson's approach to language and communication. Franklin explicates his editorial approach regarding what constitutes a poem:

For inclusion in this edition, passages from the letters meet one or two conditions. They have independent verification as poetry by having other appearances that confirm it, or they were incorporated as poetry in Dickinson's customary way, or both. . . . The criteria here, though her own, do not establish an exclusive canon, for there is no definitive boundary between prose and poetry in Dickinson's letter. (33-34)

Franklin recognizes the complexity of drawing genre boundaries, yet he draws them anyway, and then oddly states that "at times she [Dickinson] may have surprised herself to find prose becoming verse" (34). Of course, I cannot know whether or not Dickinson "surprised herself," yet studies such as Cristanne Miller's, Messmer's, and Hart and Smith's locate a sustained experimentation with genre that belies Franklin's contention that "independent verification as poetry" can take place.

Franklin compiles all available details in order "to present a separate text for each known manuscript," and the resulting texts create publics which are quite different from the ones during Dickinson's lifetime. While none of us can approach a poem, letter, or letter-poem as Sue, when we know that a poem was sent in a letter or incorporated into a letter-poem to Sue, then we cannot avoid the attempt to read through Sue's eyes. A feat, of course, no one can accomplish. What occurs, then, is we see the poem as "occasional," although we cannot return to the

historical instance and are not encouraged to do so through Franklin's neat, detailed, seemingly-complicated variorum. The separation of poems from letters, the standardization of line breaks, and the arrangement of poems in chronological order follow Franklin's assertion that "this edition is based on the assumption that a literary work is separable from its artifact, as Dickinson herself demonstrated as she moved her poems from one piece of paper to another" (27). While Franklin's plethora of details appears overwhelming and complicated at first, his editorial approach is far more simplistic than Dickinson's workshop, where Dickinson manipulated and experimented with the boundaries between public and private, intimate and distant, verse and prose. Specific examples of poems and letter-poems reveal that a "return" to Dickinson's workshop offers valuable insight into how language operates within "a hierarchy" between "public and private" (Warner 23), and how transgressing the distinction as well as the hierarchy may be one explanation for why Dickinson writes to Higginson, "I had told you I did not print –" (L316).

One example of a poem addressed to Sue that reads like a message to her, and thus as a comment on Sue and Emily's relationship, is L258, written in early 1862:

Dear Sue,

Your – Riches – taught me – poverty!
Myself, a "Millionaire"
In little –wealths – as Girls can boast –
Till broad as "Buenos Ayre" –
You drifted your Dominions –
A Different – Peru –
And I esteemed – all – poverty –
For Life's Estate – with you!

Johnson's version of the poem continues for three more eight-lined stanzas with the ending signature:

Dear Sue –
You see I remember –

Emily.

Approached in isolation, this poem has been interpreted in a number of ways.¹³ George Frisbie Whicher, for example, views it as an elegy for Benjamin Franklin Newton: “There cannot be much doubt that Emily was thinking of Newton. Some years later, we cannot be sure just when, she sent this poem to her sister-in-law with the words: ‘You see I remember.’ Sue would know what” (92). Newton, Dickinson’s “gentle, yet grave Preceptor” from about 1849-1850, who taught her “what to read” and “what authors to admire” (L153), left “Amherst to continue the study of law at Worcester” when Dickinson was nineteen, giving her a copy of the 1847 edition of Emerson’s *Poems* as a parting gift (Johnson 85; Capps 113). Newton died in March 1853, and Dickinson most likely refers to him in an 1862 letter to Higginson: “When a little Girl, I had a friend, who taught me Immortality – but venturing too near, himself – he never returned – Soon after, my Tutor, died –” (L261). Despite Whicher’s claim, Dickinson’s exact reference is uncertain, although we can be sure “Sue would know what.” Johnson suggests it may be “written about a person living whom [Dickinson] feels that she has lost, perhaps Sue herself. Such indeed seems to have been her feeling about Sue at this time” (401-402). But the poem seems to be about more than loss, although the narrator and the addressee of the poem are apart: “But *this* – must be a *different Wealth* – / To miss it – beggars – so! / I’m sure ‘tis ‘*India*’ – all day – / To those who look on you –”. The address and signature lines, in conjunction with the message of the poem, allow one to interpret Sue as the “Different” girl who “drifted” her “Dominions” into Dickinson’s life; until that day, Dickinson perceived herself as a “Millionaire”

¹³ Daneen Wardrop contextualizes the poem within the burgeoning mining industry in the nineteenth-century, concluding it may caution against greed: “She provides ironic twists on the type of wealth obtained from ‘Buenos Ayre,’ ‘Peru,’ and ‘India,’ and ‘Golconda,’ a city in southern India, renowned for diamonds. Her point is eminently clear: ‘Of ‘Mines’ - I little know - myself - / But just the names - of Gems –’ (Fr418A). Her riches come from the names of things rather than from the things themselves” (75). Vivian Pollak reads the poem’s economic metaphor as a “link between the private experience and that communal nineteenth-century life of which she was a shrewd observer and oblique critic” (161).

in whatever “wealths” a girl “can Boast.” Reading the poem as a message to Sue fosters the biographical context, providing the illusion that one can isolate the narrator, the addressee, and the non-referential nouns, such as “Riches,” “wealths,” and “the Pearl.” The inherent intimacy of the epistolary form becomes even more powerful in this instance, since the poem appears to have been sent as well as written to show Sue that Dickinson remembers something. As readers, we wish to imagine what that something may be, and yet the poem does not offer access to Susan’s or Dickinson’s memories.

In this instance, the allure of returning to a specific occasion is tempting, but the inability to be sure and the range of interpretations, particularly without any biographical background or the letter context, represent why one could argue, as does Dohmna Mitchell, that what is easily forgotten is the “remoteness [of the manuscripts] from our own time” and twenty-first-century readers should keep “the inaccessibility of the historical” in mind (“A Foreign Country” 186). However, another position articulates that the manuscripts offer a different view of the writing process and can bring us closer to what Jerome McGann calls “Dickinson’s original scene of writing” (Debo 133). The *Dickinson Digital Archives*, for example, contain a section labeled, “Emily Dickinson Writing a Poem,” which shows the manuscripts of the exchange between Dickinson and Susan regarding “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers.” The point of this section, it seems clear to me, is not to finalize Dickinson’s intentions, but to raise questions:

In these screens, browsers can see Dickinson sending one of her poems to a correspondent and then rewriting the poem in consultation with that reader, Emily's sister-in-law Susan Dickinson. Their exchange about this poem raises questions of identity central, really, to all practices of reading. (Preface)

While the editors, Martha Nell Smith and Lara Vetter, offer a few possible questions, such as “what is the identity of ‘Safe in their Alabaster Chambers,’ the poem under Emily and Susan’s consideration here?,” they end the Preface with this statement: “As you examine the manuscripts

and notes featured here, many other questions and insights will surely arise, and we would greatly appreciate your comments and inquiries.” The discovery of an exchange between Susan and Dickinson leads to contemplations regarding the identity of poetry, the nature of writing, the idea (or breakdown of the idea) of the isolated genius, and what constitutes an artistic artifact.

Rather than drawing any finite conclusion about Dickinson’s intentions, databases such as the *Dickinson Archives* seem established to raise more questions. Smith deems this “readerly writing” a useful tool not only for scholarly inquiry but for pedagogical approaches:

Having realized that poems do not spring fully formed from a poet’s mind, seventh graders were inspired [after looking at the ‘Emily Dickinson Writing a Poem’ section of the *Archives*] not only to read but also to write poetry. Their activity parallels the ‘writing’ that all readers and all editors do in the acts of reading and of textual production, the very sort of readerly writing that conventional editions, however scrupulously produced, occlude. (Introduction, *Emily Dickinson’s Correspondences*)

Due to time constraints in the classroom and in critical inquiry, scholars and teachers who agree that Dickinson’s presentation is part of her art can typically discuss only a few poems where, for example, the shape of an “s” and the cross of a “t” are seen as intentional and influential in how the poem is read. Mitchell’s concern is that these “anomalies” may be consistent features within Dickinson’s manuscripts as well as in nineteenth-century conventions, and thus the treatment of “the material appearance of [Dickinson’s] manuscripts as if they were not accidental or incidental to her practices” indicates a quite drastic assumption as to authorial intention (Mitchell, “A Foreign Country” 178). However, manuscript study need not be to discover Dickinson’s intentions, although the resistance to manuscript study may be explained through its break with “Western tradition,” in which “public and private haven been commonly and sensibly understood as distinct zones” (Warner 26). Manuscript study and digital archiving access Dickinson’s “bedroom” poetry in ways that may cause anxiety or rebuke from those committed to traditional editorial approaches, and these reactions against standard procedure parallel the

1890s reactions against Dickinson's lack of technical skill. When we read Dickinson's poems in print, and disregard the manuscripts and Dickinson's workshop, then we can "just read" Dickinson's poetry without having to think about genre boundaries, let alone see them manipulated and broken. While the manuscripts pinpoint an occasion, or multiple occasions, in which Dickinson sought the advice of Sue, my discussion of the letters is not to return us to the historical moment, but to reveal the complexity of Dickinson's opus. While poems, letters, and letter-poems are marked by historical specificity, the primary operation of Dickinson's poetry is un-occasional, something which Dickinson develops through her epistolary experimentation. The poses and voices in her letters, a genre which readers typically assume represents an honest intimacy, correlate to her commitment to non-referential poetry.

The story regarding Sue and Dickinson hinges on an increasing distance between the two following Sue's marriage in 1856, an event which some argue Dickinson viewed as Sue's abandonment of her for the duties of wife, mother, and socialite.¹⁴ While the two women had intellectual disagreements and differences in opinion, Hart and Smith problematize

the biographical commonplace that Emily did not see Susan for years at a time. In fact, the contact between the two is deeply intimate and sustained [during the mid-1860s to the mid-1870s]. The letter-poems allude to unkempt appearance, shared cups of coffee, and private interludes, which Susan's daughter Martha described as taking place in the back hallway of the Homestead. (147)

In *Open Me Carefully*, Johnson's L258 is transcribed as L70:

¹⁴ For example, Judith Farr reads Dickinson's poetry, in conjunction with the letters, as "narratives" of two great loves: an early one for Sue, which is replaced by one for Samuel Bowles: "Her surrender of the adored Sue to marriage, motherhood, and a shared life with Austin . . . seems to have prompted a thirst for prominence and position of her own. It clearly provoked a surge of desire for a life in art, a life for which she must have known herself suited . . . The evidence of her poems and letters, however, also shows that Emily Dickinson had indeed been in love—with the girlhood friend who became her sister-in-law; that later she was passionately drawn to the married Samuel Bowles" (30). Dillon notes, however, that "In critical treatment of Dickinson's poems concerning marriage, the biographical impulse has thus proved powerful in part because Dickinson has so effectively blocked this path of analysis" (247). The push to find to what or whom Dickinson's non-referential poems and letters refer is, perhaps, understandable, or at least the primary critical approach throughout the twentieth century. In contrast to filling in biographical gaps, however, the letters and letter-poems indicate Dickinson's commitment to keeping the occasional out of her poetry, and her epistolary work enabled her to practice.

Dear Sue.

Your – Riches –
taught me – poverty!
Myself, a “Millionaire”
In little – wealths – as
Girls can boast –
Till broad as “Buenos Ayre” –
You drifted your Dominions –
A Different – Peru –
And I esteemed – all –
poverty –
For Life’s Estate – with you!

The intent of Hart and Smith’s edition is

to make a cohesive book that would most effectively relate the human story behind this most generative of literary and emotional unions because of the editorial belief that the textual body of the correspondence—Dickinson’s manuscripts and all their material facts—forms a powerful witness to Susan’s involvement in Emily’s writing practices. (xxi)

However, the difficulty of transcribing these “material facts” into print necessitates an involved, detailed “End Notes” that attempts to describe the materiality of each letter. Hart and Smith contend, “Dickinson used the page itself, and the placement of words in relation to embossments, attachments, and margins to convey meaning,” yet they admit “that typography cannot sufficiently transmit” all of the “poetic designs” (xxiii). Thus, one is left to decide how the Hart/Smith version differs from Johnson’s: does the spacing alter one’s vision of the poem, and can the visual differences be related to content differences? While contemporary Dickinson criticism debates such questions, Michael Warner’s discussion of how “the unending process of redefinition” of multiple publics, which “can be strategic, conscious, even artful,” applies in fruitful ways to Dickinson’s body of work, particularly in the current moment of digital archiving (14). Digital archives dedicated to providing access to Dickinson’s work and to nineteenth-century periodicals allow one to see how context shapes interpretation. We can also

“see” Dickinson at work, which offers possibilities beyond whether or not Dickinson’s intentions can be located. Dickinson’s material artifacts, in manuscript as well as in print, reveal

that each decision of form, style, and procedure carries hazards and costs in the kind of public it can define. The temptation is to think of publics as something we make, through individual heroism and creative inspiration or through common goodwill. Much of the process, however, necessarily remains invisible to consciousness and to reflective agency. (Warner 14)

While Dickinson’s “process” of creating multiple publics is somewhat invisible, and was largely absent until the computer allowed for a wider range of access, we can “see” her workshop, her experimentation, and the ways in which each context of each poem alters not only the poem’s content but the poem’s identity. Whether or not Dickinson intended to “make” various publics is largely invisible too, but her decisions “of form, style, and procedure” offer possibilities that are only recently being fully explored and appreciated. Warner’s theories in the Dickinson context elucidate just how complex the “interplay among these different levels [of publics]” can be, but it is precisely this “interplay” that debunks the long-held assumption of Dickinson’s place as *the* poet of privacy (14). Dickinson’s commitment to “interplay” is clear to me, and while I may be unable to prove that she *intended* to “make” various publics, my intent is to show how her body of work explores and transcends the public/private dichotomy.

Hart and Smith are committed to the active presence of Sue within Dickinson’s workshop, and the few examples of Sue’s letters *to* Dickinson seem to support this conclusion. For example, Dickinson listens to Susan’s advice regarding “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers” (Fr124A-G). While the *Springfield Republican* printed a version of the poem on March 1, 1862 (Fr124A), Dickinson sends the poem to Sue with an altered second stanza and the signature line,

Perhaps this verse would
please you better – Sue –
Emily.

Susan replies: “I am not suited / dear Emily with the second / verse –”. Dickinson revises the second stanza again, returning it to Sue and asking, “Is this, frostier?” (Hart and Smith 96-100). The version included in Fascicle 6, however, closely resembles the version printed in the *Republican*, which indicates that while Dickinson revised and sent the stanza to Sue, she retained what seems to be the earliest version of the poem in fair copy without any variants in the fascicle (see also Franklin 159-164). In Fascicle 10, however, Dickinson records the poem again in fair copy and includes the two alternate stanzas that she had sent to Sue.¹⁵ We can only guess at the extent to which Dickinson sought and implemented Sue’s advice. Dickinson’s correspondence, however, provides a context that differs from any poems in print, including those printed during Dickinson’s life, such as “These are the days when Birds come back –”. While Sue may have been the one to send the poems to *Drum Beat*, we can conjecture that she could not have done so without at least Dickinson’s implicit approval. And since, once again, we cannot know the situation firsthand, the more important point is to see the influence of context in what we understand a poem to mean. As discussed in Chapter One, the readers of *Drum Beat* would interpret “These are the days when Birds come back –” in a different way than Sue, if only because Dickinson initially sent this poem to her in the mid-1850s, before the start of the Civil War. The study of these various contexts, even though we cannot read as Sue and we are no longer in the nineteenth-century, allows for open-ended publics to be formed.

In addition, according to Hart and Smith, Dickinson’s “These are the days” echoes “a poem by Susan, ‘There are three months of the Spring,’ suggesting a call-and-response relationship in their writing life” (71). Although Susan’s poem was not printed, the manuscript can be read on the *Emily Dickinson Archives*, and is clearly a work in progress. If Dickinson is

¹⁵ For Eleanor Heginbotham’s discussion of how “duplicates” operate within the fascicles, see her Chapters Three and Four.

echoing Susan, then the poem could be read as a peaceful observation regarding Indian summer, similarly to the way Susan's poem observes the peaceful flow from winter into spring. Susan's poem, however, never appears in *Drum Beat*, or anywhere else in print, and the context of the Civil War adds a dimension of violence to Dickinson's poem. Since we have neither the Civil War as context nor Susan's original poem at our fingertips, unless one looks for it within the digital archive, then we read Dickinson's poem primarily as Fr122A, B, C, or D, or J130. In fact, without the aid of a title, such as "October," under which the poem appeared in *Drum Beat*, or the utterly-telling "Indian Summer" of the 1890 edition, interpreting the poem's main description may represent a difficulty. One would need to know, for example, what an Indian Summer signified, and the general reader may easily understand the reference if she lived in a geographic location in which these fraudulent summers are prevalent; others, who have never experienced such weather, may not.¹⁶ One's interpretation of this poem depends upon its context, yet the various contexts in which it was and can be seen, such as by Susan, by the readers of *Drum Beat*, as Fr122, or untitled¹⁷ in Fascicle 6, reflect the ways in which Dickinson's work, in conjunction with but also apart from the themes discussed in the poems, represents the possible spaces beyond public or private. Dickinson's work exemplifies the alluring difficulty of

¹⁶ For an interesting close reading of "Indian Summer," based exclusively on the poem's portrait of this "season," see Donna Bauerly's "Dickinson's Rhetoric of Temporality." Bauerly's understanding of Indian Summer and of language is altered by the poem, which "recalls all the deceptive tricks that such a 'season,' not really a season at all, plays on the willing-to-be-duped. Indian Summer comes after the first frost, when we reluctantly have turned ourselves toward winter. Suddenly, the days warm, the light catches the colors in the leaves and returns us to the bright hues of summer blossoms. Mindlessly, like an overwrought and eager Orpheus pursuing Eurydice, wanting to catch hold of what we fear we are losing, we turn back—foolish and fooled mortals!" (1-2). Bauerly concludes, "and how shall I go out into nature, into Nature, these days? . . . Returning to Iowa will not just be the recognition of the old familiar signs. The displacement has been far more than external. Dickinson knew all about that, for more than once she spoke of 'internal differences.' Now I know, and knowing, unknow as well" (7).

¹⁷ Elizabeth Maddock Dillon correlates Dickinson's lack of titles to "the liberal subject's narrative of identity," in which "identity is often imagined to have been established in private, particularly in the domestic space of the home." Dillon argues that "Dickinson's preference not to title her works is not simply a problem for editors; rather, it is of a piece with a poetic practice that disturbs and obstructs the liberal subject's narrative of identity as well as the division between public and private on which this narrative depends" (246-247).

defining “private” and “public” as distinct zones that are always clearly demarcated regardless of context or situation. The image of Dickinson has long been synonymous with privacy, but I see her work as playing with the multiple, complex, and sometimes contradictory definitions of private and public poetry.

Within the past few decades, studies into Dickinson’s refusal to print highlight the multiple, often competing, contexts in which Dickinson’s work can be comprised, and these studies reveal how Dickinson blurred genre distinctions, with both print and manuscript contexts playing a role. Dickinson’s project, rather than simply existing because she “delayed to print,” represents possibilities beyond the norm, and we need not finalize Dickinson’s intentions or the “proper” way to read her poetry. Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, for example, utilizes Dickinson’s work to explicate “contemporary political debates concerning marriage” (237). Dillon’s reading of Dickinson’s marital poems centers on the argument for alternative spaces:

By splitting apart the public and the private, Dickinson makes visible the space of sociality—the space in which public and private meanings are stitched together—either overtly or covertly. The third space, between public and private, is one that Dickinson’s poetry habitually seeks to inhabit. (253)

Some critics, such as Dohmnall Mitchell, may disagree with others who focus their studies on the manuscripts, such as Martha Nell Smith, because “relying on the autograph version alone is problematic, for it assumes that the handwritten page is a form of publication—complete, finished, and containing *in script* and in visual form all the information necessary to its further transmission” (“Diplomacy of Translation” 45). Mitchell articulates that prioritizing Dickinson’s work in manuscript form may cause one to forget the “remoteness [of the manuscripts] from our own time” (“A Foreign Country” 186). However, Martha Nell Smith, in *Rowing in Eden: Rereading Emily Dickinson*, never suggests that Dickinson’s work should *only* be read in manuscript. Rather, her main point seems to illustrate how

the original Dickinson documents emphasize the fact that readers do not ‘get hold of’ or ‘master’ poems, but are themselves part of the process. . . . Dickinson’s literary productions are themselves theoretical, beginning to critique the idea of the author, the role of the reader, and to elaborate what we now call reception studies.
(8)

A return to a historical moment is not possible, yet the attempt to do so has revealed multiple, complex contexts through which Dickinson’s work can be considered, leading to a necessary re-evaluation not only of Dickinson’s status as a “private poet” but of the dichotomy between private and public. Rather than seeing Dickinson’s project as a rejection of print, Alexandra Socarides locates the ways in which the manuscripts investigate the limits of print:

When we look at the two main material contexts in which Dickinson copied her poems (her fascicles and her letters) we see something other than flat out rejection—we see that she is also adopting, borrowing, and appropriating conventions of print, in order, as I will argue, to figure out what the limitations of print might be.¹⁸

Critics have always found a lack of consistency in Dickinson’s work, such as the lack of a clear pattern to each fascicle; certain poems appearing in duplicates in the fascicles; the presence of variants or alternate word choices in the fascicle poems; various drafts of the same poem; and certain poems working with the hymn quatrain while others seem to be experimenting with visual effects of line breaks. These inconsistencies lead some scholars to deem a vast amount of Dickinson’s work as “unsuitable for circulation . . . [and] not intended for others” (Franklin 20). However, I see Dickinson’s project as going in a different direction—while we cannot read Dickinson’s mind, we can find some consistency within her experimentation, which may be *to not be consistent*. Dickinson’s manuscripts and letters reveal the ways in which she delineated how to manage the writing of poetry: meticulously experimenting with diction, line breaks,

¹⁸ Socarides’ argument stems from a close reading of the ways in which Dickinson copied poems into her manuscripts. A detailed discussion of contemporary manuscript studies, including Socarides’ point of view, is the focus of Chapter Three and Four.

grammar, addressee, purpose, context, and voice. The letters can be seen as practice for her commitment to non-referential poetry, and the workshop plays with and understands the confines of print, and Dickinson uses this workshop not simply to “talk” to herself, but to investigate how and when she could work within those confines and how and when she could not.

I have already mentioned the discussion within the letters about “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers,” but another rare glimpse into how the workshop may have operated between Sue and Dickinson is the poem’s appearance in the *Springfield Republican* (March 1862):

The Sleeping.

Safe in their alabaster chambers,
Untouched by morning,
And untouched by noon
Sleep the meek members of the Resurrection,
Rafters of satin, and roof of stone.

Light laughs the breeze
In her castle above them,
Babbles the bee in a stolid ear,
Pipe the sweet birds in ignorant cadences:
Ah! What sagacity perished here!
Pelham Hill, June, 1861.

The violence of the Civil War seems intentionally subdued by the poem’s title, which was most likely chosen by the *Republican* editor, Samuel Bowles, as it does not appear anywhere in Dickinson’s manuscripts, yet the context of the publication and the addition of the exact site of where the “perished” lie make the war inextricable from the poem’s images. Besides the title, the poem’s diction, such as “Safe,” “Sleep,” “laughs,” and “babbles,” rings of such peace that one may miss the poem’s portrait of an uncaring, “ignorant” nature, laughing and singing, significantly in “cadences,” despite of, or perhaps at, the dead who lie below. According to the *Emily Dickinson Lexicon*, “sagacity” is “shrewdness; acuteness of mental discernment; aptitude for investigation or discovery; keenness and soundness of judgment of persons and conditions.”

Why the fallen soldiers represent “sagacity” is unclear. The poem seems to indicate that nature continues despite human death. The dead as “the meek members of the Resurrection” echoes Bible verses such as “But the meek shall inherit the earth; / and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (*The Psalms* 37:11) and “Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5.5). “Ignorant” nature remains unaware that “The Sleeping” will one day return and “inherit the earth.”

However, the *Republican* readership would associate death with the Civil War, where both sides used millennium discourse as justification,¹⁹ and nature’s laughing scorn may be at the war’s contingency upon a *lack* of “keenness and soundness of judgment of persons and conditions.” A primary objective of the *Republican* was to offer a weekly review of the war’s status, and Dickinson’s poem, appearing on page two, follows an extensive account of the “Progress of the War.” A *Republican* reader could be uplifted from the dismal reminder by the message of hope in the poem that follows Dickinson’s, which Hart and Smith indicate could likely be Susan’s (96):

“The Shadow of Thy Wing.”

Weary of life’s great mart, its dust and din,
Faint with its toiling, suffering with its sin,
In childlike faith my heart to Thee I bring,
For refuge in "the shadow of thy wing."

Like a worn bird of passage, left behind
Wounded, and sinking, by its faithless kind,
With flight unsteady, seeking needed rest,
I come for shelter to Thy faithful breast.

Like a proud ship, dismantled by the gale,
Her banners lost and rifted every sail,
In the deep waters to Thy love I cling,
And hasten to the refuge of Thy wing.

¹⁹ See, for example, Shira Wolosky’s *A Voice of War*, Chapters One and Two.

O Thou, thy people's comforter **alway**,
Their light in darkness, and their guide by day,
Their anchor 'mid the storm, their hope in calm,
Their joy in pain, their fortress in alarm!

We are all weak, Thy strength we humbly crave;
We are all lost, and Thou alone canst save;
A weary world, to Thy dear arm we cling,
And hope for all a refuge "'neath Thy wing."

Although both poems were published anonymously, "The Shadow of Thy Wing" as authored by Susan seems indicated in her statement to Dickinson, "Has girl read Republican? / It takes as long to start our / Fleet as the Burnside" (L58). In comparison to "The Shadow," Dickinson's invocation of scripture is remarkably slight and its use as a message of hope is debatable. While the Biblical connotation makes "meek" a positive quality, the meekness of soldiers, especially dead ones, may not have been a well-received description. The lack of clarity belies not a statement of peaceful, hopeful closure, but a critique of the war itself and of what caused these soldiers to die; it may refer to the sagacity of the perished soldiers, but it may also indicate, especially if the place of death is removed, that what has perished is sagacity. In contrast, "The Shadow" finds and offers hope in the "Steadfast love of God": "How excellent *is* thy loving-kindness, O God! / Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings" (*Psalms* 36:7). Although only the "meek" are addressed in Dickinson's poem, Susan's claims that "We are all weak . . . We are all lost" and God "alone canst save" this "weary world" and God alone can offer "a refuge."²⁰ Juxtaposed with this confident message of hope and love, one views Dickinson's as more critical of the war—rather than a reflection upon the peaceful sleep of

²⁰ Dickinson's "'Hope' is the things with feathers" seems to allude to "The Shadow of Thy Wing," although it was not printed until the 1891 edition of *Poems* and most likely was not sent to Susan (Franklin records that a lost manuscript "was sent to Louise and Frances Norcross, perhaps about 1862," 333). Dickinson transcribed the poem into Fascicle 13. Dickinson's "synthesis", as always, "is hers, and unique" (Sewall 717), and she removes the direct Biblical allusion. In Dickinson's poem, "hope" itself, unattached to any mention of God, "perches in the soul . . . And sore must be the storm - / That could abash the little Bird / That kept so many warm - / I've heard it in the chilliest land -- / And on the strangest Sea -- / Yet - never - in Extremity, / It asked a crumb - of me." (Fr314).

fallen heroes, one can read it as an observation of nature's relentlessness and of the lack of shrewdness that caused "The Sleeping" to be put in their place. The poem's placement exemplifies that war kills, since an account of the war's progress leads readers here to imagine a "Rafter of satin, and roof of stone." Despite the weariness of the world that Susan's poem admits, one can find an "anchor 'mid the storm" in God, which indicates that the storm will pass; until it does, however, refuge is possible with and within God's love. Dickinson's poem offers no such guarantee—only that "sagacity perished here."

The "third space" appears when we account for the material existence and the various contexts of Dickinson's poems and letter-poems, and see them as objects contingent upon space and time, yet capable of transcendence. The identity of these artifacts does not depend on *Dickinson* alone, but on who sees it and where. Although contemporary print editions offer all of Dickinson's poems in isolation, or seemingly without a context other than the random page at which a person opens the book, mid-nineteenth-century readers would access Dickinson's poems much like the above example, which is a context separated from Dickinson in several ways: her name, for one, would be "anonymous," and while a poem would be isolated from other Dickinson poems, its interpretive context would be shaped by the surrounding poems and prose. Despite the alteration of print, the periodical context reflects an aspect of Dickinson's workshop that Johnson's and Franklin's variorums, and particularly the reading editions, obscure. Although recipients of Dickinson's poems would know the author of the poem, despite her tendency to vary or leave out a signature, the poem or letter-poem would be read amidst Dickinson's prose, often with a specific occasion in mind. Just as readers of *Drum Beat* and the *Republican* could not disregard the cultural or textual contexts surrounding Dickinson's poems, Susan's reading of a poem would be marked by the poem's relation to recent events in her life.

Specifying Dickinson's intent in writing the poem, however, is made difficult by a poem also being sent to Samuel Bowles, who would interpret it according to events in his life. In other words, both recipients would attempt to understand Dickinson's point, yet both would come to different conclusions since Dickinson sent it to them, but did not necessarily write it with them in mind. While Dickinson's reason for the initial *writing* may be unverifiable, her reasons for sending it can be postulated, and when twenty-first century readers are made aware of the context, of when the poem was read by a particular recipient, then a new public is created, one which differs from a public arising out of Franklin's traditional editions. And these material artifacts continue to create new publics with each additional layer of context: we "see" the artifact through Susan's eyes or read it in the context of Susan, Higginson, or Bowles, depending upon to whom she sent it. The poem could also be read by a contemporary reader who has no knowledge of any of the various contexts or recipients and would constitute a public in a way different from those who do read it in the light of its fascicle placement, its status as a letter-poem, or its being sent to Sue, Bowles, or Higginson.

Public is a complex noun, with various senses and modes of definition that "tend to be intermixed in usage. People do not always even distinguish between *the* public and *a* public, though in certain contexts the difference can matter a great deal. *The* public is a kind of social totality" (Warner 65). Modern society's conception of *the* public is one sense of the noun, while Michael Warner explains that *a* public "can also be a second thing: a concrete audience" (66). Warner thinks of this "concrete audience" as a bounded totality marked by a specific event or place, such as the audience of a play, yet his explanation links in an interesting way to the specific, intended audience of Sue. However, Warner's main objective is to clarify the "third sense: the kind of public that comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation"

(66). While Dickinson may have intended numerous poems to be read by Sue, to be about Sue, or to work through her emotions regarding Sue, Sue no longer can be the “bounded totality” of Dickinson’s poetry. And Dickinson seemed to recognize this. When considering even a single Dickinson poem, the various versions and contexts result in publics that exemplify Warner’s notion of a public in the third sense. The discursive publics created by Dickinson’s texts rely on multiple factors, such as a reader or readers, the setting or context in which the poem(s) is found, the medium of access, and the moment in time, and each public changes depending on these and other numerous factors. While I see Dickinson’s project as a prediction of Warner’s investigation, Emerson clarifies the simple distinction between prose and verse by writing, “you shall not speak ideal truth in prose uncontradicted: you may in verse. . . . We ask for food and fire, we talk of our work, our tools and material necessities, in prose; that is, without any elevation or aim at beauty” (“Poetry and Imagination” 743). Emerson also simplifies the distinction between public and private by relating it to moral conduct: “We believe that holiness confers a certain insight, because not by our private but by our public force can we share and know the nature of things” (“Worship” 586).²¹ The poet is endowed with the ability to understand and explain nature in a way that “normal” men cannot: the poet “stands among partial men for the complete man, and apprises us not of his wealth, but of the common wealth. . . . Nature enhances her beauty, to the eye of loving men, from the belief that the poet is beholding her shows at the same time” (“The Poet” 239). Although Henry Wells observes that Dickinson was “the only person in America who really made Transcendentalism practical,” she also radicalized and complicated Emerson’s notions of the clear boundaries between public and

²¹ Earlier in the essay, Emerson makes clear that his use of the terms public and private relates to forms of worship—religion being public and faith or a moral consciousness being private: “The builder of heaven has not so ill constructed his creature as that the religion, that is, the public nature, should fall out: the public and the private element . . . adhere to every soul, and cannot be subdued except the soul is dissipated. God builds his temple in the heart on the ruins of churches and religions” (582).

private, verse and prose (Capps 112). The experimentation that occurs in her letter-writing provides the laboratory for Dickinson to produce her “new species of art.”

Of course, Dickinson is not the only nineteenth-century writer to experiment with literary conventions or to blur genre distinctions. In fact, the Civil War era altered the literary landscape:

Boundaries between once-distinct poetic stances became remarkably fluid. Earlier in the century an occasional civic poem such as Emerson’s ‘Concord Hymn’ would have seemed diametrically opposed to a woman poet’s meditation on the death of a child . . . In the Civil War era, however, when a poem represents the death of a son in battle, grieving becomes a process that is at once collective and individual . . . an astonishing variety of people—men and women from all walks of life—turned to poetry in order to respond to events of the war. (Barrett 2)

While poetry became integral to American culture, writers recognized the difficulty of representing the war and its effects, and some attempted to alter literary conventions in order to produce a “new” language that could better convey what was happening. Dickinson clearly falls into this category, as does Melville’s *Battle-Pieces*, in which he examines how the “war is represented in all kinds of texts, including newspapers, telegrams, and poetry. . . . Melville probes the boundary between poetry and prose, suggesting that poetry—a new kind of poetry—might have a role to play in representing the war’s horrors” (14). Similarly to the critical confusion about Dickinson’s unconventionality, “Melville’s volume of densely written and philosophical war poems was a critical failure in its own time . . . Some reviewers had trouble deciding whether Melville was writing poetry or prose” (14). But Melville and Dickinson were not the only ones who consciously blended verse and prose. While they may have done so as an artistic stance, the prevalence of poetry during the mid-nineteenth-century resulted in extensive circulation in various ways: some Americans sent in their work to newspapers and magazines; others copied them into album books, mailed them in letters, or read them aloud at social gatherings (2). Poetry was read in books and anthologies, in “broadsides, pamphlets, daily newspapers, and magazines,” as well as in the form of sheet music (2). Besides letters as a

means of circulating one's own poems or poems one liked, other writers of the time period also collapsed prose and poetry in letters. For example, Faith Barrett and Cristanne Miller's *Words for the Hour: A New Anthology of American Civil War Poetry* publishes for the first time the work of Obadiah Ethelbert Baker, who fought for the Union army and "filled thirteen pocket diaries with his responses to the war, responses that include journal entries and long poems, as well as the lines of verse he sometimes used to close out journal entries" (1). Baker revised and drafted the war-time materials until the 1890s, ending up with "about two hundred poems" (1). Dickinson is clearly a product of her time period, yet the quantity, variety, and quality of her poems create one of America's most accomplished poets. While there is indeed experimentation going on in her letters, she was not the only poet of the time period to do so, and the intermingling of communication and poetry was a facet of the nineteenth-century that links Dickinson with her culture, rather than sets her apart. What distinguishes her is the sustained effort to continue to play with the limits of genre and print conventions. In the next chapter, I explore how Dickinson became known as the isolated genius ahead of, rather than influenced by, her time.

CHAPTER 3 DICKINSON IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In the twentieth-century, Emily Dickinson became one of the most canonized female writers in American literature. This transition from a popular writer to the ideal (pre)modernist poet continues to influence the way her work is read, taught, and understood. The myth of the spinster recluse who wrote poetry only for herself arose during the nineteenth-century, of course, but the reiteration of this myth throughout the twentieth-century continues to permeate the way Dickinson's work is understood. In stark contrast to viewing Dickinson as a product of the Civil War era, an era which collapsed the distinction between "high" and "low" poetry, twentieth-century editorial procedures and literary criticism reinforced the image of Dickinson as isolationist. In fact, the literary establishment purported to have "discovered" Dickinson, and she was valued as a protomodernist poet who had rejected everything about her own time. Allen Tate, for example, writes in a 1928 essay on Emily Dickinson that "when she went upstairs and closed the door, she mastered life by rejecting it" (287).

The *Third Series* in 1896 marked the last of the nineteenth-century volumes. After Austin Dickinson's death in 1895, a quarrel developed between Dickinson's sister, Lavinia, and Mabel Loomis Todd over a strip of land, culminating in a much-publicized court case that Todd lost. It ended her work on the manuscripts, leaving them divided between the two women (Franklin 3). Lavinia continued on her own, and although she "was reduced to the old pattern of piecemeal publication, she succeed at times. Four poems attributed to Emily Dickinson appeared in periodicals in 1897 and 1898 . . . Lavinia's death in 1899 stopped such publication, and the manuscripts passed to her niece and heir, Martha Dickinson" (4). Martha, who would later become Martha Dickinson Bianchi, did nothing with the manuscripts until about thirty years later, "by which time Susan Dickinson was dead and [Martha] was in her sixties" (4). Bianchi

was Susan's daughter, and she did not publish any of the manuscripts until "1914 in *The Single Hound*, largely made up of poems that had been sent to her mother" (4). Bianchi also published a 1915 article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, which "contained notes and letters, including some poems, that Dickinson had sent to her family" (4). In 1924, Bianchi published *The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson*, which was Bianchi's re-arrangement of *Letters* (1894) with a biographical account and some material from the 1915 article (4). Also in 1924, Bianchi issued *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, which combined the 1890s volumes and *The Single Hound*. Bianchi did not realize many of the manuscripts she had inherited from Lavinia contained poems not yet published, so she issued *Further Poems* in 1929 and *Unpublished Poems* in 1935. While Bianchi was not as competent as Todd with Dickinson's handwriting, and she made "numerous alterations in the interests of sense and sensibility . . . and her texts were regularized as to spelling, capitalization, and punctuation," her "installments may be seen as the continuation of the three nineteenth-century series," although "she was the first to stop giving titles to poems, and in fact removed all of them from the nineteenth-century versions when she brought them into her collected edition in 1924" (5). In 1931, Mabel Loomis Todd, in collaboration with her daughter, Millicent Todd Bingham, published an expanded edition of the *Letters*, which Franklin sees as "a direct challenge to Bianchi's *Life and Letters* (1924)" (5). When both Bianchi and Todd died, Bingham "issued two books, *Ancestor's Brocades: The Literary Debut of Emily Dickinson* (1945), in which she documented the early editing, the lawsuit, and the ensuing confusion, and *Bolts of Melody* (1945), an edition containing over 650 unpublished poems, the last installment in the series that had begun in 1890" (5). The 1945 edition represented the end of "the first cycle of Dickinson editing . . . nearly all the poems had now been published," yet the

1896 manuscript division was made permanent between Harvard's collection and the collection at Amherst College:

In 1950 Alfred Leete Hampson, Bianchi's heir, sold the Dickinson papers to Harvard University, which thereby acquired claims to the manuscripts in Bingham's possession, along with those in Hampson's, and to the Dickinson literary property generally. Bingham gave her manuscripts to Amherst College, and an agreement between the two institutions permits their remaining there. (5-6)

In addition to the single-author volumes, Dickinson's poems were presented in anthologies. To show how the mythic Emily Dickinson came into being, Amanda Gailey traces "major editorial approaches in depicting Dickinson's life and poems by examining representative anthologies from 1897 to 1955" (62). Gailey records several specific instances of later editorial introductions that simply redraw the reclusive, love-spurned image of Dickinson that began with Todd and Higginson, and Todd, Higginson, and Bianchi, all writing in the new century, continued to add to the myth. For example, Higginson collected a number of his nineteenth-century *Atlantic Monthly* essays into a book, *Carlyle's Laugh*, published in 1909. The longest essay in the collection is "Emily Dickinson," which opens, "few events in American literary history have been more curious than the sudden rise of Emily Dickinson many years since into a posthumous fame only more accentuated by the utterly recluse character of her life" (249). Higginson recounts his relationship with Dickinson, including in full the first eight letters she sent him as well as a number of the poems sent along with those letters. Early twentieth-century readers would see that Dickinson writes, "I smile when you suggest I delay 'to publish,' that being foreign to my thought as firmaments to fin," and "When I state myself, as the representative of the verse, it does not mean me, but a supposed person" (258, 260). Although Higginson is not completely truthful about his initial reaction to Dickinson, he writes, "the impression of a wholly new and original poetic genius was as distinct on my mind at the first

reading of these four poems as it is now” (252).¹ Higginson refers to the four poems Dickinson sent in her first letter to him, the one in which she asks, “Are you too deeply occupied to say if my verse is alive?” (L262). Higginson includes in full two of the poems, “We play at paste” (Fr282) and “The nearest dream recedes unrealized” (Fr304), since they had not yet been printed. He notes that the other two enclosures “have since been separately printed, — ‘Safe in their alabaster chambers’ and ‘I’ll tell you how the sun rose’” (251). Higginson mainly uses Dickinson’s letters to present an account of her life. Although he calls her a “poetic genius,” his essay reinforces the image of Dickinson he drew in the 1890s:

At last, after many postponements, on August 16, 1870, I found myself face to face with my hitherto unseen correspondent . . . I heard an extremely faint and pattering footstep like that of a child, in the hall, and in glided, almost noiselessly, a plain, shy little person, the face without a single good feature . . . She had a quaint and nun-like look . . . She came toward me with two day-lilies, which she put in a childlike way into my hand, saying softly, under her breath, “These are my introduction,” and adding, also under her breath, in childlike fashion, “Forgive me if I am frightened; I never see strangers, and hardly know what to say.” (272)

While the Prefaces to the 1890s editions highlighted Dickinson’s reclusiveness, Higginson linked Dickinson the poet with Helen Hunt Jackson and Emerson. Here, he reduces the forty-year-old woman to an unattractive, timorous child. Amanda Gailey argues that Dickinson had to be “naturalized [into] the feminized private explorer” because of “the belief that she could not have produced universally aesthetic poetry without a painfully feminized life” (65). According to Bianchi, Dickinson’s “painful” life is a result of falling “suddenly and completely in love with a man already married” (Gailey 73).

Bianchi’s portrait of her aunt appears in her Preface to the 1915 and 1924 volumes, which ushered in a new period in Dickinson’s reception, according to Fred Lewis Pattee, who remarks

¹ Recall from Chapter One that Ruth Miller relays Higginson’s April 17th letter to his editor: “I foresee that ‘Young Contributors’ will send me worse things than ever now. Two such specimens of verse as came yesterday & day before—fortunately not to be forwarded for publication!” (62).

that by 1930 “the flood-gates of sentimentality and sensation and romance were wide open” (186). Pattee argues that by 1937, the year when his article was published in *The Sewanee Review*, “there are three Emily Dickinsons, if we begin our consideration with the date when she first appeared in published form” (181). Pattee claims that first is the Todd-Higginson period, which he sees as without sensation, deeming the prefaces as offering “perhaps a complete revelation of the poet as we shall ever have” (182). Pattee’s second period is “the Madame Bianchi period—Emily Dickinson presented as a person, Emily Dickinson romanticized, sentimentalized, drenched with superlatives” (185). The post-1930 period witnesses a flood of interest in Dickinson: “there were four biographies of Dickinson, and four different lovers, and with it came a new ‘Complete Edition’ of the Poems—778 poems now. Then had come two bibliographies . . . and endless articles in magazines and reviews, much of it in the key of personalia and literary gossip” (185-186). While Pattee pinpoints the editorial “blunder” of withholding material, saying that “photographic reproductions of manuscripts” often differ from translations into print, he associates the “bungling and unscholarly” editing with “the feminine ranks”: “The proponents and biographers and defenders of the poet have been from the first mostly women” (186-187). Pattee singles out Mabel Loomis Todd as “praiseworthy,” despite “her unscholarly editing, her haphazard arrangement of the poems, and her composition of titles” (186). Pattee laments editorial issues that continue to concern critics today, such as the selections made for the 1890s editions (“why select the 115 seemingly at random and throw them without chronology into four classifications never dreamed of by their author?”), the translation of the poems into print, and the “apparent division of the holders of the manuscript poems into two seemingly hostile camps” (187).

While Pattee makes some poignant observations that are still being debated today, his overall argument is to show “the real Emily Dickinson,” which he believes is different and more real than the other “Dickinsons” already created by past editors and critics. He rightly calls for a detailed editing that remains close to the manuscripts, saying that “if the poet revised her manuscript poems or presented them in different versions the reader should know it” and “all of the manuscripts should be open for the inspection of students and critics” (188-189). But Pattee’s scholarly, *male* editor’s main task would be to organize the “chaotic mass” of the manuscripts. Although the first scholarly edition will not appear until 1955, Pattee’s vision of an editor parallels the mentality of T.H. Johnson and R.W. Franklin, which is to “clean up” the poetry and present it correctly by removing the titles and regularizations and organizing the poems into chronological order. Pattee quotes the conclusion of Professor Whicher, “which has been the conclusion of every other scholarly critic: ‘Of the growth of Emily Dickinson as a poet some conception of the sequence of her poems is a first essential’” (188). While I do agree that Dickinson’s manuscripts are integral to her project, Pattee and his ideal editor, a role which Johnson and Franklin fill well, would offer the poetry correctly in order to judge it more accurately—a “competent” male editor is needed in order to determine whether or not Dickinson’s poems reveal poetic value. While Pattee recommends that this editor “throw aside most of the biographical material now in print and all of the centenary papers in magazines and reviews,” presumably to be able to edit the poetry without being blinded by the “sentimentalized myth” of Dickinson, he then argues that the poems should be considered a “media through which one might catch possible glimpses of a woman’s naked soul” (189-190). Pattee restates the myth begun by Higginson that “the lyrics we know were written . . . with never a thought of possible publication,” and adds his own explanation for why Dickinson’s poems should be understood as

passionate confessions and cries, whether or not they were attached to autobiographical events. Pattee argues Dickinson “never did escape from her ancestral environment,” which he describes as “New England individualism seeding into queerness; religion hardening into cliché; love in its natural channels repressed, denied, thwarted, become a growing underground cataract—strange wreckage one finds on the terminal moraines of the Puritan ice-age” (191). Pattee, in fact, affirms his theory of Dickinson’s Puritanical repression with Higginson’s portrait “of Emily at both of his visits to Amherst” as “a mere child” (193).

Pattee reads the poetry as Dickinson’s desire for escape, and suggests that “what undoubtedly saved her from mere sterile ‘queerness’, was her ability,—first tested after she had entered her thirties—to express herself with the written word; an ability rarely attained in the New England of her period where feminine repression was deemed to be scriptural command” (193). Since Pattee calls for an editor to “throw aside most of the biographical material,” I should add here that we know Dickinson’s valentine was published in the *Springfield Daily Republican* in 1852, when she was twenty-one. Many much later critics have suggested that Dickinson was oppressed by her time period, and countless psychoanalytic readings of her poems were published throughout the twentieth-century.² But rather than add anything new or

² For example, Heather Kirk Thomas writes in a 1988 article, “Emily Dickinson’s ‘Renunciation’ and Anorexia Nervosa,” that “Dickinson’s poetry display[s] the obsessive patterns of starvation and renunciation typical of female victims of anorexia” and that “her life and her extant letters present nearly conclusive evidence that Dickinson herself suffered from this syndrome” (206). In 1979, Karl Keller claims Dickinson was liberated to write poetry through her Puritan heritage, just as “Puritanism liberated Anne Bradstreet not to heresy, but to duty . . . In each instance the Puritan emphasis on fulfillment through faith gave a woman her poetry” (17). Keller contextualizes Dickinson’s work within the teachings of Puritanism to show how her Puritan heritage allowed more freedom and equality than nineteenth century social binaries, since “every man and woman [was] struggling toward the Celestial City” (16). Keller’s concludes, “a private poetry could therefore become Emily Dickinson’s way of fulfilling herself (in perfect Puritan model) as a woman” (22). Wells includes the comments of Bliss Carman, a reviewer in an undated clipping from an unnamed paper in the Jones Library, who also understands Dickinson through an understanding of Puritan New England: “It would never, I feel sure, occur to anyone with the least insight into the New England conscience (with its capacity for abstemiousness, its instinct for being always aloof and restrained rather than social and blithe) to think of Emily Dickinson as peculiar or her mode of life as queer” (257). Sandra Gilbert’s and Susan Gubar’s famous 1979 book, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, explains Dickinson’s art “as a coping mechanism,” resulting from psychic anxiety. A 2009 collection, *Gilbert & Gubar’s The Madwoman in the Attic*

revise the myth of Dickinson, Pattee reaffirms the designation of the genteel critics of the nineteenth-century: “All of her poetry from the first ran riot over the rules. No conscious rebellion however! She knew no better” (193). While Pattee yearns for a competent editor for Dickinson’s manuscripts and recommends scholars to ignore the sentimental, romantic rewriting of Dickinson, he sees her, at best, as a “feminine Emerson without benefit of Harvard and the schools”; an inconsistent, childlike poet who unconsciously broke poetic rules and spoke only for herself, rather than for “humanity” or for “the life of his times”; Dickinson would add “to the long tradition of American poetry” “a few lyrics, undoubtedly, that will continue to enrich the anthologies, even the most select” (197). But Pattee implicitly states the Dickinson is *not* a “great poet,” like Whitman: “were she a conscious rebel she would have thrown off completely shackles of uniform rhyme and stanza form and expressed herself in free verse. Either all or nothing!” (195).

While Pattee outlines the influence of editors on Dickinson’s work, nearly ten years earlier, Anna Mary Wells writes, “when Emily Dickinson appeared upon the literary horizon in this decade, she was greeted as a discovery of twentieth century critics” (246). In some ways, as Wells and later critics would admit, Dickinson’s poetry is modern³: “the flippancy of many of

After Thirty Years, addresses the significance, implications, and re-evaluations of this pivotal study. Lucia Aiello, for example, challenges Gilbert and Gubar’s analysis of Dickinson’s poetry, suggesting that the authors underestimate her innovative work.

³ Cary Nelson’s *Anthology of Modern American Poetry* (2000) begins with Whitman and Dickinson. In a very short introduction to the sixteen Dickinson poems, Nelson writes, “the cultural environment was fervently religious, but Dickinson instead gradually chose irony as her way of viewing the world. She is thus, in an uncanny and symbolic way, the precursor to everything in modern poetry that is condensed, elliptical, and disjunctive, rather than being expansively Whitmanesque” (9). A far earlier anthologist also began with Dickinson: “Starting with the 1919 publication of *Modern American Poetry*, Untermeyer began his selections of modern poetry with Dickinson: in his introduction, he claims that Whitman was “the greatest of the moderns” (vii), but he does not even include Whitman in the book, making Dickinson the earliest modern included. In fact, in other writings Untermeyer claims Dickinson’s superiority as a poet, as in his 1927 chapbook, where he writes: “this poetry, built on epigram and paradox, has a range unsurpassed even by Whitman” (6). He began his *Modern American Poetry* with Dickinson until 1942, when he finally pushed the starting point back to Whitman, the only poet included who predates Dickinson” (Gailey 74).

the religious poems, the epigrammatic brevity of all, and the unexpected mingling of sardonic wit with sentiment find numerous parallels in the work of our contemporary poets” (246). But Wells quotes a review of William Dean Howells to show that 1890s reviewers were not unaware of Dickinson’s power, and she explains how the “romantic and popular account of the survival of neglected manuscripts has little if any basis in fact” (247). Wells includes several of the 1890s reviews, both positive and negative, to show the amount of attention the nineteenth-century had paid to Dickinson:

Until 1900, then, discussion of Emily Dickinson in magazines was fairly plentiful. It was after the turn of the century that for fifteen years she became almost as obscure as she had been during her life. . . . In 1914 Emily Dickinson’s niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, published a fourth volume of poems entitled *The Single Hound* . . . It was the fifteen years of obscurity between 1900 and 1915 that led to the popular misconception that no one before our own generation had appreciated Emily Dickinson. (257-258)

This rewriting of nineteenth-century reactions continues throughout the century as the “Bianchi period” reinforces the myth of a recluse whose experience of unrequited love leads her to reject the world. Yet Dickinson’s popularity is predominantly academic, and her canonization occurs because of the kind of female poet she is assumed to be. “Histories of American literature give her from a page to a chapter; most anthologies include her, and a number of important critics have written about her” (Wells 258). The acceptance of Dickinson by the intellectual elite, according to Wells’ statement, began around the 1920s, and Amanda Gailey’s study shows how this acceptance allowed Dickinson a rare place in the canon:

Paul Lauter has argued that in the early twentieth century—in the twenties, especially—women and minorities began to be systematically excluded from poetry anthologies. He notes, though, one persistent exception to this trend: Emily Dickinson. He points out that by 1948, the NCTE [National Council of Teachers of English] found that only three American women writers were represented in college English classes, but that Emily Dickinson was tenacious enough to appear in twenty-four courses, ranking her as the seventeenth most commonly taught American writer. (67)

The portrait of Dickinson as a shy recluse with an intense imagination made her a woman who was kept safe in her own head. Gailey argues,

the frequent inclusion of Dickinson’s brand of creative femininity in anthologies—and the frequent exclusion of competing notions of what it means to be a woman writer—likely helped check early feminist forces in the academy and to serve the conservative impulse to domesticate educated women. (68)

Rather than poetry being seen as a cultural necessity to which everyone had access, such as was the case during the Civil War, the modernist literary establishment had an “interest in seeking an exclusionary cultural position” (Lurie 153). The overly-simplistic characterization of Dickinson drawn in the 1890s carried over into the twentieth, and was further cemented by Bianchi’s editions, which incorporated “numerous alterations in the interests of sense and sensibility” and presented seemingly-accurate accounts of Dickinson’s biography and literary methodology since the editor was Dickinson’s niece (Franklin 4).

The complete scholarly publication of Dickinson’s 1,775 poems came in 1955, when Thomas H. Johnson printed a three-volume variorum of *The Poetry of Emily Dickinson*. This edition became the academic standard, backed by the power of Harvard. Johnson’s purpose was

to publish all of the poems in a literal text, chronologically arranged, with the variant readings, which infested the published texts, critically compared to all known manuscripts. The second editing for most of the poems, Johnson’s work was the first collected edition of the whole—without titles and alterations and, in a major change, without standardizing transcription. He preserved Dickinson’s spelling and, within the limits of conventional type, her capitalization and punctuation. (Franklin, 1998, 6)

Franklin’s 1998 variorum has the same purpose as Johnson’s—the poems are “dated and arranged chronologically rather than in topical or other groups,” and the manuscripts for each text are identified to give “the publishing history of each” (6). Franklin revises Johnson’s chronology and lists the number of poems as 1,789. Franklin attributes his ability to better date the poems to the

reconstruction of the fascicles reported in *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson* (1981). The sequence of the fascicle papers, if not always specific fascicles, was thus already known, and the fascicles and sets, containing about two thirds of the poems, have been a sturdier base upon which to study handwriting and assign dates than a series of individual manuscripts. (38)

Johnson's and Franklin's editorial procedures parallel those called for by much earlier critics, such as Pattee, who wonders why the 1890s editors "throw" the poems "without chronology," and even Mabel Loomis Todd, who writes, "her letters cannot complete the picture until her poems have been fitted into the sequence where they belong" (Pattee 187-188). For all, it seems, the chronological sequence would offer a better understanding of Dickinson's poetic ability since it would show her progress. However, Franklin reminds us that "the dating is of documents, not necessarily of the composition of poems" (39). Fitting Dickinson's poetry into a chronological sequence is possible, of course, but it is only an approximation, and it shows only when a poem was copied into a particular place, rather than when the poem was written.

In contrast to a chronological sequence, Dickinson worked with another—the fascicles. But the "chaos" found by editors even in Dickinson's most formal means of presentation resulted in the editorial choice to approach the poems under the philosophy that "a literary work is separable from its artifact" (Franklin 27). I will detail contemporary theories regarding the fascicles in the final two chapters, but I would like to highlight here the difficulty in Dickinson's case of viewing the manuscripts as "separable," which implies they are inconsequential or should be ignored in the interests of clarity. In his call for a competent editor and open-access to the manuscripts, Pattee quotes Mabel Loomis Todd's observation that "the changes of text suggested by the poet were numerous and at times 'baffling'" (188). One of the most problematic aspects of Dickinson's fascicles is the presence of variants, which Franklin explains:

Dickinson's care in preparing the earliest fascicles, which admitted only completed poems, all their alternative readings resolved, shows the goal to have been a finished product. She used clean erasure, not overwriting or crossing out, and

deftly squeezed in omitted letters. Before 1860, she did not revise them. The first appearances of extraneous writing are in Fascicle 5, where an omitted reading was transcribed in ink as an alternative (Fr121), and in Fascicle 7, where for two poems (Fr145, Fr159) an alternative was added in pencil. . . . As of Fascicle 9, in early 1861, they would have been unsuitable for circulation. The transcription, though in ink, was less careful, and the texts, now with unresolved readings, were not intended for others. (20)

Mabel Loomis Todd writes, “in the so-called ‘copied’ poems [meaning the fascicles and sets], tiny crosses written beside a word which might be changed ultimately and which referred to scores of possible words at the bottom of the page were all strictly alike, so that only the most sympathetic and at-one-with-the-author feeling would determine where each word belonged” (Pattee 188). While Todd is overly-simplistic in saying the variants are “all strictly alike,” her portrait of confusion and chaos leads Pattee to write, “to reveal the poet full circle, a definite edition must be prepared with foot-notes and with a biographical introduction bare of superlatives” (189). The Johnson and Franklin editions fulfill Pattee’s desire, yet we still have not solved what some call the editorial “problem” of Dickinson, and this is because print *cannot* solve Dickinson. The poems can and have been quite successfully separated from their artifacts, but this was done because editors followed a philosophy that assumed what poetry should be. Consequently, they worked to make Dickinson’s poems fit into pre-conceived notions. I do not want to argue that Dickinson should only be read in manuscript since the editorial philosophies from Higginson and Todd to Franklin follow a great tradition of what poetry is. In Dickinson’s case, however, these editors made her more clear, and the manuscripts reveal a complexity that print will always obscure. The manuscripts offer possibilities for new ways of reading and understanding not only Dickinson but poetry in general, and to account for them is not to deem all other approaches as “wrong,” but to see where these possibilities may lead.

To show the complexity, I offer a case study of “We play at Paste –” (Fr282A). Although I focus on only one poem here, my intent is to show “that there are always many different ways

of addressing a public, that each decision of form, style, and procedure carries hazards and costs in the kind of public it can define” (Warner 14). A single text cannot create a public, yet “the temptation is to think of publics as something we make, through individual heroism and creative inspiration or through common goodwill” (14). For Dickinson’s work, a case study reveals the complexity of the publics defined by the poems—even a single poem is often not a single text, and the various contexts of a single poem are steeped in prior discourses, such as epistolary or poetic conventions and the very long publication history of the poems in general and a single poem in particular. Warner argues that “in some cases” “a conscious strategy of style can be seen as struggling to compensate for conditions of circulation, perhaps vainly,” and I believe this “case” applies to Dickinson. An analysis of a single poem shows “the sort of multileveled analysis that . . . is always demanded by public texts” (15). However, literary study in its traditional form is “not adequate to the analysis of publics” (16). The study of Dickinson’s poetry to find “Dickinson” or to understand Dickinson’s opinion regarding life and love, for example, begins “simply with the text as its object” (16). However, Warner argues that an analysis of publics cannot focus only on the text as its object:

Publics are among the conditions of textuality, specifying that certain stretches of language are understood to be “texts” with certain properties. This metapragmatic background – itself of infinite complexity – must be held up for analysis if we are to understand the mutually defining interplay between texts and publics. Publics are essentially intertextual, frameworks for understanding texts against an organized background of the circulation of other texts. . . . And that circulation, though made reflexive by means of textuality, is more than textual – especially now, in the twenty-first-century, when the texts of public circulation are very often visual or at any rate no longer mediated by the codex format. (16)

A text is defined by its public, yet a public is defined and brought into being by texts and their circulation. The text alone as the sole object to be analyzed does not take into account the publics created, addressed, and defined by that “text,” and a “text” is never solely an object on its

own since its circulation and its consumption also determine how it is understood and what types of publics it can define.

In Dickinson's case, the circulation of a poem, the way a single "text" is consumed, reveals the complexity of the operation of discursive publics. "We play at Paste –" (Fr282A), currently housed at the Jones Library, was one of the four poems enclosed in Dickinson's first letter to Higginson. We know, then, that the poem was written by April 15, 1862. Since Dickinson's first letter to Higginson was inspired by his essay, "Letter to a Young Contributor," Franklin suggests that the poem as well may have been inspired by the advice found in that essay (299).

The poem explores experience and learning:

We play at Paste –
Till qualified, for Pearl –
Then, drop the Paste –
And deem ourself a fool –

The Shapes – though – were similar –
And our new Hands
Learned *Gem*-tactics –
Practicing *Sands* –

Franklin records the poem as two quatrains, even though the line breaks in the manuscript are different. Franklin, again, believes that Dickinson only broke lines due to space on the page, rather than for any visual effect or artistic purpose. Since this is not a fascicle poem, the only way one could see the manuscript version is to get access to it at the Jones Library. Franklin records the line divisions, however, so we know that the copy sent to Higginson was not written exactly as it was printed by Higginson in the *Atlantic Monthly* in October 1891 or by Johnson and later Franklin. The first stanza has five lines with "a fool" set off on its own. The second stanza consists of five lines since the first is broken in two: "The Shapes – though – / were similar –". Whether or not Dickinson intended a twenty-first century reader to see the line breaks as she wrote them, or if she assumed they would be regulated into the normal quatrain, is

somewhat beside the point because Dickinson could not have predicted the publics that would be addressed by or created by this particular text. It would be difficult to claim the effects are the same—“a fool” and “were similar” as lines of their own force one to pause, and the visual change highlights these terms; since they are literally set apart from the rest of the poem, they become more important, whether or not Dickinson intended it that way.

But one could also ignore these possible incidentals and read the poem as two quatrains—this is how readers of the *Atlantic Monthly* saw the text in October 1891 and readers of Johnson’s variorum in 1955.

Readers of the poem as it appeared in *Poems* (1891) would have seen this:

WE play at paste,
Till qualified for pearl,
Then drop the paste,
And deem ourself a fool.
The shapes, though, were similar,
And our new hands
Learned gem-tactics
Practicing sands.

Although this is the edited version as it appeared in 1891, the lack of a stanza break follows an 1865 manuscript version that Dickinson made in fair copy, which Franklin translates into print as Fr282B:

We play at Paste –
Till qualified for Pearl –
Then, drop the Paste –
And deem Ourself a fool –
The Shapes, tho’, were similar,
And our new Hands
Learned Gem Tactics
Practicing Sands –

This version is again not a fascicle poem, so I know of the manuscript details only through Franklin's variorum.⁴ In this version, the second line ends with "for," making "Pearl —" its own line. The other line breaks nearly follow the earlier version: "a fool —" becomes line six and "similar" is line eight. In this version, the lines with single words seem to make them parallel—one could argue that these line breaks make "Pearl" and "a fool" "similar." And this does not seem too much of a stretch since the poem argues while we may deem ourselves fools when we simply "play[ed] at Paste," those early materials allowed us to make "Pearl[s]". A period of coarseness and foolishness, it seems, precedes one's learning of "Gem Tactics." Despite the varying visual cues, one could still arrive at the same interpretation of the poem, and this is why many contemporary critics argue that reading Dickinson in manuscript is not necessary. Others, however, value the experience of reading—reading Dickinson in manuscript is different than reading the poems in print if only because the poems look different. This is not to say that reading Dickinson in manuscript is better or that it offers a privileged interpretation, but the multiple contexts open up additional possibilities, and these possibilities can alter interpretation. Higginson, for example, most likely understood this poem differently than we do today. The lack of reference allows the "We" to be seen as humanity and "play at Paste" could be an endless number of learning experiences. If Higginson read it as a reply to his essay, however, the "We" could seem less general—we the young contributors. Once one knows the contextual information and the circulation of this poem, then "We" may imply Higginson and Emily Dickinson, or "We" poets, which would affect one's understanding of the poem's message—"play[ing] at Paste" could come to mean writing in general and the writing of poetry in particular. An additional interpretive layer is added by the fact that Dickinson refers to a book as

⁴ The manuscript is housed at the Jones Library in Amherst, which is more accessible than the collections at Harvard. I plan to see the manuscript during a visit to the library in August 2011.

a “Pearl” in a few of her letters; one could argue, as is often the case with lyric poetry, that Dickinson is offering the reader a metaphor for how she understands literary influence and process.

But the second version as it appeared in *Poems* 1891 would lack this contextual and manuscript information; readers could easily identify it as an exploration of “Life” since it was the fourth poem in this first category of the edition. Some readers may recognize it from the October 1891 essay in the *Atlantic Monthly*, which Higginson used as a means to advertise the appearance of the 1891 volume. In the essay, “Emily Dickinson’s Letters,” he discusses her early letters to him, including “We play at paste” in full since it had not yet been printed:

We play at paste
Till qualified for pearl;
Then drop the paste
And deem ourself a fool.
The shapes, though, were similar
And our new hands
Learned gem-tactics,
Practicing sands.

Higginson introduces the poem by saying it “comprises in its eight lines a truth so searching that it seems a condensed summary of the whole experience of a long life” (445). Readers in 1891 may notice the two printed versions of the poem, and wonder, as did Pattee, why certain editorial choices were made, but nineteenth-century readers would not know that the 1865 manuscript, which presents the poem as a single stanza, was an unfolded fair copy, written “on embossed notepaper, headed ‘Emily’ and signed ‘Emily’”. Since it was unfolded, Franklin writes that it “was not sent to a recipient” (300). In this instance, while other interpretations may abound, the manuscript reads as a letter that Dickinson wrote to herself. While the 1890s editions reflect a clear marketing strategy centered on the discovery of Dickinson’s “letters” to a silent world, seeing a manuscript version of this poem as addressed to and signed by herself cannot help but

be a different reading experience than seeing the poem in any other print form. The image of Dickinson conjured by this artifact, or even by the knowledge of the artifact's details, places her and this poem in the position of George Orwell's diarist in *1984*. "We play at Paste" is a single example within a large and complex body of work, and my discussion of it here is not to imply Dickinson addressed her work to "humanity" as Winston does in *1984*. The manuscript does reveal the layers of interpretation created by contextual information, and the comparison to Orwell's diarist, which I will discuss in detail towards the end of this chapter, encapsulates how Dickinson's choice of style has influenced the publics created throughout history by her texts and their circulation.

While there was a need to recognize poetry as poetry during the Civil War, as is evidenced by critical lamentations at Melville's apparent confusion between prose and poetry, much more so in the twentieth-century, editors and readers of Dickinson needed to see her poetry presented as recognizable poems. Since it was assumed she wrote only for herself, a competent editor had to clean and organize the "chaotic mass" to see what poems could be pulled from it, and then critics could finally decide Dickinson's place in literary history. However, as manuscript study became more widespread, critics found that more than chaos existed in the "mass," and the manuscripts represented something other than materials left unorganized because no one was supposed to see them besides Dickinson. While the Civil War era enjoyed a more universal approach to poetry since Americans desperately sought an understanding of the war through verse, we find in the 1890s and in the twentieth-century, particularly in the case of Dickinson and within increasingly elitist canons, the notion that poetry must be recognizable. Complicated projects that examined the futility of language, which applies to the work of Melville and Dickinson, were not greatly appreciated in the Civil War era, but poetry was a part of the culture

and could be read and written by anyone. Verse played an important role in daily life, so much so that “normal” correspondence often collapsed poetry and prose. But the majority of the reviews of the literary establishment in the 1890s viewed Dickinson as unstudied. The twentieth-century establishment ignored the positive reviews and the popularity of Dickinson in the 1890s and purported to have discovered an isolated genius ahead of and unconcerned by her time.

While Johnson’s 1955 edition ushered in a new era of Dickinson criticism, and readers and scholars were for the first time introduced to the amount of poems she wrote, the editorial policy continued and remains the same today in certain areas of thought, such as Franklin’s argument that a “literary work is separable from its artifact” (27). The consistent thread is that poetry should be recognizable and consistent, which enables one to judge it accurately. Pattee laments in 1937 that “she felt too that poetry was expressed in stanzas, her most common units being those of the church hymnal. Why then start her poem in conventional form and then suddenly switch it into chaotic formlessness?” (194). Pattee may be thinking of poems such as “After great pain” (Fr372), which was first published in the *Atlantic Monthly* (February 1929) and *Further Poems* (1929). When translated into print, it opens with a quatrain of iambic pentameter lines that follow a rhyme scheme of *aabb*:

After great pain, a formal feeling comes –
The Nerves sit ceremonious, like Tombs –
The still Heart questions ‘was it He, that bore,’
And ‘Yesterday, or Centuries before’?

This form breaks, however, and *Further Poems* prints the second stanza with five lines. In the manuscript in Fascicle 18, the second stanza is written in ink like this:

The Feet, mechanical, go round –
Of Ground, or Air, or Ought –
A Wooden way
Regardless grown,

A Quartz contentment, like
a stone –

However, in Franklin's variorum, he prints a five-line stanza with the second and third lines switched. This is because Dickinson has written the number one next to the first line, the number three next to the second, number two next to the third, and four next to the fourth. In the fascicle version, the first stanza has seven lines and the second and third both have six. Franklin reports that some collections after 1929 would reformat the poem into three quatrains (397). Although Franklin records the manuscript details, he presents the poem's first and last stanzas as quatrains; only the second stanza would have fallen, as Pattee exclaims, into "chaotic formlessness."

In Bianchi's *Further Poems* (1929), which Pattee most likely read, the poem appears as such:

After great pain a formal feeling comes –
The nerves sit ceremonious like tombs;
The stiff Heart questions – was it He that bore?
And yesterday – or centuries before?

The feet mechanical go round
A wooden way
Of ground or air or Ought,
Regardless grown,
A quartz contentment like a stone.

This is the hour of lead
Remembered if outlived
As freezing persons recollect
The snow –
First chill, then stupor, then
The letting go.

Despite the removal of dashes and capitalizations and the regularization of grammar, this version follows Dickinson's line breaks in the final stanza, something that Franklin does not do. While this poem can be easily regularized, an issue with Dickinson's work that Wells discusses in her

1929 article, the manuscript version displays a concern with line order. Dickinson plays with the traditional unit here by opening and ending the poem in what can be made into iambic pentameter. But when the poem describes the “mechanical” nature of the “contentment” one feels while in the “formal feeling,” the traditional organization breaks down. Rather than attributing this poem’s “lack of finish” to a rush of inspiration, the fascicle version indicates a sustained attention to detail. While editors may have seen it as “unstudied” and often corrected it to fit within poetic tradition, it aligns with Emerson’s explanation of poetry in the portfolio, rather than the book: it is a verse “*of society*,” rather than “the festal and solemn verses which are written for the nations;” and, to the frustration of some modernist critics, it encompasses “a more liberal doctrine of the poetic faculty than our fathers held . . . [who] denied the name of poetry to every composition in which the workmanship and the material were not equally excellent” (220). One’s experience of it is altered by reading in its “portfolio,” rather than in an edited book. And while it represents the lack of “finish which the conventions of literature require of authors,” Dickinson’s attention to detail is indicated by her notations regarding line order. The “lack of finish” can be and has been “corrected” by editors. The poem fits in part with Emerson’s definition of poetry of the portfolio, but this fit seems a conscious effort, rather than “when a writer has outgrown the state of thought which produced the poem, the interest of letters is served by publishing it imperfect, as we preserved studies, torsos, and blocked statues of the great masters” (221).

One consistent approach in editing Dickinson is to make her poetry more clear. Editors since the 1890s have seen it as their role to clarify Dickinson, through regularization and categorization; formalist criticism to show how ahead of her time she was; detailed, scholarly work to present her “correctly”; and most recently to return to the manuscripts to figure out what

she intended. There is a solid possibility that Dickinson intended her poems to be read in their manuscript contexts. The romantic notion of a “partially cracked poetess,” to borrow Higginson’s well-known description, whose brilliance was discovered after her death, locked away in a box that she ordered to be burned, has been debunked in recent decades (and even far earlier, as evidenced by Anna Mary Wells’ article). As I have shown in the previous two chapters, Dickinson’s experimentation with genre, voice, addressee, and linguistic conventions represents a far more complicated methodology that can only be fully appreciated if one accounts for the print versions and the manuscripts. Dickinson was *not* an unstudied poet, and she had to be aware of poetic traditions and the methods of circulation available to her. Similarly to Melville and Whitman, she realized during the Civil War that language as it had been understood was not sufficient, and she experimented with new ways of communication. What others saw as a lack of knowledge, a lack of consistency, and a lack of editorial procedure can now be seen more clearly as a method of experimentation.

The debate about whether or not we can assume Dickinson’s intentions is not a new one. Critics have long yearned for some sort of statement regarding her poetic philosophy. Since one does not exist, it remained quite easy for representatives of the literary elite, beginning in the nineteenth-century and continuing throughout the twentieth, to state that Dickinson simply did not *know* poetic conventions. Anna Mary Wells sought a poetic statement in Dickinson’s letters to Higginson. Wells refers to Dickinson’s “famous definition of poetry,” at least according to Higginson’s account of his first face to face conversation with her in 1870: “If I read a book, and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that it is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that it is poetry” (Higginson 275; Wells 251). Wells responds to Dickinson’s definition by saying, “I think that unless we refuse to

believe she was sincere in this, we cannot believe she had a reasoned technique” (251). Using the letters to Higginson that he includes in *Carlyle’s Laugh*, Wells argues that “poetry for her [Dickinson] was always connected with emotion rather than cerebration, and her interest in form was only spasmodic” (251). Wells believes the correspondence with Higginson

throws a good deal of light on another question which has vexed critics ever since her work was first published. The argument still continues: did Emily Dickinson write awkwardly, ungrammatically, and with faulty rhymes because she was unable to do better, or because her artistic purpose demanded that she write so? The modern critic tends toward the belief that every irregularity was conscious and of artistic purpose. (250)

While Wells sees Dickinson’s work as connected to emotion, rather than to a “system of rhyme approximations” or a “reasoned technique,” she does conclude Dickinson’s manipulation of convention was intentional, rather than “unstudied”: “It seems to me that the very ease with which this stanza, and many other similar ones, can be changed to a conventional form shows that Miss Dickinson did not really want to achieve regularity of form” (254-255). Wells refers to an 1890s reviewer, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, who rewrites the first stanza of Dickinson’s “I taste a liquor never brewed” to make the lines rhyme since he could not find “anything admirable in work which was faulty grammatically” (254). Although Wells at first seems to be unconvinced by other modern critics who argue Dickinson’s irregularities were “of artistic purpose,” she seems to side with Susan Miles, who “chose fifteen or twenty such stanzas, altered them as Aldrich did in this one, and attempted to show that in each case the regular version was less effective than the original irregular one” (255). In a 1926 article in *The London Mercury*, Susan Miles concludes that Dickinson’s “irregularities express a world which does not dovetail properly” (251). This conclusion parallels in particular the work of Shira Wolosky’s 1984 study, which re-contextualizes Dickinson’s work and the Civil War.

The work of these early critics brings up issues still debated today. During the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, Dickinson's canonized status relied upon and perpetrated the myth of the safe, private, isolated feminine explorer. The early splitting up of the manuscripts in 1896 between Mabel Loomis Todd and Lavinia meant that Johnson was the first editor, since the 1890s, to have access to "the corpus of Dickinson's manuscripts" (Franklin 6). Thus, when he published the three-volume edition, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1955), Johnson was "the first literary scholar to edit Dickinson" (6). In 1966, Jack Capps's study, *Emily Dickinson's Reading*, revealed how much Dickinson was influenced by the great amount that she read. In 1968, Ruth Miller's *The Poetry of Emily Dickinson* highlights the problem of the Dickinson myth and the importance of the fascicles. She writes,

the mythic Emily Dickinson was a shy primitive, a recluse whose retirement from the active world was due to an act of renunciation of an unattainable lover. The poet Emily Dickinson does not fit the woman of this myth. The poems she left to the world, the best evidence we have today, are speculations and contemplations, the queries and outbursts of a tough-minded, independent woman whose self-doubt and timidities were a mask. (4)

While many contemporary scholars would disagree with Miller's view that Dickinson "allayed her despair at the world's rejection of her as a poet by composing hymns to herself and to God," she was one of the first to take notice of the fascicles (4). Franklin and other scholars had begun reconstructing the fascicles, and Miller was allowed access to the holdings at Harvard's Houghton Library and Amherst's Frost Library, yet her conclusions regarding them have since been disproven; the fascicles are not, for example, "so similar" that "it seems possible to chart one and obtain a blueprint for all" (249).⁵ However, Miller rightly evaluates the influence of

⁵ Although Dorothy Huff Oberhaus tries to make a similar claim for Fascicle 40, Miller's view does not hold that each fascicle "is a narrative structure designed to recreate the experience of the woman as she strives for acceptance or knowledge, is rebuffed or fails because of her limitations, but then by an act of will, forces herself to be patient in order to survive, fixes her hopes on another world where Jesus and God await her, and remains content meanwhile with herself alone. Or, if the emphasis is on the poet, each fascicle records the poet's efforts to understand the truth as she observes the phenomena of the transient world she inhabits" (249).

Higginson, the first publications in the 1890s, and eventually turns to the fascicles for a more accurate depiction of Dickinson's project. She concludes, "we have not yet shed the distorting effects of her editors who in her own day confused sentiment with insight, and in our own day confuse cataloging with scholarship" (288). The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the most powerful re-visioning of Dickinson and her body of work, ushered in by Franklin's publication of *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson* in 1981. Karen Dandurand's and Shira Wolosky's studies in 1984 dispel the myth that Dickinson was unconcerned and unaffected by the Civil War, as well as highlight the importance of a historicist approach in Dickinson criticism. Martha Nell Smith's *Rowing in Eden* (1992) reinstates the influence and importance of Sue in Dickinson's workshop, and is one of the first studies to reveal the power, importance, and excitement of reading Dickinson in manuscript. Marta Werner's *Emily Dickinson's Open Folios*, rather than seeing Dickinson's non-fascicle poems as "scraps," uses the non-fascicle manuscripts to show how, "Dickinson refused the limitations of a print existence and, in so doing, effectively altered the ways in which we read (receive) her encodings" (1). Sharon Cameron's *Choosing Not Choosing* (1992) and Eleanor Heginbotham's *Dwelling in Possibilities* (2003) represent fascicle studies less concerned with biography, or collapsing the woman with the poet, and examine the artistic approach of individual fascicles.

While much work has gone into showing Dickinson's commitment to unconventionality and explaining why this commitment is both unique and a product of the Civil War era, contemporary critics continue to debate the issues invoked by Miles, Wells, and Pattee: how much is intentional and "of artistic purpose"? What role should a "competent editor" play? The debate about how Dickinson's poetry should be read connects to pedagogical concerns. The image and perception of Dickinson, again due to her commitment to non-referential poetry,

which has always left ample room for romantic, pathological speculation, often depends upon what poems a person reads and how one is offered access to those poems. Realistically, even in an undergraduate course focused on Dickinson, one cannot expect students to read Dickinson's entire body of work. Therefore, especially in high school courses where time is even more limited, one's image of Dickinson is centered on only a handful of poems. This remains problematic in the case of Dickinson, but it is, again, nothing new:

As the scholarly climate put less and less emphasis on historical and biographical context with the rise of New Criticism, editors seemed less inclined to seek out accurate contextualizing historical information to frame their selections. Since classrooms were similarly tending to become centered around the texts themselves, students and teachers were not demanding accurate, useful contextualizing information. Not surprisingly, many anthologies from this period are based on formalist principles: W.H. Auden and John Garrett, for example, in their influential *The Poet's Tongue*, thought poets' names not as important as their "tongues," and withheld them from the pages that the poems were printed on. (Gailey 75)

In Dickinson's case, we can locate how problematic the early twentieth-century's ahistoricism and mythologizing were, yet Dickinson's poems also argue for the unimportance of a poet's name. One of the major editorial problems has been the lack of pagination, table of contents, or instructions, and while Dickinson's letters were signed, although not consistently, her poems often were not. None of the fascicles, for example, contain the name of their author. And in the two poems I include here (I am sure many more exist), Dickinson presents the power of poetry in a way similar to the philosophy in *The Poet's Tongue*. The first is in Fascicle 30, and Franklin records it was most likely copied into that fascicle about the second half of 1863 (Franklin 646). This poem (Fr665) was not printed until Bianchi's *Unpublished Poems* in 1935:

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 –

The second poem (Fr930) was transcribed into Set 5 in early 1865, and was not printed until it served as an epigraph in Bingham's *Ancestors Brocades* (1945):

The Poets light but Lamps –
Themselves – go out –
The Wicks they stimulate
If vital Light
Inhere as do the Suns –
Each Age a Lens
Disseminating their
Circumference –

The poems above reveal that Dickinson's themes, among other style components and the notion of her rejection of the world, aligned her with writers of the early twentieth-century, which enabled them to argue she was ahead of her time, rather than influenced by it. Apart from the mythology of Dickinson, or the understanding of Dickinson as the embodiment of modernist views of Art, her poems can be seen as exemplifying formalist principles.

Scholars offer numerous, varied, often contradictory notions of how we can read Dickinson's poetry in the twenty-first century. Annette Debo uses the number of Dickinson scholars, such as Susan Howe, Martha Nell Smith, Jerome McGann, Sharon Cameron, and Paul Crumbley, who focus their studies on the facsimiles rather than printed editions to indicate that Dickinson "must be studied by undergraduates through her manuscript facsimiles" (Debo 132). Debo is a member of what Domhnall Mitchell and others describe as the "manuscript school" since she defends the idea that Dickinson's manuscripts can offer "an accurate text," indicating that even the most painstakingly detailed printed editions, such as Franklin's 1998 variorum, contain the mark of the editor and are thus "corrupted texts" (132). However, Debo's article is mainly concerned with practical use of the manuscripts in the classroom, which are accessible thanks to advances in technology and the computer. Dickinson's handwriting is notoriously

difficult and sometimes impossible to decipher with certainty, which is one of several reasons for the problems inherent in “translating” the manuscripts into print. Debo consistently defends the “superiority” of the manuscripts, yet her main purpose in the article is to offer suggestions and explain personal experiences in using the manuscripts to teach Dickinson. Dickinson’s difficult handwriting obviously poses a problem, and Debo admits, “I do offer a typescript version of each poem to help students overcome these complications initially, but I try to wean them back to the manuscripts” (135). Debo’s classroom focus is not only on the analysis and close readings of poems, but on requiring students to contemplate and even perform instances of editing.

Domhnall Mitchell argues that “relying on the autograph version alone is problematic, for it assumes that the handwritten page is a form of publication—complete, finished, and containing in script and in visual form all the information necessary to its further transmission” (“Diplomacy of Translation” 45). Mitchell finds problematic the assumption by scholars, such as Susan Howe, that “Dickinson’s presentation is part of the art form” (Debo 134). Scholars and teachers illustrate this point through select case studies, which are often few due to time constraints both in the classroom and in critical inquiry, of individual poems where, for example, the shape of an “s” or the crossing of a “t” is seen as influencing the way the poem is read. Mitchell finds this line of thought problematic since scholars tend to then argue that Dickinson intended the crossing of the “t” to be taken into account, and therefore, Dickinson meant her poems to be read in her own handwriting.⁶ However, Mitchell shows these “anomalies” to be more consistent features not only in Dickinson’s poetry and letters but in everyday letters from the nineteenth-century as well. The treatment of “the material appearance of [Dickinson’s]

⁶ Debo refers to Howe’s “apt example” of how the letter “s” in “The Sea said / ‘Come’ to the Brook –” is crafted to simulate the “shape and movement of waves” (Debo 133). In “A Foreign Country,” Mitchell references Martha Nell Smith, who first describes the “stunning flourish that crosses both T’s” in the word “Tonight,” and then argues that this passionate scrawl is intentional and integral to the poem “Wild Nights!” (Mitchell 182).

manuscripts as if they were not accidental or incidental to her practices” indicates a quite drastic assumption as to authorial intention (Mitchell “A Foreign Country” 178). Mitchell concludes that while “the claim that Dickinson’s manuscripts have a design element cannot be dismissed, it also cannot easily be sustained” (186). Reading the manuscripts and using them in the classroom is a consequence of being allowed access, which has been brought about by not only Franklin’s *Manuscript Books* but by the computer. Therefore, at this specific instance in time, it may appear that we can now be present at what Jerome McGann calls “Dickinson’s original scene of writing” (Debo 133). However, Mitchell argues that the current

drive to present Dickinson’s manuscripts in apparently unmediated electronic forms is as much a function of our historical moment as, say, Mabel Loomis Todd’s efforts at altering Dickinson’s rhymes. In this case, the impulse exists because there is an audience and because the software and technology are available. (Mitchell 186)

Contrary to the position that the manuscripts represent for current readers “Dickinson’s original scene of writing,” Mitchell articulates that a manuscripts-only approach provides one with this illusion, and what is easily forgotten is the “remoteness [of the manuscripts] from our own time” (186). Nineteenth-century manuscript conventions can be conveniently or unintentionally ignored, or not taken into account, allowing “anomalies” in Dickinson’s manuscripts to hold meaning for a twenty-first-century reader. It is indecipherable, however, as to whether or not that meaning is intended.

Mitchell views the focus on minute material details in Dickinson’s manuscripts as a fascinating and necessary aspect to Dickinson criticism that opens up an array of possibilities, but Mitchell also observes that we should keep “the inaccessibility of the historical” in mind (186). Mitchell argues that a manuscripts-only position is uncertain and often impractical; in fact, it should be considered a “corruption”: assuming that the material details are *not* accidental is equal to the assumption made by editors that they *are* accidental. On a practical, pedagogical

level, Mitchell explains, “for those of us who teach Dickinson, it remains necessary to cross-check the print edition of a given poem with a facsimile of the manuscript whenever possible” (44). However, not everyone in the “manuscript school” argues the same thing, and lumping Dickinson criticism into two sides—manuscript studiers versus print studiers—produces an unhelpful tension. A particular scholar may decide, as does Debo, that Dickinson “must be studied by undergraduates through her manuscript facsimiles” (132). However, this does not mean that *every* scholar who reads Dickinson’s manuscripts believes that they provide the one “true” way to read Dickinson. Reading all of Dickinson’s manuscripts is, in fact, impossible since one would require access to Harvard’s entire collection. One can read the fascicles in Franklin’s *Manuscript Books* and find select letters and later drafts and fragments in digital archives, but one cannot access everything. Thus, one is forced to use “case studies,” and those such as Mitchell who aim to prove the “manuscript school” wrong argue that these case studies are not enough to prove Dickinson’s intentions. Practical, pedagogical reasons aside, *both* manuscript and printed versions of Dickinson’s poems are necessary and valuable because they provide the entry point into a complicated, dense history of editing, categorization, criticism, and canonization that reveals the inappropriate description of Dickinson as *the* poet of privacy.

One could argue, as many critics have, that Dickinson’s work correlates to modernist principles and themes, yet historicizing Dickinson’s work is necessary since it sheds light on the complexity of her project. The modernists were not the first to appreciate poetry for the “tongue” rather than the name. Poetry during the Civil War era was incorporated into daily life without giving credit to the author—the words or thoughts were more important, and people used them in their letters, diaries, journals, memory books, and conversations. *A Masque of Poets* in 1878, which contained Dickinson’s “Success is counted sweetest” (Fr112), presented all of the

poems anonymously. While Dickinson's work can be seen as proto-modernist, it is also very much a part of her time period, yet the mythology surrounding the discovery of Dickinson's poetry continues to be problematic. Mary Aswell Doll writes,

the conventional view of Emily Dickinson as Maid of Amherst—virginal, pure, and sentimental—was promoted by her playacting a public pose; she was producer, director, and actor for 'Emily Dickinson.' . . . I imagine 'Emily Dickinson' has been played out in many classrooms, where teachers think it safe to teach the strange little nature poems penned by a Massachusetts maid. No wonder students hate poetry. (67-68)

The safe portrait of Dickinson as a private explorer pervades recent criticism and general reading responses. Although Doll highlights Dickinson's "act," she then claims, "'Emily Dickinson' only published ten poems in her lifetime. The other thousand-plus poems, hidden in a locked chest that contained forty hand-sewn albums, never saw the light of day" (67). This myth (whether or not Doll believes it or is attributing it to "Emily Dickinson" is unclear) coincides with others that have been presented about Dickinson, and ignores the fact that Dickinson sent out over six hundred poems to friends and family. Doll uses Dickinson as an example, along with Lawrence, Chopin, Woolf, and Joyce, to explore "the impact of repression on character," and argues that Dickinson "saw the repressed nature of conventional society . . . and chose to counter it by parodying the conventions from another side of the social mirror" (68). Doll knows of Dickinson's performance because, presumably, she has read more than the "strange little nature poems"; thus, Doll sees in Dickinson's poetry the performance of someone who does not fit the "conventional view" that teachers of Dickinson see as "safer." Doll's study is meant to reveal how learning from literature is valuable, yet is often discounted. Doll argues,

in a culture that considers the humanities as the stepsister in the academy—an enterprise that will not fatten the pocketbook—my students are like so many other nonreaders whose only experience with books is with the textbook . . . But, together with curriculum theorists, I insist that the engagement with fiction (prose, drama, poetry, myth, fairytale, dream) can be a learning experience of the first order—not because students hunt down symbols or identify themes, not because

they check boxes on multiple choice tests, and not because they echo the professor's beliefs: safe activities all. None of these. Rather, out of the very chimney corner from which the humanities huddle, fiction disturbs the status quo. (xi)

Even if Doll is unaware that hundreds of Dickinson's poems did "see the light of day," her *use* of Dickinson's poetry is not to find Dickinson, but to help her students experience alternate spheres offered by literature.

Sara Ahmed opens her conclusion to *Queer Phenomenology* with the statement, "moments of disorientation are vital" (157). In a way similar to Doll's effort to use fiction as a way to disturb the safety of the status quo, Ahmed is concerned with the necessity of redefining how we think of the term "orientation." By focusing on spatiality and using Warner's idea that "directing one's attention to a shared object is enough to create a public," Ahmed concludes,

the very act of reading means that citizens are directing their attention toward a shared object, even if they have a different view upon that object, or even if that object brings different worlds into view. So we might face the same direction. We could even say our "faces" face the same way, creating a collective force. Yet, it is not that the collective has a face, in the sense of a personality and agency. The collective takes shape through the repetition of the act of "facing." (119-120)

Ahmed's description of a collective of readers "facing" the same way counters the image that when one reads Dickinson's poetry, one is "facing" Dickinson (rather than the object which is drawing our shared attention.) Ahmed's claim that disorientation is vital and Doll's claim that fiction should be taught because it disrupts the status quo coincide with Michael Warner's discussion of the image of George Orwell's diarist:

Orwell's dystopia disturbs readers because the frustration it asks them to imagine is common enough not just behind the old Iron Curtain but here in the land of freedom, under civil-society conditions, whenever the available genres and publics of possible address do not readily lend themselves to a world-making project. Anyone who wants to transform the conditions of publicness, or through publicness transform the possible orientations to life, is in a position resembling Orwell's diarist. (128)

Although many continue to imagine Dickinson as *the* poet of privacy, it seems possible that she found her work did not fit in with the “available genres.” Just as Winston chooses to write despite his situation, Dickinson seems to have chosen to try to “transform the conditions of publicness.” It was not simply that she wrote for herself in order to prevent insanity; her experimentation shows she understood what being a “public woman” would mean, what print would require of her poems, and how conventional genre distinctions would inhibit the way she wanted to explore language and poetry.

More important than Dickinson’s intentions is understanding what manuscript study (and the current debates surrounding it) tells us about publics. The brief outline of Dickinson’s publication history here reveals what Michael Warner argues about publics, and the assumptions of what kinds of publics a particular genre or text *should* address. As we have seen, editors, reviewers, and systems of canonization have “possessed” Dickinson, claiming that their understanding and translation of her was better: Higginson and Todd did for Dickinson what she would not do for herself; twentieth-century critics “discovered” her; Johnson created the first scholarly, *accurate* edition; Franklin reconstructed the fascicles and made them available in conventional book form; Franklin then revised Johnson and supplied all necessary details for each poem in a three-volume variorum; and digital archives increase access to read Dickinson in her own handwriting.⁷ Although the myth is somewhat being deconstructed, one can find a great quantity of essays and books that focus on (re)discovering Dickinson, and the image of her (even now) parallels Warner’s discussion of George Orwell’s diarist in *1984*:

⁷ I borrow this term from Seth Perlow’s discussion at the 2011 Modern Language Association convention. Perlow’s paper, “The Possessions of Emily Dickinson,” discusses the ways Dickinson has been possessed by readers and how readers have been possessed by her. His discussion uses previous work, such as Susan Howe’s, that centers on readings of Dickinson as *My Emily Dickinson*, which is the title of Howe’s 1995 book.

The horror of totalitarianism is driven home to the reader by – of all things – writer’s block. The main character, Winston Smith, has just sat down under the glare of the all-seeing telescreen, intending to begin a diary. He falters . . . “For whom, it suddenly occurred to him to wonder, was he writing this diary?” (125)

Winston eventually makes a decision about his addressee, writing in the diary, “*To the future or to the past, to a time when thought is free, when men are different from one another and do not live alone*” (Warner 127). While Warner’s main argument is to compare the situation of Orwell’s diarist with that of contemporary leftist theorists who are often criticized for not writing clearly enough, Warner’s parallels apply to Dickinson as well as to Dickinson criticism. In fact, Winston arrives at his addressee by reasoning that “he was a lonely ghost uttering a truth that nobody would ever hear. But so long as he uttered it, in some obscure way the continuity was not broken. It was not by making yourself heard but by staying sane that you carried on the human heritage” (127). Although Dickinson most likely did not see herself as carrying “on the human heritage” in spite of the horrors of totalitarianism, her work has been understood for years as her way of “staying sane.” Warner explains the diarist’s dilemma by writing,

the public sphere here becomes purely imaginary; or, we might say, internalized as humanity. In order to write even a diary, Winston must imagine the ability to address partial strangers. . . . When he turns this ability into an internal freedom, able to dispense with being heard, he begins to speak directly to humanity – in an effect that could aptly be called lyric, since Winston addresses humanity only in the absence of any actual context of address. (127)

This is an eerily apt description of the mythic image of Dickinson—her poems were seen as her “letter to the world” that never listened or replied to her. Numerous critics throughout the twentieth-century have agreed with Pattee that the poems represent a means of mental survival for her, rather than an organized poetic project—Dickinson stayed sane (perhaps just barely) by expressing herself, and the “chaotic mass” of poems reveal how *much* she had to express in order to keep from going over the edge. Dickinson needed to write, but in order to do so, like Winston, she had to “imagine the ability to address partial strangers.” What has remained

frustrating for readers, editors, and critics is Dickinson's commitment to keeping herself a stranger. Her poems have been understood as lyrics, as the poet speaking to the reader, and this has been accomplished because the poems were seen as without context.

Yet the poems do have various, complicated, sometimes contradictory contexts, and each movement within Dickinson studies seems to argue for a "more real" Dickinson. The problem, it seems, is Dickinson's choice of style—her lack of clarity and her "refusal" to print has lead readers to assume what types of publics her poems should address. Warner's discussion of "styles of intellectual publics" centers on

the ongoing preoccupation, voiced by journalists and academics, with the style of left academic theory. When people complain, as many do, that intellectuals are not writing clearly enough, their yardstick of good style often turns out to be not just grammatical or aesthetic but political . . . They want language that will bring a certain public into being, and they have an idea of what style will work. The question of style, at any rate, entails a worry about the nature and duties of the intellectual. (129)

Although Warner is not talking about poetry or poets here, his discernment of the importance of style choice in a "world making" project applies to Dickinson's position. Dickinson is placed, along with unclear academics, in the position of Orwell's diarist because they are "writing to a public that does not exist, and finding that their language can circulate only in channels hostile to it, they write in a manner designed to be a placeholder for a future public" (130). It seems to me that Dickinson did at least entertain the idea of printing her poems, and she sought out the advice of Higginson perhaps as preparation. Whatever her thought process, she did eventually reject the traditional print form, but she did not stop writing. This choice, combined with her experimental grammar, punctuation, meter, rhyme, and contextualization, has lead many to complain that she had no clear understanding of poetry. From the mid-nineteenth-century until now, many wonder why she did not "fix" her work, which would enable editors, reviewers, and readers to understand clearly her intentions and her philosophy of poetry.

Although Dickinson's uniqueness is part of her power, she is not as isolated as has been thought previously, and her choice of style reflects more than a commitment to defy poetic conventions. Warner discusses the arguments of style with regard to contemporary theory, pointing out that critics, particularly journalists, complain that "bad writing" is unclear writing, by which they mean inaccessible writing. Katha Pollitt, for example, argues that "intellectuals write for themselves" and thus it is a "pseudo-politics" (Warner 130-131). Their assumption, Warner argues, is that "accessible style leads to mass markets and therefore to effective politics" (132). The idea that good writing is accessible writing leads to the discussion of what writing and language should be used for—to reach as many people as possible and therefore be politically effective, or, in the arguments of the academics being attacked for "writing badly," such as Judith Butler, the "apparent clarity of common sense is corrupt with ideology and can only be countered by defamiliarization in thought and language" (132). Warner points out that "a very similar argument lies at the core of American Transcendentalism. Henry David Thoreau . . . had nothing but scorn for common sense and the journalistic demand that one write for it. . . . He also thought that true perceptions must be poetic, transformative, even transgressive; any true thought must wake you out of common sense" (133). We can better understand Dickinson's work in this light. She was not writing to be immediately accessible to all who read her, but this does not mean her poems are unclear. For over a century, editors have been able to re-format her work to seem safe yet unconventional; popular and then iconically academic; ahead of her time yet deeply influenced by her world, real or imaginary; and committed both to the traditional stanza and to materiality. Dickinson's primary concern aligns her with the conception of common sense espoused by Thoreau and contemporary critics like Judith Butler because her body of work "defamiliarizes" not only poetic convention but methods of communication. I see

Dickinson as deeply influenced by her time period, working within and against the notions of public/private, prose/poetry, print/portfolio that marked her understanding of language, an understanding which arose out of the Civil War era. Dickinson's efforts, even without any clear artistic philosophy or concrete evidence that would clarify her intentions, reveal that she too viewed the primary operation of poetry to be "transformative, even transgressive." But to write as she did, she had to write "to a public that does not exist." Although Dickinson has been in print since the 1890s, and has been rigorously studied and debated since those first volumes appeared, we can better understand her now if we seek not to pinpoint her intentions, but to explore the tenuous, complex, varied, flexible, and open-ended publics that her texts have created.

CHAPTER 4 THE FASCICLES

Besides Johnson, Franklin remains the only other main editor of Dickinson's body of work, and he edits under the philosophy that "a literary work is separable from its artifact" (27). The contemporary scholars who disagree with Franklin's approach rely on the computer, rather than "standard typography," to present various approaches to reading Dickinson's work (28). In an interesting move, despite his power as Dickinson's primary editor backed by Harvard, Franklin seems aware in 1998 that "Dickinson and Hypertext" were soon to come. Of this, he says that "even with digital images, where the poems are in pixels, an editor will need typography to explain the relationship of images and to transcribe the texts, confirming what the eye sees but may not understand and disclosing what the eye, unaided, cannot detect" (28). I must admit that I do not really know what he means here, and do not see why any explanation would be needed of "the relationship of images." Perhaps Franklin simply has in mind the difficulty of Dickinson's handwriting, which would be something that the "eye sees but may not understand." In a classroom setting, Franklin may be imagining that students would need some kind of explanation for the images of Dickinson's manuscript poems. But, if this is what he means, the reading experience, no matter how difficult, would add to students' understanding of Dickinson's work and of the influence of editing and publishing. I do think that typography would be needed as the sole means of explanation. As to why the eye is "unaided" in front of a computer screen and *not* any less unaided during the process of transcribing the manuscripts into print as Dickinson editors have had to do is not clear to me, unless there is some editorial magic Harvard has kept hidden.

Martha Nell Smith discusses her work with Dickinson's manuscripts, arguing that the *Dickinson Electronic Archives* figure into her broader concern of textual production:

“maintaining relentless self-consciousness about how critical ‘facts’ have been produced, about how items of knowledge are part of the circumstances of their creation, is crucial for responsibly providing the provisionality that characterizes the best kind of science of chaos” (852). And in response to the question of “how might all these technologies and their potential begin to address crises in publishing and in humanities education?,” Smith answers, “I am persuaded that protecting the flow of information should trump protecting profit in academic publishing. . . . Besides these new models of publishing, new models of scholarly and pedagogical praxes are needed” (852-853). Some of these new models already exist and have been incorporated into pedagogical texts and hypertexts. Besides the digital archives made available in open-access, free websites such as the *Dickinson Electronic Archives*, the *Classroom Electric* and *Emily Dickinson Online*,¹ editors of websites and anthologies have opted to use individual fascicles, rather than selecting individual poems. While an editor makes a subjective or practical choice as to what fascicle to include or teach, using a fascicle, rather than one’s own selection of poems based on preference, common themes, or technique, opens up space to explore issues of editing, publishing, materiality, and access. Although arguments abound about the impossibility of arguing for Dickinson’s intentions with regard to the fascicles, they are a space set by Dickinson, and the poems within that space can take on new meanings when read together. Michele Ierardi’s “Translating Emily: Digitally Representing Dickinson’s Poetic Production Using Fascicle 16 as a Case Study” provides one of the most detailed and fascinating examples I have

¹ For a small fee, one can access Marta Werner's *Radical Scatters: Emily Dickinson's Fragments and Related Texts, 1870-1886*, which “is a site-licensed electronic archive, the first SGML-encoded section of an increasingly collaborative effort of the Dickinson Editing Collective which aims to reproduce electronically all of Dickinson's writings, beginning with the poetic and epistolary texts in her correspondences. *Radical Scatters* contains all of the extant fragments composed by Dickinson between 1870 and 1886” (*Dickinson Electronic Archives*, http://www.emilydickinson.org/radical_scatters.html). *Emily Dickinson's Correspondences: A Born-Digital Textual Inquiry*, edited by Martha Nell Smith and Lara Vetter, was published by the University of Virginia's Rotunda Press in 2008. Although some portions are accessible for free, this database also requires a subscription.

found of the opportunities offered by the computer. Ierardi's intent with the website is to connect hypertext to Dickinson's poetic innovations:

In Dickinson's self-publication, she pushed out of the confines of the print medium. She created her own language of punctuation which we will never be able to fully understand. She offered variants which pitch a reader onto a fulcrum, teetering between two or more choices for meaning, the very idea of choices creating webs of meaning. . . . Dickinson worked to think outside of the book, to break with the paradigms of print and by doing so, created texts that de-naturalize the book and help re-present it as technology. On a certain level isn't that what hyper-text is all about—text that is hyper, that won't stay within the neat confines of the pre-existing technology?

Ierardi's project offers scanned copies of Fascicle 16 as found in Franklin's *Manuscript Books*. Below each image, there are "Fascicle 16 Navigation Options," which, depending on the poem and its appearance in earlier publications, show multiple versions of the poem in print, such as in *Poems* (1891), *Final Harvest* (1962), and the 1930 *Centenary Edition*, titled *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* when it was brought out by Bianchi and Alfred Leete Hampson. The poems are presented in the order they are found in the fascicle, and my favorite part is the "this poem with its variants" option—a printed version of the poem, normally following Johnson's 1955 transcription, appears, but any lines with variants automatically change back and forth. Thus, one can literally watch the poem change as it would with the different variants inserted.²

² Another useful online project, although not as in-depth or innovative as Ierardi's, is Sean B. Palmer's "Emily Dickinson Archive," which includes Johnson's transcriptions of the poems in their fascicle order. Palmer offers a list of the forty fascicles, and includes Johnson's transcriptions in their fascicle order for F1, F6, F7, F8, F11, F14, F15, F16, F18, F21, and F25. Judith Johnson's "Emily Dickinson: A Reconsideration" is a hypertext project based on Dickinson's Fascicle 33. It is also not as professional or as innovative as Ierardi's, but remains a useful example for the possibilities offered by hypertext. Janet Gray includes Fascicle 34 and the variants found in the manuscript version of the fascicle as her entry for Emily Dickinson in *She Wields a Pen*. The first image of the book is the manuscript page of Dickinson's "A Little Road – not made of Man –" (Fr758). In contrast, Cheryl Walker's anthology, *American Women Poets of the Nineteenth Century*, does not include Dickinson. In the Introduction, Walker explains, "the exclusion of Emily Dickinson from this anthology was a decision made for the sake of space and coherence. . . . Though this anthology aims to inspire new comparative work that would connect Dickinson to other nineteenth-century women poets, its purpose is mainly to bring to the attention of modern readers the long-forgotten texts of nineteenth-century women poets who are not already widely known and recognized" (xlili).

The more readers and scholars study Dickinson's manuscripts, the more they are made aware of the powerful influence others have had in creating "Dickinson." Throughout the twentieth-century, as new Dickinson materials were "discovered" and offered to a wider audience, the image and understanding of Dickinson as a poet changed. That change continues. While we remain fascinated by the mystery of Dickinson's intentions, and while some are often left frustrated by the vast complexity of Dickinson's materials, we better understand the dangers of oversimplification for Dickinson's work in particular and for poetry in general. Dickinson lived in an era when poetry was a part of American culture, society, and politics, and the twenty-first century seems far removed from that time. But perhaps it is not as far away as was assumed in the twentieth-century. The current technology increasingly allows wider access to more and varied materials than ever before. While these materials are not un-mediated, of course, they do create publics in a new way. Dickinson's intentions become less important, since students and scholars are allowed to become involved in the writing process in such a way that no other prior technology has allowed. The manuscripts remain remote from our own time, as Mitchell has argued, but the access to them allowed by digitization alters this remoteness in such a way that exemplifies Warner's most powerful points about the nature of discursive publics—they are unknowable, unforeseeable, ever-changing, and open-ended. Rather than seeing Dickinson as inconsistent, unstudied, isolated, and private, the collection of materials now at our disposal proves that discursive publics are to blame, not Dickinson's psyche or poetic ability.

Perhaps the push to find *Dickinson* is due to the complicated and often misunderstood notion of publics. We take the idea of publics for granted. As readers and scholars of poetry, particularly if we read a poem as a lyric, we assume that the Poet behind the texts must have had an audience or even *the* public in mind (or the Poet did not fathom any type of public and wanted

the poems to remain “locked in the box.”) But this line of investigation ultimately leads to readers, editors, and publishers assuming too much. The publics created and addressed by Dickinson’s texts become a fascinating way of inquiry outside reading the poems for their own sake. The publics have morphed through history, with different schools of critical thought as well as with different modes of editing and translating the poems into print. Dickinson’s place within the canon came about as the result of editing, editorializing, and anthologizing; it was not primarily due to her widely or consistently recognized poetic genius. For me, this coincides with Warner’s opening argument that “the idea of a public is a kind of practical fiction” (8). The image of Dickinson, as it was and is fiercely attached to the poems, serves a purpose in different contexts, and because the image fits the need of the moment, a different public comes into being. The definition or interpretation of Dickinson’s poetry has been and remains centered on one’s definition of “Emily Dickinson.” But Warner’s explanation of how discursive publics operate moves the focus from the person of Emily Dickinson to the “queer” nature of publics (7). What prior editors and critics have imposed upon Dickinson, whether it was her childlike, strange personality or her unstudied technique, can be attributed to the “queer creatures” that are publics (7). The print editions together with the manuscripts, including the letters and letter-poems, highlight Warner’s correlation between “world-making projects” and “style”:

The desire to have a different public, a more accommodating addressee, therefore confronts one with the circularity inherent in all publics: public language addresses a public as a social entity, but that entity exists only by virtue of being addressed. It seems inevitable that the world to which one belongs, the scene of one’s activity, will be determined at least in part by the way one addresses it. In modernity, therefore, an extraordinary burden of world making comes to be borne above all by style. (129)

The current ability and commitment to take the manuscripts into account offers unending possibilities to redefine “Dickinson.” The attempts to return to Dickinson’s “scene” of “activity” reveal a choice of style that has confused critics, readers, scholars, and editors since the mid-

nineteenth-century. The chaos, as it is deemed by numerous editors and critics, does have a method to its madness, and this method can be found in the fascicles, which I explore in this and the final chapter.

Editorial procedures during the nineteenth-century and the twentieth-century fostered the general point of view that Dickinson represented the isolated, oppressed, and unappreciated genius. This caricature allowed her printed poems to be seen as lyric poetry, which is often “understood as timeless overheard self-communion” (Warner 82). However, reading Dickinson in manuscript shows us something else. While Walt Whitman chose print to compromise the typical “lyric transcendence,” which allows him to toy “with the nonintimate, depersonalizing conventions of print publication,” Dickinson chose “portfolio poetry” to toy with the intimate and personal conventions of communication (Warner 82, 285).³ Although my claim in these final chapters relies more upon Dickinson’s intentions, which I have been attempting to circumvent by investigating the publics created by Dickinson’s texts, I feel confident that Dickinson must have been aware of her experimentation. The exact reasons why she did not print, or at least left no instructions or artistic philosophy to be used after her death, will never be known, but the evidence we do have seems to indicate an awareness of the possibilities open to her, and she used these possibilities to offer something new and more complicated than traditional poetry. While many readers, editors, and scholars throughout history have been

³ Not surprisingly, even recent criticism purports that Dickinson and Whitman are polar opposites. For example, Joyce Carol Oates writes in her introduction to *The Essential Dickinson* that Dickinson and Whitman “have come to represent the extreme, idiosyncratic poles of the American psyche: intensely inward, private, elliptical and ‘mystical’ (Dickinson); and the robustly outward-looking, public, rhapsodic and ‘mystical’ (Whitman) (3). The dichotomy, it seems to me, is overly-simplistic and unhelpful for both poets, but especially for Dickinson. While Whitman is viewed as the democratic giant of American literary history, Dickinson continues to be understood as the silent, oppressed, “half-cracked,” child-like poet, who, at best, lived in her private world of poetry, or, at worst, was forced to write alone in her “attic” because she knew no other way to keep from going insane. Oates writes her selections for what constitute “essential Dickinson” are “personal” yet not “private” since the book “includes the poems generally considered great—and they are many. It contains the much-anthologized; but it also contains the virtually never anthologized” (15).

frustrated by the lack of clear directions, I, like many other readers of the manuscripts, relish the possibilities offered by the lack clarity. Dickinson, too, seemed to appreciate what possibility offers: “I dwell in Possibility – / A fairer House than Prose – / More numerous of Windows / Superior – for Doors –” (Fr466).

Dickinson’s initiation of the correspondence with Higginson, her friendship with Samuel Bowles and Helen Hunt Jackson, the pivotal role played by Sue in her workshop, her own commitment to revision, her extensive amount of reading, and the way she accessed the world in her lifetime are a few facts that indicate Dickinson’s awareness of print conventions and possibilities. But the manuscripts reveal a great volume of something more complicated than print. Individual poems, for example, experiment with convention, and while many would claim this is due to Dickinson’s lack of study, early scholars noted the ease with which Dickinson’s poems could be made normal, which seems to support the idea that Dickinson sought something else. While Dickinson clearly knew that one way to express poetry was in stanzas, she also experimented with others, such as the prose-poems found in her early letters and her letter-poems sent most often to Sue. Dickinson’s non-fascicle poems also seem to experiment with the limits of print, since hardly any of those artifacts can be represented in print. Without a visual artifact, one requires prose to explain on what and how the poem is written. These “scraps,” as they have been called by early twentieth-century scholars as well as Johnson and Franklin, are the most unorganized, yet the most experimental. They seem to investigate poetic inspiration and how visual cues, whether intentional or not, affect one’s reading of a poem. In the *Manuscript Books*, Franklin provides all the poems Dickinson “included in her fascicles and sets in facsimile form, thus giving readers a sense of the materiality-specific and process-based nature of Dickinson’s poetic composition” (Kreider 69). However, in the 1998 variorum, Franklin describes the

material details of each poem, rather than offering a visual image. Following the long tradition of editing Dickinson, Franklin

prints these materials, often keeping with the poetic convention of a quatrain or ‘hymn’ meter, the form most widely attributed to Dickinson’s verse. . . . [While] this offers the reader of Franklin’s *Variorum Edition* a sense of the intricacies and idiosyncrasies inherent in Dickinson’s pages . . . [it is] only insofar as such details are received through Franklin’s verbal description and editorial codification of them. (69)

For other scholars, the reading experience is of the utmost importance, and understanding the artifact via Franklin’s “verbal description” often presents a difficult, unsatisfying experience.

Recent scholars, such as Marta Werner and Kristen Kreider, are committed to working with and creating access to these later manuscripts. These “radical scatters,” to borrow the title of Werner’s electronic archive, differ quite extensively from Dickinson’s fascicles and sets—they are not bound; are often presented in their “worksheet” state, meaning written in pencil or deemed a “draft,” rather than a fair copy, by Franklin; and are often written on odds and ends, such as envelopes, the back of a shopping list, or a fragment of wrapping paper, rather than the stationary of the fascicles and sets. In the fascicles, the context is set by the other poems within the same space. In her letters and letter-poems, the context is set by prose, by the person to whom Dickinson sent the letter, and by events referenced in the letter. In Dickinson’s reading, isolated poems, sometimes by un-named authors, would be situated within other poems and within prose, such as contemporary news and literary announcements. In the “radical scatters,” context is less important. Marta Werner describes her online project as encouraging “new investigations into both the dynamics of Dickinson’s compositional process and the play of autonomy and intertextuality in her late work” (quoted in Kreider 69). In Dickinson’s lifetime, her understanding of poets and poetry was affected by how she read them—in periodicals, in anthologies, in single-author volumes—or how she heard them, such as the sermons by Charles

Wadsworth she often attended. Dickinson would have known that context affects interpretation, and she experiments with this in her most formal productions—the fascicles.

However, the fascicles have only recently been read as artistic productions, and many scholars continue to argue that they do not offer “privileged” interpretations. For example, Shira Wolosky argues that the fascicles “cannot provide privileged evidence of textual connections, when the methods of entry, as Franklin himself vividly presents them, correlate neither with the order of composition nor with any other clearly ascertainable procedure” (88-89). While R.W. Franklin reassembled the fascicles in the 1981 book, *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson*, he purports that “as of Fascicle 9, in early 1861, they would have been unsuitable for circulation. The transcription, though in ink, was less careful, and the texts, now with unresolved readings, were not intended for others” (Franklin, 1998, 20). Franklin reconstructed the individual fascicles and ordered them according to the date around which they were written. While the progression of Dickinson’s handwriting can give a quite reliable clue as to what date a fascicle was written, the numbers 1-40 are otherwise arbitrary, meaning that there is no definitive reason to designate Fascicle 11 as coming before Fascicle 12. Mabel Loomis Todd, however, did keep track of the fascicles, and much of Franklin’s reconstruction is based on her system.⁴ The editing of Dickinson’s poems is no easy task, but Franklin does make clear in his 1998 variorum that “a literary work is separable from its artifact,” and claims that his edition “takes license to make public what Dickinson herself never did, honoring the interests of history over her reticence” (27).

However, Franklin is less clear about the editing of Dickinson’s fascicles, and one can only interpret the reasons why he did not follow the *Manuscript Books* with a print version of the

⁴ Ruth Miller studies the fascicles before they were re-established in 1981, and thus her chapter gives a good indication of how Franklin’s efforts came to be. See pages 247-332.

fascicles. Sharon Cameron reports Franklin's contradictory opinions regarding the importance and role of the fascicles:

To follow the fascicle order is, in Franklin's account of his task as described in the introduction to the facsimile, to present the poems "much as [Dickinson] left them for Lavinia and the world" (I:ix). In an article in *Studies in Bibliography*, however, published two years after the facsimile text, Franklin differently claims that the fascicles were a form of "surrogate publication . . . constructed for herself." (12)

Later in the same *Studies in Bibliography* article, Franklin posits that the fascicles were a means of keeping order among Dickinson's poems, and he means that they literally helped her to tidy up: "The disorder that the fascicle sheets forestalled may be seen in the 'scraps' of the later years. When she did not copy such sheets and destroy the previous versions, her poems are on hundreds of odds and ends—brown paper bags, magazine clippings, discarded envelopes and letters, and the backs of recipes" (Cameron 11). We cannot be certain as to Dickinson's intentions with regard to the fascicles, of course, yet "we do know Dickinson intended something. After all, she copied the poems into fascicles" (Cameron 18). The difficulties inherent in translating Dickinson's poems into print aside, all recent fascicle scholars agree that reading poems within the fascicle context can elucidate one's understanding of the poetry; the reading experience is different, and should not be discounted, even if we cannot use our experience to exact Dickinson's intent. As Cameron points out, the way Dickinson's poetry has been printed means "the unit of sense is the individual poem; beyond that, it is whatever arbitrary place the reader decides to close the book" (15). In reading individual fascicles, connections can be made between poems that are hidden when presented in a chronological order. In a practical sense, one can read (and teach) a fascicle as a unit, rather than approaching a giant book of "units." Surprisingly, not many of the fascicles have been individually examined, and only one

book-length study exists on a single fascicle.⁵ All of these fascicle studies agree that individual fascicles incorporate a range of influences and themes; they do not follow any identifiable “blueprint,” as Ruth Miller argues in 1968, but they do reveal how context affects interpretation, and they offer interpretive possibilities that are foreclosed if the poems are approached in isolation. They also offer, as other fascicle scholars such as Ann Swyerski and Eleanor Heginbotham show, a better understanding of the ways in which Dickinson was influenced by other writers. My final chapter offers a close reading of Fascicle 30, which reveals how the work of John Keats influenced Dickinson’s conception of “the Poet,” and offers information regarding how Dickinson accessed Keats’s work in the mid-nineteenth-century.

In his Introduction to the 1998 variorum, Franklin gives extensive details regarding “the most prominent part of the manuscripts that Lavinia Dickinson found in May 1886,” which are the

fascicles, her sister’s own form of bookmaking: selected poems copied in ink onto sheets of letter paper that she bound with string . . . In all Lavinia discovered forty bound fascicles, containing over eight hundred poems, and a good many fascicle sheets that had never been bound. These unbound groups, called *sets* following the terminology of *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson* (1981), brought the total to over eleven hundred. “Fascicle” was not Emily Dickinson’s term. It was introduced by Todd in *Poems* (1890) and has been retained because it has long serve in referring to these homemade books . . . Dickinson copied poem after poem onto sheets of letter paper, already folded by the manufacturer to form a bifolium.
(7)

The individual sheets of letter paper, now referred to as fascicle sheets, were stacked one on top of another, rather than nestled. The earlier fascicles normally have four sheets, which produces a booklet with eight leaves with text on both sides, while the later fascicles have a norm of six (Franklin, *Manuscript Books*, xi). “Sometimes the last poem ran over onto a separate leaf (twice onto the next full sheet) and on a few occasions onto a separate slip that was pinned, or in one

⁵ This is Dorothy Huff Oberhaus’s *Emily Dickinson’s Fascicles: Method & Meaning*.

case bound, into place. . . . To bind, Dickinson stacked the assembled sheets, with the overflow leaves (if any) in place, punched two holes through the group, threading it with string, tied on the front” (Franklin, 1998, 7). Dickinson began constructing the fascicles in 1858, and “the beginning of 1866 marked the effective end of fascicle making” (26). It may only be a coincidence, or a significant moment when Dickinson relinquished her copying and binding practices for a different type of project, that the fascicle-making ended in the same year as the publication of “The Snake” in *Springfield Daily Republican*, which instigated Dickinson’s famous statement to Higginson that she “did not print” (L316). Many have wondered why Dickinson stopped creating the fascicles, but it seems possible that she was finished with them and decided to move to a different method of experimentation.⁶ Franklin, who sees the fascicles as a means of keeping order or as a repository of poems from which she would make copies and send in letters, describes the non-fascicle manuscripts as “a proliferating disarray of scraps of paper”:

The next four years are without fascicles or sets or even many poems, only ten or twelve in each of the years from 1866 through 1869, almost like the silent years from 1855-1857. In 1870 she returned to making individual fascicle sheets (Sets 8-12, 15, 13-14), but it was an occasional occupation and lasted only until 1875. During these later years, except for the last two, when illness was debilitating, her output rose again, but it never reached earlier levels. She continued to work with first and second drafts and to produce retained copies prepared more formally, as if for a recipient. (26)

The fascicle poems are copied in ink, which Franklin considers “more formally,” while later poems, or poems not on fascicle sheets, are often (but not always) in pencil. Dickinson’s normal

⁶ Alexandra Socarides writes, “while Dickinson was clearly absorbed with her fascicle project for many years, she did eventually abandon it. She then wrote individual poems, parts of poems, and sometimes only a scattering of words onto the backs of kitchen lists, advertisements, and bills. Because Dickinson destroyed almost all of the drafts that preceded her fascicle copies, we do not know if she had always worked this way and simply chose to abandon making fair copies and binding them into fascicles, or if her later work represents a change in method. Either way, she stopped copying and binding these texts together, an act that suggests a change in her approach to her poetry. What is most interesting, though, is that between these two stages of her writing life [the fascicles and the ‘scraps’], she continued copying her texts onto fascicle sheets, yet abandoned binding them together” (88-89).

formula was to destroy earlier drafts, so while Franklin calls certain years “silent,” he refers to a lack of manuscripts from that period. Dickinson could have been writing, of course, but we no longer have evidence of it.

Dickinson’s intentions with regard to the fascicles can never be known concretely since the early mutilation and disarray cannot be corrected with exactness. Franklin dated paper and handwriting to determine the approximate time when Dickinson transcribed poems into a particular fascicle, and he matched pin-holes in order to re-establish them. We cannot be sure, however, that Franklin’s ordering of fascicle sheets follows Dickinson’s original order. Despite the “chaos,” Dickinson became early in the twentieth-century a canonical author; as the century progressed, she became established as America’s foremost poet (not just a great female poet.) This is due in part to the Dickinson mythology, but it is also because people read and studied her poems. Editors were able to derive poems from the “chaos” that were popular in the nineteenth-century and then were seen as pre-modern and even pre-postmodern throughout the twentieth-century.⁷ Similarly to the ease with which individual poems can be made conventional, the ways in which Dickinson’s larger body of work has been molded to fit traditional understandings of what poetry written by a woman should be imply that she was aware of the conventionality she *should* be striving for; instead, she chose to explore and puncture the boundaries of poetic language and intimate communication.

⁷ See Sharon Cameron’s *Choosing Not Choosing*. Cameron indicates that the participation of the reader encouraged by reading Dickinson in manuscript aligns Dickinson with post-modernism. Cameron argues the variants are not alternative possibilities but integral to the poem, and they represent Dickinson “choosing not to choose” one word or phrase over another. Cameron’s argument as to Dickinson’s lack of choice regarding a “final version” of the fascicle poems is based in considering the variants “as inclusive rather than substitutive” (63). Cameron views Dickinson as offering the variants in order to extend the identity of a poem, and of the possibilities of poetry. In Cameron’s point of view, the variants as well as their visual presence in the manuscripts are imperative in any speculation regarding the identity of a Dickinson poem. Cameron explores in detail Fascicle 20 and Fascicle 16, but she views the fascicles overall as Dickinson’s interest in the identity of a poem: “unity is not produced by reading Dickinson’s lyrics in the fascicle context. . . . What is more radically revealed is a question about what constitutes the identity of the poem. . . . Dickinson’s fascicles can rather be seen to embody the problem of identity” (4).

Within the past few decades, more fascicle scholarship has appeared, and these studies reflect the complexity of Dickinson's forty "hand-made" books. Eleanor Heginbotham argues that "the fact of the fascicles deserves attention. Regardless of whether they were complete or finished or intended as prepublication studies, as self-publishing artifacts, as gifts, as scrapbooks, or as workbooks, they exist" (ix). Heginbotham studies individual fascicles to discover "what proximate poems can tell us about each other and what the selections—for they are that, it seems to me, rather than repositories—suggest about the concerns of their author at the moment she bound them together" (xi). Heginbotham explores Fascicle 21 in particular, and focuses on "They shut me up in Prose—" and "This was a Poet—" to reveal the importance of the fascicle context. Heginbotham argues these

two poems speak to each other across the page, each opening up interpretive possibilities for the other. . . . Here are two poems, both of them familiar to Dickinson readers as disparate entities; when explored together, however, . . . they become new artifacts by virtue of their proximity. (5)

Heginbotham argues that Fascicle 21 is where "Dickinson declared her aesthetic principles," which emphasize "the subversive and affective possibilities of poetry" (5,18). Heginbotham reads the central poems as declaring Dickinson's "aesthetic stance," which is "far from those of her contemporary 'fireside poets,' whose strictly metered, true-rhyming, nationalistic, and inspirational verse was rarely de-stilling or unsettling," while the "entire fascicle reflects the 'business' of the working poet" (18, 24). In discussing Dickinson's aesthetic principles and the business of poetry, Heginbotham notes the influence of Keats and Barrett Browning, and several poems in Fascicle 21 can be read as overt references to these specific poetic precursors.

Rather than highlighting echoes of several authors, as Heginbotham does to reveal Dickinson's "aesthetic principles" in Fascicle 21, Ann Swyerski traces the influence of a single author in the "Barrett Browning Fascicles," which are fascicles 26, 29, and 31. According to

Franklin, Dickinson recorded the first elegy to Barrett Browning into Fascicle 26 around the summer of 1863, and the second and third into Fascicle 29 and Fascicle 31 about the second half of 1863. Dickinson's interest centers not only on Barrett Browning's work, but on her status as a well-known woman poet. Swyerski shows that the "Barrett Browning Fascicles" "record [Dickinson's] evolving relationship with Barrett Browning. . . . Dickinson chose to embed these poems [the elegies] in gatherings of other poems which explore her own development as a woman and poet" (76-78). For Swyerski, as Dickinson contemplates Barrett Browning's death she is also "becoming aware of her own power to assimilate and transform previous texts" (89).

The earliest study of the fascicles to be published after the *Manuscript Books* is by William Shurr, who reads the forty fascicles as indicative of marriage between Dickinson and Henry Wadsworth. Although Shurr's study has been discredited due to the unfounded and unhelpful biographical focus, later critics have attempted to align the fascicles with Dickinson's life story. In *The Passion of Emily Dickinson*, for example, Judith Farr reads within Dickinson's work "cycles" of poems that describe her passion first for Susan Gilbert Dickinson and then for "Master," whom Farr believes is Samuel Bowles. Although Farr mentions the fascicles quite often and searches within them for these two narrative strands, her project is not a sustained focus on the fascicles. She writes,

the forty fascicles, together with a few unbound poems, talk about the beloved woman [who Farr argues is Sue] in a fashion inconvenient to facile deductions about the chronology of events. For example, long after the beloved has been claimed by another [Austin], Dickinson's speaker rehearses heightened moments of their love as if these had just occurred. . . . Chronologically, then, Dickinson's story is random. Nevertheless, taken in their entirety, the poems for the beloved woman constitute a distinct narrative. (132)

Farr's observation that the fascicles are "chronologically random" aligns with Franklin's and prior editors' frustration at the lack of clear intent with regard to the fascicles. I am unconvinced by Farr's "story," although her use of the poems, in and out of their fascicle context, as a means

to explore Dickinson's "desire for a life in art" aligns with the majority of twentieth-century criticism, which is to use Dickinson's poetry to fill in her biography and vice versa (Farr 30).

Similarly to Farr, Dorothy Huff Oberhaus attempts to find a narrative structure within a single fascicle, which she then applies to all the fascicles as well as to Dickinson's life. In the only book-length study on a single fascicle, Oberhaus reads Fascicle 40 as a three-part conversion narrative. Oberhaus applies the poetic content of this final fascicle back to the first fascicle to show why she sees the fascicles as tracking the protagonist's poetic and spiritual pilgrimage, culminating in the conversion narrative of the final fascicle. Oberhaus's reading of Fascicle 40 is to show the protagonist's attainment of true contentment in a spiritual as well as poetic union with Jesus Christ. Similarly to Ruth Miller, Oberhaus examines the progress of the poet and the woman. Oberhaus argues the narrative of the fortieth fascicle shows how the protagonist, as the author of the fascicles, views her poetry to be not only inspired by but written for Christ. Oberhaus's study highlights the textual influence of the Bible in Fascicle 40, yet all attempts to find a single "story" within the forty fascicles remain unconvincing.

Instead, other scholars focus on individual fascicles. In addition to Swyerski's work with the Barrett Browning fascicles and Heginbotham's with Fascicle 21, James Wohlpart discusses how Fascicle 22 exemplifies Dickinson's confrontation with nineteenth-century dichotomies, concluding that "the liberation" at the heart of the fascicle "subverts orthodox, religious views on redemption and can most clearly be defined as the establishment of interrelationships with the natural world and with other humans that enable her to transform the quotidian into the sacred" (55). M. L. Rosenthal and Sally Gall focus on Fascicle 15 and Fascicle 16 to argue for a sequential movement, which compares to the modern poetic sequence. Robert Bray also finds a lyric sequence in Fascicle 18. Daneen Wardrop explores how the poems of Fascicle 16 reveal

Dickinson's understanding and use of the Gothic. Wardrop argues, "in Fascicle 16 we can see particularly well how Dickinson works within an established genre, Gothicism, which by this time she is accustomed to using, in order to turn to more difficult questions of how an identity is formed" (Martin 142). William Doreski focuses on figurations of loss in Fascicle 27. In my final chapter, I argue that Fascicle 30 shows Dickinson's understanding of John Keats.

Dickinson's use of Transcendentalism and Romanticism is well known, but the space created by the fascicle shows us how Dickinson understood the role of the Poet. My reading of Fascicle 30 also fits in with Swyerski's since she focuses on Dickinson's relationship to a single author.

The influence of Barrett Browning on Dickinson is un-questioned, yet Swyerski's attention to the fascicle context reveals a deeper understanding of the relation between the two poets.

Similarly, Fascicle 30 shows how pivotal Keats became to Dickinson's understanding of poets and immortality.

But Dickinson's fascicles represent a great difficulty. They are not, despite what Johnson and Franklin may have thought, a means of keeping order or forestalling the "scraps" of later years, but what Dickinson intended them to be is a labor-intensive, seemingly-endless pursuit. Some see this as proof that any readings are simply coincidental. Sally Bushnell contends that "recent critics who attempt to read across Dickinson's fascicles fall into exactly the same trap of unverifiable intention" (Bushnell 58). However, this is in response to critics, such as Dorothy Oberhaus, who argue for the forty fascicles to be read as a single literary work. Relatively few scholarly articles have closely analyzed the poetry of single fascicles, while many scholars have added their opinions regarding how Franklin, even with his *Manuscript Books* and the 1998 variorum, has not solved the problem of "reading" Dickinson. In "Emily Dickinson's Manuscript Body: History / Textuality / Gender," Shira Wolosky writes, "Franklin's newly proposed re-

ordering of the poems [does not] finally settle questions of chronology, nor of how much one is able to make use of them in interpretation. . . . Relationships among texts abound, but none are finally binding” (88). Many scholars, including Franklin, remain convinced that Dickinson’s manuscripts in general and her fascicles in particular cannot offer conclusive information regarding Dickinson’s intentions. I tend to see the fascicles as representative of the inherent complexity of Dickinson’s work, and individual fascicles do provide insight into what influenced Dickinson. For example, criticism early in the twentieth-century highlighted Dickinson’s isolationism and this could be proven by the themes found in Dickinson’s poetry of the time period. Fred Lewis Pattee remarks that “according to her passages in her letters, she had read many standard poets but in her verses there are no echoes” (194). Similarly, Anna Mary Wells writes, “what other people were writing during her own time, then, had comparatively little effect on her,” yet Wells does highlight how much Dickinson read from times other than her own, saying that “her taste, formed by what opportunities she had for reading, was more catholic than discriminating” (246). The fascicles, at least the few that have been closely read as individual booklets, do reveal Dickinson’s influences in a more powerful and concrete way than has been realized previously. There are direct echoes, even more so than all of the ones set forth by Jack Capps’s pivotal work, *Emily Dickinson’s Reading*. For example, Capps selects individual lines from letters or poems and correlates them to their original sources. His work reveals the amount Dickinson was involved in literature from her own time period as well as others, and how much she read contemporary magazines and newspapers. But the echoes are random and sporadic, while the fascicles reveal a sustained concentration in a space controlled by Dickinson.

However, due to the manuscript mutilation and disarray, how much of that space was intended by Dickinson remains an area of debate. In “Dickinson, Higginson, and the Problem with Print,” Alexandra Socarides argues that the fascicles are not booklets of poetry, but reveal Dickinson’s main focus to be the fascicle sheet:

Attending to how Dickinson made the fascicles reveals that she was working with a particular unit of construction—the fascicle sheet—and, in doing so, was already thinking about the very problems of narrative, sequence, fragmentation, and genre that Dickinson scholars have been struggling with for over a hundred years. Once we see that the fascicles aren’t what we’ve always assumed them to be—books of lyric poems whose contents can be both extracted individually and read sequentially—then we will be able to identify what they are and what kinds of poems Dickinson copied in them. (2)

Similarly to Ruth Miller, who notices the importance of “the presence of several poems on a manuscript page” since they are “indisputable, for these poems cannot have been displaced,” Socarides argues for the significance of the fascicle sheet (Miller 247). In “Rethinking the Fascicles: Dickinson’s Writing, Copying, and Binding Practices,” Socarides explains that while the fascicles are relatively new to Dickinson studies, they can be contextualized within the nineteenth-century:

Critics’ treatments of Dickinson’s manuscripts inadvertently imply that no one else ever copied and kept her own writings. Yet, over two decades ago, Barton Levi St. Armand placed Dickinson’s fascicle poems in a wider cultural context when he suggested that they were portfolio poems, the sort of manuscript expressions that Ralph Waldo Emerson had called for in his 1840 essay, “New Poetry” (3-5). At the time, St. Armand asked critics to further investigate Dickinson’s material writing practices when he wrote, “This art was not exclusively literary in nature but originated in Dickinson’s situation as a nineteenth-century woman who was a part of a community where many nonliterary or nonacademic arts were practiced” (9). Several critics have taken up this call and several new studies of nineteenth-century women’s poetry in particular have explored the fact that American women of Dickinson’s culture and class were deeply absorbed in the practice of writing, copying, and preserving their own and others’ verses. (71)

Socarides’ concern is reading too much into how Dickinson may have intended the fascicles to be read. Since we cannot be sure they were re-established correctly, we may be assuming too

much if we argue for a narrative structure within an individual fascicle or the fascicles as a whole. Rather than focusing on “the fascicles as something read,” Socarides views “the fascicles as something made” (71). Socarides argues Dickinson uses the fascicle sheet to “formally address her own resistance to both the static lyric moment and an all-encompassing narrative” (89). Socarides concludes that the complexity and difficulty of the fascicles cause one “to rethink the boundaries between individual texts”:

In the end, the fascicles may continue to avoid classification at every turn. Yet it is this very avoidance that opens up new questions that allow for a reexamination of the materials themselves, the assumptions that have been made about them, and the discourses that are the most useful when discussing both. (89)

Dickinson’s body of work, since there are *so many* possibilities inherent in only a handful of case studies or within a single fascicle, problematizes the assumptions that constitute literary identity, such as the need for clearly demarcated boundaries between genres. Socarides argues that the fascicle sheets reveal Dickinson’s play with the limitations of print; she closely reads the poems in their manuscript fascicle page “to see some of the amazing relations Dickinson put into play,” relations that print will always obscure (“Problem with Print” 6).

Reading Dickinson in manuscript, and reading the fascicles in particular, is not to decide with finality what Dickinson intended. Rather, it is to show the great possibility she offered and with which she experimented. Print will always obscure this experimentation, but technological innovations increasingly offer new ways of reading, which parallel Dickinson’s commitment to working within and against established conventions of communication. Dickinson’s efforts, and the long, complicated history of Dickinson criticism, exemplify what Warner defines as the “circularity” of discursive publics: a public is self-organized; it is a “space of discourse organized by nothing other than the discourse itself. . . . It exists *by virtue of being addressed*” (67). The fascicles exist, and because Dickinson copied poems into manuscript books, we know

she intended something. We may never know what she intended, but their existence fosters new ways of reading and understanding Dickinson's project. These artifacts continually create different publics. The circularity, particularly powerful in the case of the fascicles, never ceases: "Could anyone speak publicly without addressing a public? But how can this public exist before being addressed? What would a public be if no one were addressing it? Can a public really exist apart from the rhetoric through which it is imagined?" (67). Just as we cannot answer with finality what Dickinson intended the fascicles to be, Warner says, "these questions cannot be resolved on one side or the other. The circularity is essential to the phenomenon" (67). If one sees the addressee of the fascicles as Dickinson, then one would deem them, as many have, as utterly private. However, Franklin's *Manuscript Books* create new publics and if one reads the poems within those volumes as lyrics, as Dickinson talking to herself because they were meant to be private, then one understands them within an established discourse based on a traditional poetic genre. The "rhetorical address" of the poems is understood because of the original context of circulation, which is assumed to be non-circulation, yet the "real context of reception" is determined by one's reading of the *Manuscript Books*. The use of the materials to discover "Dickinson" and her intentions results in various, nearly endless possibilities for different contexts of reception. Although we try to return to the original scene of circulation, we are continually thwarted since the texts create the publics, rather than Dickinson. The circularity that defines discursive publics allows us to think we can find Dickinson's addressee, but we only think there is an addressee because the materials created a public and we cannot imagine a public without someone addressing it. Rather than using the fascicles to show a singular private poet who sought no public, Dickinson's fascicles continually give rise to "an infinite number of

publics within the social totality,” a totality bounded only by the attention to a shared object; in this case, Dickinson’s fascicles.

Although it would be difficult to prove Dickinson understood publics as Warner describes them, and thus worked as she did in order to reveal the nature of discursive publics, her work does reveal a commitment to a lack of clarity, which forecloses the possibility of closure on both an individual as well as a collective level. Her manipulation of language results in poems that always seem new:

Regardless of how many times you read her best poems, and how many times you persuade others that you know what they ‘mean,’ you feel the tickle of unsolved mystery in the poem; you do not convince yourself that you have gotten to the bottom of it; the poem, like the poet herself, is never quite your own. (Miller *A Poet’s Grammar* 19)

Similarly, Sharon Cameron writes, the “fascicles as an entire project and as single entities are as resistant to closure as the individual poems that compose them” (19). The various contexts in which we can now see Dickinson’s poetry—print, manuscript, and hypertext—serve to accentuate Dickinson’s poems as perpetually “unsolved” mysteries. Despite the confusion of editors at Dickinson’s chaos, they have extracted for over a century hundreds of poems, which resulted in Dickinson’s solid and privileged place in literary history. Beginning around the 1980s, as new scholarship and new ways of reading came into being, we began to better understand Dickinson’s relationship to her time period as well as the wider, more radical possibilities for her project. The letters, the fascicles, and the “scraps” of later years represent three distinct spaces of experimentation, and taken together, these three spaces explore and ultimately reject the boundary between public and private; they reveal the dichotomy to be overly-simplistic, arbitrary, and problematic, at best, and dangerous, at worst. The first explores intimate communication and the relationship between prose and poetry as well as intended audience and nominal addressee. The fascicles reveal the influence of context and show

Dickinson's understanding of the limits of print. The fascicles can be read in numerous ways—with or without accounting for the variants; placing significance on the fascicle sheet, rather than seeing it as a book of poetry; seeing it as a form of self-publication very remote from our own time, but using it nonetheless to set up a space for seeing common themes, literary echoes, or a possible narrative. In explaining his editorial philosophy that “a literary work is separable from its artifact,” Franklin writes that “Dickinson herself” demonstrated this philosophy “when she moved her poems from piece of paper to another. Even the fascicles, her most formal organization of her work, were the source for further copies” (27). Yet when Dickinson transcribed a poem into another place, she did change the context and, in a way, the “artifact,” but those artifacts remained in manuscript. Print, no matter how detailed or diligent, represents a rather drastic change—in Dickinson's case, while it may be true that “there can be many manifestations of a literary work,” the artifacts *are* important to study, not just as material needed to translate into print and more traditional genres, but as artifacts integral to the literary project, significance, and methodology as a whole (Franklin 27). The “scraps,” or “radical scatters,” which I find to be a much more apt description, further the meshing of genre Dickinson played with in both her letters and her fascicles.

Overall, despite the possibility of translating the poems into print and regularizing the line breaks to fit in with the tradition of the hymn quatrain, Dickinson seems committed to the manuscript form, perhaps because she realized the inability to be printed exactly as she wanted. While, again, we can only infer why (or even if) Dickinson rejected print as an artistic stance, her manuscripts continue to offer alternative possibilities for what defines and constitutes a poem. Individual fascicles, in particular, provide a space to explore the issues central to Dickinson's project: context, visuality, and poetic identity. The complexity of these case studies reveals

Dickinson's commitment to blurring boundaries and showing alternative possibilities within a space that counters the nonintimate, depersonalizing conventions of print publication.

Dickinson's manuscripts lend themselves to supporting both the image of the isolated, safe female genius, and the chaotic, unstudied poet because they problematize the personal. The manuscripts, particularly the fascicles and later fragments and drafts, are intimate; they seem to address a personal public of one—Dickinson herself. Dickinson's letters often have an intended audience—a specific person, an intimate acquaintance to whom Dickinson can confide. And thus the letters are used to fill in the gaps, and to explain the “glimpses of a woman's naked soul” provided by the poems (Pattee 190). Yet the poems are both personal and impersonal; they seem to relate to autobiographical events that the reader cannot know; the poems are so powerful, they *must* be influenced by experience, but what could the experiences have been of this childlike nun of Amherst? The confusion throughout Dickinson criticism is due in part to unfounded biographical accounts, but it is also due to Dickinson's meticulous commitment to non-referential poetry. Individual poems toy with a reader's understanding of lyric poetry, and the body of work more generally toys with the underlying assumptions of public and private communication. As Cristanne Miller argues, “Dickinson uses the experience of her life and world to create what [Robert] Weisbuch has aptly called a ‘sceneless’ poetry [in *Emily Dickinson's Poetry* (1981)]. The poems stem from her life, but they do not point to it; there is no direct reference to a particular act of the poet or even necessarily to her real voice in the statement or voice of a poem” (15).

Many critics are not convinced by the “manuscript school,” which is, again, often problematically discussed as though it is a single entity, because we can offer only case studies, which may or may not indicate Dickinson's intentions; they may merely be “anomalies” that

cannot be used to prove Dickinson's artistic point of view. However, arguments regarding Dickinson's central concerns have been always based in "case studies," or close readings of individual poems or groups of poems. Dickinson's view of nature, religion, immortality, poetry, marriage, love, and life has been often assumed via close readings of select poems. Much of this is due to practicality—one can only write about or teach so many poems out of the 1,789. But it is also due to finding poems that prove one's point and ignoring poems that contradict one's point. For example, the difficulty throughout history of pinpointing how Dickinson viewed religion and publication results because numerous poems inhabit contradictory stances.

Dickinson's poems, despite Miller's recognition, are often read as Dickinson's statement on a certain subject. This is not to say that reading to find a statement is thus pointless; rather, it is clear Dickinson's work represents complex notions, rather than portraying a singular train of thought. In addition, the manuscripts further complicate Dickinson and one's perception of her as a person and as a poet. Debates continue about the most basic aspects of Dickinson's work—what is a Dickinson poem? And in order to participate in these debates, critics often must simplify them, which would account for why the "manuscript school" becomes singular.

But critical inquiry continues to rely on case studies and close readings, and even if we are arguing very different things, we often arrive at similar conclusions. Don Gilliland, for example, argues for a relation between Dickinson's textual practice and religious point of view. He writes, "there is a necessary relationship between Dickinson's religious concerns and her textual practice, and this relationship is the basis for a poetics that synthesizes philosophical materialism and religious transcendence" (41).⁸ To "illustrate Dickinson's poetics," Gilliland discusses

⁸ Gilliland situates his own study within two strands of Dickinson criticism—"the manuscript school" and those interested in "the religious content of the poems" (40). He claims that the manuscript school "has focused intently on features of Dickinson's manuscripts . . . [but] it has not taken sufficient account of the abstract notion of what I will refer to as the 'Poem': that component of artwork that consists in its ideas, apart from the physical materials

“three poems that have religious subject matter (and frequent Christian allusions) but differing textual origins” (44). The first is undated (“A word made Flesh” Fr1715); the second (“Of Paradise’ existence” Fr1421) is dated at about “1877, which was after Dickinson’s fascicle-making period;” and the last is “No Crowd that has occurred” (Fr653), which is found in Fascicle 30 and which I will discuss in detail in the next chapter (47). Although Gilliland’s interest is linking Dickinson’s textual practice with her religious point of view, and although I am unconvinced by his discussion of three poems to establish not only Dickinson’s religious outlook but also how that outlook influences the “textual origins” of her poetry, our conclusions parallel in an interesting way. Gilliland writes,

her poetics consists in a circle that is ever-expanding, an unfixed circumference always growing in all directions. . . . Dickinson maintains her devotion to and reverence for human bodily existence and the manuscript, and at the same time she retains a belief in and sense of awe toward the spirit and the Poem. (55)

Despite all the years of morbid mythology, it seems clear Dickinson loved poetry and this most likely extended to a love of being a poet—she had the cultural position and status to have a “room of her own,” and she embraced the freedom within that space to “ever-expand” and “unfix” literary conventions. It seems clear Dickinson was interested in more than composing traditional lyrics that would speak to a future humanity. Although the image of Winston, who had no audience and no possibility to write except to an internalized sense of humanity, does fit Dickinson in a certain interesting and enlightening way, she also embraced the opportunities open to her and worked within a complexity that we are only beginning to understand. It would

from which it is constructed and reproduced” (40). This is an odd claim, since Dickinson is read most often as a writer of the “Poem,” and readers and scholars have been predominantly unconcerned, due at least in part to a lack of access, with “the physical materials.” And the argument that the “manuscript school” does not “taken sufficient account” of the “Poem” ignores the work of Sharon Cameron, Martha Nell Smith, Alexandra Socarides, Marta Werner, Kristen Kreider, and I am sure many others with whom I am not yet familiar. In addition, Gilliland claims that those who are interested in “religious content” are “not interested in the importance of the textpage,” yet this ignores the work of Dorothy Oberhaus (41).

not be too much of a stretch to argue that the “Circumference” pervading her work relates to her puncturing the boundary between public and private. Rather than accept the dichotomy, Dickinson embraced the “circularity” of discursive publics to produce a body of work that continually evades category and elucidates the problem of conventional literary and communicative spheres.

CHAPTER 5
DICKINSON'S THIRTIETH FASCICLE

The twenty-one poems within Emily Dickinson's Fascicle 30 investigate what John Keats coined "Negative Capability," which Keats defines as a capability "of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts" (L32). We can infer that Dickinson's investigation of "Negative Capability" stemmed not only from Keats's works but from what she knew of his life. While Percy Shelley and Barrett Browning defended Keats as a martyr for beauty, the risk of a "critical assassination" may be one reason behind Dickinson's "delay 'to publish'" (L265). Despite Keats's moments of confidence and his fierce ambition to see his work in print, Dickinson would have been aware of the negative consequences. Besides the harsh critical reviews of *Endymion*, Keats eventually refers to the poem as "slipshod" (L90), and his grand attempts to sustain dream worlds in other poems also fail, represented by the fragments *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*. Reading Fascicle 30 in the context of how Keats's works and life exemplify "Negative Capability" reveals a commitment to ambivalence that Dickinson appreciated in Keats, and yet the fascicle also complicates the simplicity of "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" ("Ode on a Grecian Urn" l. 50). My reading of Fascicle 30 revises prior assumptions regarding the influence of Keats on Dickinson. Rather than a Keatsian presence "somewhere" in Dickinson's poetry, as Karl Keller claims, or Keats as an anxiety-producing father figure to Dickinson, as Joanne Diehl seems to imagine, Fascicle 30 shows an invested attentiveness to Keats's work and life.

Dickinson's most overt reference to Keats occurs in Fascicle 21, which moves from "the terror-stricken persona of the opening poem . . . to the confident speaker of the last poem ('It was given to me by / the Gods –' [J454, Fr455]), who crows, 'The Difference – made me / bold –'"

(Heginbotham 24).¹ About mid-way through Fascicle 21's movement from terror to boldness, we find Dickinson's "own 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'" (30) in "I died for Beauty –" (Fr448), which argues that Beauty and Truth "are One." Fascicle 30 begins its investigation of "Negative Capability" by embracing the ambivalent beauty inherent in nature and human experience, yet the concluding poems seem to deny that "'Beauty is truth, truth beauty.'" The fascicle's revision of Keats presents the idea that "uncertainties, Mysteries, and doubts" can "Debase" humanity and produce "Crucifixion" and suffering. While Fascicle 21 incorporates "the indistinguishability of Truth and Beauty," Fascicle 30 recognizes that Keats may be "able only to assert, not to enact" this truth (Vendler 233). Fascicle 30's movement is the *opposite* of that found in Fascicle 21—rather than progressing from a "terror-stricken persona" to a "confident speaker," Fascicle 30 opens with an awe-filled spectator at Christ's "Resurrection" and closes with a "Sufferer polite," a suffering which seems to extend from earth into heaven. Fascicle 30's arc reveals Dickinson's transition from the absolute power of poetry, or the notion that Beauty and Truth "are One," to the undeniable, bitter, and often dismal power of experience.

¹ In contrast to Fascicle 21's incorporation of several authors to support Dickinson's "aesthetic principles," (Heginbotham 5), Ann Swyerski traces the influence of a single author in the "Barrett Browning Fascicles," which are fascicles 26, 29, and 31. According to Franklin, Dickinson recorded the first elegy to Barrett Browning into F26 around the summer of 1863, and the second and third into F29 and F31 about the second half of 1863. F29 and F31 are of the same stationery as Fascicle 30. Dickinson's interest centers not only on Barrett Browning's work, but on her status as a well-known woman poet. Swyerski shows that the "Barrett Browning Fascicles" "record [Dickinson's] evolving relationship with Barrett Browning . . . Dickinson chose to embed these poems [the elegies] in gatherings of other poems which explore her own development as a woman and poet" (76-78). For Swyerski, as Dickinson contemplates Barrett Browning's death she is also "becoming aware of her own power to assimilate and transform previous texts" (89). Thus, while F30 seems to reject a sustained transcendence within poetry, the fascicle is found amidst Dickinson's (re)discovery of her poetic voice as it relates to Barrett Browning. The tension between possibility and failure is F30's central concern and this tension manifests among the fascicles as well. While less than one-third of the forty fascicles have been closely read, it is clear that not every fascicle can be associated with a single author. Other arguments regarding the fascicles as booklets of poetry, aside from Heginbotham and Swyerski, include: Dorothy Huff Oberhaus's focus on the fortieth fascicle and its textual relation to the Bible; James Wollpart's focus on Fascicle 22 and the way Dickinson manipulates domestic imagery to subvert cultural norms; William Shurr's reading of all forty fascicles as a single narrative of Dickinson's "marriage" to the Reverend Wadsworth; Rosenthal and Gall focus on F15 and F16 to argue for a sequential movement, which compares to the modern poetic sequence; and Sharon Cameron discusses the operation of the variants.

In addition, Fascicle 30 explores Keats's presentation of the dream world in *Endymion*, the 4050-line "Poetic Romance" committed to poetry as "an endless fountain of immortal drink" (1.24). *Endymion* meanders his way through multiple realms due to his love for the moon goddess Cynthia, and although he experiences a few obstacles along the way, the poem ends with the two lovers vanishing into the immortal realm, presumably to spend eternity happily ever after. Fascicle 30 refuses a dreams-do-come-true-ending, but the movement of the fascicle links with Keats's correlation between sleep, dreams, and poetry. We can locate this movement as well as the fascicle's concern with dreaming through the strategic placement of the fascicle's three dream poems, which appear fourth, eleventh, and fifteenth in the sequence. The fascicle consists of six folded sheets stacked on top of one another. Each dream poem begins its fascicle sheet and articulates a different point of view within the broader discussion of "being in uncertainties." The first dream poem inhabits a positive, peaceful dream world that leads to poetic inspiration. The second reflects a wariness regarding the power of sleep and dreams to offer or renew inspiration. The final dream poem marks a clear separation from the positive power of dreaming in general and from the convenient, happy ending of *Endymion* in particular.

Fascicle 30 follows R.W. Franklin's renewed ordering in the 1998 variorum with the interesting exception of "'Morning' – means 'Milking'" (Fr191B), which elucidates the fascicle's initial correlation between dreaming and poetic inspiration.² According to Franklin's 1998 variorum, which ascribes Dickinson's most productive year to 1863, rather than 1862 as

² Franklin notes that a variant of Fr191 was sent to Sue about 1861 and then copied into F30 about 1863: "Although two years apart, the copies probably derived from the same draft, now destroyed" (224-225). Poems 630-652, following Franklin's numbering with no additions, make up Fascicle 31. Poems 673-679 are in Set I, with 680-699 in Fascicle 32. Franklin re-constructed the fascicles in 1981, and re-numbered the poems 1-1789 in 1998, writing in the 1998 Introduction that "The present dating has had an advantage not enjoyed by Poems (1955) in that it was accomplished after the reconstruction of the fascicles . . . the fascicles and sets, containing about two thirds of the poems, have been a sturdier base upon which to study handwriting and assign dates than a series of individual manuscripts . . . The dating is of documents, not necessarily of the composition of poems" (38-39). Documenting exactly when Dickinson transcribed poems into a certain fascicle is also difficult to determine.

has been previously thought, Dickinson compiled Fascicle 30 about the second half of 1863, and this date revises the “about 1862” designation in Franklin’s *Manuscript Books*. Dickinson’s placement of poems reflects a sequence that investigates the relation between human suffering and beauty, and I provide the fascicle order here for a cursory look at the fascicle’s logic:

No Crowd that has occurred (Fr653)
Beauty – be not caused – It is – (Fr654)
He parts Himself – like Leaves – (Fr655)
I started Early – Took my Dog – (Fr656)
“Morning” – means “Milking” – to the Farmer – (Fr191B)
Endow the Living – with the Tears – (Fr657B)
‘Tis true – They shut me in the Cold – (Fr658)
The Province of the Saved (Fr659)
I took my Power in my Hand – (Fr660)
Some such Butterfly be seen (Fr661)
I had no Cause to be awake – (Fr662)
I fear a Man of frugal Speech – (Fr663)
Rehearsal to Ourselves (Fr664)
The Martyr Poets – did not tell – (Fr665)
I cross till I am weary (Fr666)
Answer July – (Fr667)
There is a Shame of Nobleness – (Fr668)
An ignorance a Sunset (Fr669)
One Crucifixion is recorded – only – (Fr670)
The Sweetest Heresy received (Fr671)
Take Your Heaven further on – (Fr672)

We can be sure of Dickinson’s familiarity with Keats, although I have not located specific historical evidence regarding how she felt in particular about the works I am associating with Fascicle 30 here.³ However, Dickinson’s creation of a Keatsian fascicle coincides with essays in

³ Joanne Diehl reports that “no copy of Keats’s poems belonging to Dickinson has been found,” but the Dickinson family owned Charles A Dana’s *Household Book of Verse* (1860) and Robert Chambers’ *Cyclopaedia of English Literature* (1853), “both of which contained several of Keats’s poems.” Also, the Northampton Library had an 1848 edition of Lord Houghton’s *Life, Letters and Literary Remains of John Keats* (Diehl 113 n98). While Houghton’s volume contains a limited amount of “Literary Remains,” Houghton (or Richard Monckton Milnes) quite extensively discusses Keats’s works, including “poems published in the little volume of 1817” (21). The 1817 edition contained “Sleep and Poetry” as well as “Endymion,” which is how Keats referred to “I stood Tip-Toe” while he was writing it (see Stillinger 425-426). I am still uncertain about Dickinson’s access to the completed *Endymion*, which was published as its own volume in 1818, although Houghton outlines Keats’s progress of *Endymion* through the inclusion of pivotal letters on the subject (see 41-91 and 142-146). While multiple studies have contextualized Dickinson within Anglo-American Romanticism, specific correlations to Keats have often been overlooked. When connections are drawn, they are read as adversarial, as Diehl argues, or vague, as Richard

the *Atlantic Monthly* that center on Keats's life and works. Dickinson writes to Higginson on April 25, 1862, "You inquire my Books – For Poets – I have Keats – and Mr and Mrs Browning" (L261).⁴ Higginson's "Letter to a Young Contributor," which appeared in the April 1862 edition of the *Atlantic Monthly*, inspires Dickinson's initial letter to him, and she perhaps lists Keats first in this second letter because Higginson's essay discloses his high regard for Keats: "Keats himself has left behind him winged wonders of expression which are not surpassed by Shakspeare [sic], or by any one else who ever dared touch the English tongue" (403). Higginson also refers to Keats as "the stock victim of critical assassination, though the charge does him utter injustice" (407). In the April 1863 edition of the *Atlantic Monthly*, Joseph Severn's article, "On the Vicissitudes of Keats's Fame," reaffirms Higginson's portrayal of Keats's "assassination": "the Review [*Quarterly Review*] which, through its false and malicious criticisms had always been considered to have caused the death of Keats" (406). Higginson's and Severn's description of Keats's "critical assassination" refers to the "legend" initiated by Percy Shelley's "An Elegy on the Death of John Keats, Author of Endymion, Hyperion, Etc.,"

Brantley's sporadic correlations indicate. For an entry point into Dickinson's relation to the Romantic/Transcendental tradition, see: Diehl's *Women Poets and the American Sublime*; Evan Carton's *The Rhetoric of American Romance*; Shira Wolosky's "Dickinson's Emerson: A Critique of American Identity"; Glauco Cambon's "Emily Dickinson and the Crisis of Self-reliance"; Laura Gribbin's "Emily Dickinson's Circumference: Figuring a Blind Spot in the Romantic Tradition"; and Nancy Mayer's "Finding Herself Alone: Emily Dickinson, Victorian Women Novelists, and the Female Subject."

⁴ After the 1862 letter to Higginson, no mention of Keats appears in the letters until September 1885. The letter asks Forrest Emerson for any information regarding the "circumstances" of Helen Hunt Jackson's death, and Dickinson exclaims, "Oh had that Keats a Severn!" (L1018). Dickinson seems to recall Joseph Severn's essay, "On the Vicissitudes of Keats's Fame," which appeared in the April 1863 edition of the *Atlantic Monthly*. Dickinson wishes to know the details of Jackson's "life's close" as thoroughly as Severn could recount Keats's final hours. L1034 contains the last mention of Keats, written to the Norcross cousins about March 1886. Johnson notes that L1034 references *Endymion*, although the lines quoted are not exact to Keats's text: "Was your winter a tender shelter – perhaps like Keats's bird, 'and hops and hops in little journeys'?" In *The Atlantic Monthly* (September 1862), Higginson's essay, "The Life of Birds," quotes Keats's *Endymion*: "If an innocent bird / Before my heedless footsteps / *stirred and / stirred / In little journeys*" (374; italics in original). The italics are not present and the line breaks are different in Keats's 1818 publication of *Endymion*, Book I, lines 698-700. The lines in Dickinson's letter, therefore, could be from Higginson's essay, and thus the letter does not prove Dickinson's familiarity with *Endymion*, although Dickinson appears to be quoting the line from memory over twenty years after the appearance of Higginson's essay. While the references to Keats are sparse, the gap in time may reflect Dickinson's memorization of, or at least a sustained interest in, the details of Keats's life and works.

which attributes Keats's early death to the brutal criticism of *Endymion*. The most scathing reviews were anonymous and Shelley portrays the "noteless blot on a remembered name" as the "deaf and viperous murderer" who gave "Our Adonais" "poison" (ll. 316-317).⁵ Elizabeth Barrett Browning reinforces the legend when she describes Keats in "A Vision of Poets" as "the real / Adonis" (ll. 407-408). The *Atlantic Monthly's* introductory note to Severn's article provides an excerpt from the "Preface to Adonais, which Shelley wrote in 1821" for readers unfamiliar with Severn. Shelley writes, "May the unextinguished spirit of his illustrious friend [Keats] animate the creations of his [Severn's] pencil, and plead against oblivion for his [Keats's] name!" (401). These various sources indicate Dickinson may have imagined Keats as a poet killed by what others thought of his work.

Fascicle 30's opening poems investigate Truth and Beauty, yet the ideas are explored separately, indicating from the beginning of the fascicle that "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" represents too simple a statement for Dickinson. The first poem explores the sublimity of Truth as the speaker imagines the "General Attendance" of "Resurrection" and witnesses the impossible: "The long restricted Grave / Assert her Vital Privilege – / The Dust – connect – and live –". The poem concretizes the "Mysteries" of the afterlife by acting as a witness for Christ's "Resurrection." The poem makes this awesome event real, yet the speaker's reaction is to question "What Parallel can be – / Of the Significance of This – / To Universe – and Me?" Dickinson's translation of Negative Capability, here rooted in Christian doctrine rather than the Greek myth that captivates Keats, stems from the requirement that one must trust the divine Word: "For since the beginning of the world *men* have not heard, nor perceived by the ear,

⁵ Stillinger notes, "though friends admired and defended the poem, the principal contemporary reviews . . . were unfavorable" (432). For example, the reviewer for the *Quarterly Review* writes, "this author is a copyist of Mr. Hunt; but he is more unintelligible, almost as rugged, twice as diffuse, and ten times more tiresome and absurd than his prototype" (Wolfson 204).

neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, *what* he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him” (Isaiah 64:4). Eternity encompasses fear and awe rather than understanding. In the face of such sublimity, “the Significance” of any other event in the “Universe” may pale in comparison.

One way of finding significance on earth is by witnessing beauty and embracing the fact that it is “Beauty that must die” (“Ode on Melancholy” l.21). If we read Keats’s odes as different attempts to discover, define, and appreciate art, such as the suffering narrator’s yearning for the fleeting nightingale’s music or the human-fashioned beauty of the Grecian Urn, then “To Autumn” represents Keats’s conclusion that nature, like life, is beautiful because it “must die.” Poetry, however, acts as an immortalizer of beauty. Death and autumn can compete with re-birth, or “the songs of spring” (l.23), because the impending desolation colors “the soft-dying day” and “the stubble-plains with a rosy hue” (ll. 25-26). The inevitability of death renders life precious, and the progress of time can be stopped only (if at all) by art. Although the ode symbolizes death, Keats’s poetic defense of autumn’s beauty arises from an actual account: “How beautiful the season is now . . . I never lik’d stubble-fields so much as now – Aye better than the chilly green of the Spring. Somehow a stubble-plain looks warm . . . This struck me so much in my Sunday’s walk that I composed upon it” (L151). In Fascicle 30, Dickinson extrapolates beauty from truth and translates Negative Capability into the permanent impermanence of nature’s beauty: “Beauty – be not caused – It Is – / Chase it, and it ceases – / Chase it not, and it abides –” (Fr654). The poem indicates that beauty is, and that one should not chase it; one can only view beauty without trying to contain or capture it. The poem’s opening argument is followed by an example from nature:

Overtake the Creases
In the Meadow – when the Wind
Runs his fingers thro’ it –
Deity will see to it

That You never do it –

While this poem addresses Beauty⁶, the use of “it” in the second stanza requires a reader to fill in the blanks. Thus, I read the second stanza as arguing, “when the Wind / Runs his fingers thro’ [the Meadow] / Deity will see to it / That You never do [Overtake the Creases]”. The poem observes the beauty of wind blowing through a meadow, and uses the inability to “overtake the creases” as proof that one should only observe beauty, since it abides only if you “Chase it not.”

Dickinson embraces Negative Capability through her portraits of poetry’s debt to nature’s inspiration and her utilization of nature as a central metaphor to explore the significance of suffering. For Dickinson and Keats, suffering can result in something positive, such as poetic inspiration or an appreciation of impermanence. Sometimes, however, suffering leads to nothing. Fascicle 30 begins with the positive. The fascicle’s third poem describes a butterfly, which according to Keats is one of nature’s “luxuries” in which a poet can “indulge at large” (“Sleep and Poetry” l. 343). Dickinson’s poem (Fr655) follows the actions of a butterfly:

He parts Himself – like Leaves –
Then stands upon the Bonnet
Of Any Buttercup –
And then He runs against
And oversets a Rose –
And then does Nothing –
Then away upon a Jib – He goes –

⁶ The variant for the first line, as found in Franklin’s *Manuscript Books*, reads: “Beauty – is not caused – It Is.” “Beauty – be not caused,” despite the alliteration, forces one to pause in between the first and second word for a moment longer than signified by the dash. When read aloud, the stumbling that one does over the repetition of the “b”’s makes the poem seem a direct address to Beauty, rather than merely about Beauty, as is the case with “Beauty – is not caused,” which one can say more fluidly. I find “Beauty – be not caused” to be more powerful and confident, yet the line is also separated from the rest, since the following lines are about Beauty. However, the confident, command-like tone established by “Beauty – be not caused” is continued throughout the rest of the poem. Dickinson’s use of “Deity” may be primarily alliterative, rather than intended to invoke images of gods and goddesses, yet Dickinson only uses the term “Deity” twenty-two times, while “God” appears one hundred and thirty times (Rosenbaum 867 and 865, respectively). According to *A Concordance to the Poems of John Keats*, Keats does not use the term “Deity,” while “God” appears sixty-one times, “Gods” forty-four, and “Goddess” thirty (Becker 647).

This poem also initiates the fascicle's concern with sleep and dreams. Keats's "Sleep and Poetry" describes the restorative power of sleep, a power Keats argues is comparable to and necessary for poetry. "Sleep and Poetry" introduces the "butterfly, with golden wings broad parted, / Nestling a rose, convuls'd as though it smarted / With over pleasure" (ll.343-347), and this golden butterfly returns to play a role in *Endymion*. Dickinson's speaker wonders "What come of Him – at Night –", but "The privilege to say / Be limited by Ignorance –". The narrator also imagines the butterfly's movements far beyond the possible: he "dangles like a Mote / Suspended in the Noon – / Uncertain – to return Below – / Or settle in the Moon –". Despite the impermanence of nature's creatures, the work of the poet consists of observation and storage: "many, many more, / Might I indulge at large in all my store / Of luxuries" ("Sleep and Poetry," ll. 345-347).

The conclusion of "He parts Himself – like Leaves –" alludes to death in a way similar to "To Autumn." Dickinson's revision, however, denies Keats's subtle symbolism and makes the allusion explicit: "The Frost – possess the World – / In Cabinets – be shown – / A Sepulchre of quaintest Floss – / An Abbey – a Cocoon –". A "Frost" capable of possessing "the World" seems symbolic as well as descriptive—while Keats's ode implies the impending "Frost," it is powerful enough to "possess the World" in Dickinson's. This powerful of a "Frost," however, refers to more than just winter, and I picture an escape from a cold, uncaring world "In Cabinets." A "cabinet" in Dickinson's lexicon as well as in the *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates "a little cabin, room, repository," and these "Cabinets" become, depending on the person or situation, "A Sepulchre," "An Abbey," or "a Cocoon."⁷ While the final term returns

⁷ In Noah Webster's 1844 *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, the first entry for CAB'IN-ET is: A closet; a small room, or retired apartment. Bacon. (<http://edl.byu.edu/webster/c/2>) According to *Dickinson's Lexicon*, cabinet (-s) refers to a: Bower; tiny cottage; little summer house; small dwelling place; [fig.] cocoon; metamorphosis sack.

us to the butterfly's image, the stanza as a whole addresses human experience—when negative experiences envelope our “World,” we may feel entombed or may decide to cloister ourselves forever in “An Abbey,” which may or may not be capable of staving off future pain, but “The Frost” can also transform; “a Cocoon,” after all, is only temporary, and one emerges from it a butterfly. In other words, painful experiences can be beneficial, an integral aspect of Negative Capability and a theme which appears in five additional Fascicle 30 poems.⁸

Wing imagery in Keats is quite prevalent, such as “the viewless wings of Poesy” (“Ode to a Nightingale,” l. 33) or “Wings” being necessary “to find out an immortality” (“Sleep and Poetry,” l.84), although we find sparse mention of butterflies within Keats’s “winged wonders of expression.” Dickinson’s reliance on the butterfly, as well as other flying creatures such as the bee and the bird, exhibits a captivation with these small, easily-missed objects of nature’s beauty. Dickinson depends upon these creatures to guide her poetry more so than Keats, who often uses the sublime characters, symbols, and stories of Greek myth. In *Endymion*, however, “A golden butterfly” (2.61) plays an integral role by leading Endymion into a world of “sleepy twilight dreams” (2.73).⁹ Reminiscent of Endymion following “the merry-winged guide” (2.83) into a

Cell; closet; small room; private apartment; display case; storage cupboard; box with doors; chest with drawers; [fig.] tomb; niche; shrine; reliquary; repository; tabernacle. (<http://edl.byu.edu/lexicon/c>)

⁸ For example, Heginbotham writes that Fascicle 8, although the opening poem is about a wounded deer, “begins with the blunt announcement about the energizing power of pain . . . As we observed in the progression of stories and images in Fascicle 21, this fascicle, too, is about self-identification. In different ways but no less powerfully by the end of the twenty-poem sequence we have witnessed something like a transformation of the observed wounded victim of the first poem to the confident poet/persona of the last” (50). The five Fascicle 30 poems which I read as contemplating positive results from pain or negative experiences are: “Endow the Living – with the Tears,” “’Tis true – They shut me in the Cold,” and “The Province of the Saved,” which are the fascicle’s sixth, seventh, and eighth poems; and the thirteenth and fourteenth poems, “Rehearsal to Ourselves” and “The Martyr Poets – did not tell”. The fascicle also contains poems centered on the darkness of human experience without indicating a positive result, such as “I took my Power in my Hand,” “There is a Shame of Nobleness,” and “An ignorance a Sunset.”

⁹ Dickinson uses the term “Butterfly” in twenty-six poems; the term “Butterfly’s” in two; and “Butterflies” in sixteen additional poems (Rosenbaum 115). In Keats, “Butterflies” appears in “To the Ladies” and “Jealousies,” and in three lines of *Endymion* (1.258, 1.765, and 4.952); “Butterfly” is in line 343 of “Sleep and Poetry” and in two lines of *Endymion* (2.61 and 4.937; see Becker 75). The “Butterfly” appears quite often in the early fascicles, (F1 and F2 as well as F5, F6, F7, and F8), and then in later fascicles (F25, F27, F29, F34, F38, F39, and F40). A few of

realm “Where there was never a sound of mortal men” (2.78), we are lead by Dickinson’s creature that “parts Himself – like Leaves –” into a dream world by the sea, which is described in the fascicle’s fourth poem, “I started Early – Took my Dog –” (Fr656). Although “I started Early” has been interpreted in a number of ways,¹⁰ the first word of the subsequent poem in the fascicle, “Morning” (Fr191B), substantiates the reading of it as a dream. Dickinson’s “I started Early” mentions that “no Man moved Me – till the Tide / Went past my simple Shoe – . . . And He – He followed – close behind – / I felt His Silver Heel / Opon my Ankle – Then My Shoes /

these poems observe the butterfly or the life-cycle of the butterfly in a way similar to F30’s poems: Fr142, Fr171, Fr571B, and Fr610. The only butterfly poem that leads us into night (and almost into a dream world) takes place in Fascicle 29. Fr610 opens the fascicle with, “From Cocoon forth a Butterfly . . . Emerged – a Summer Afternoon –”. The poem trails the butterfly through its “purposeless Circumference” until “Sundown crept . . . And Afternoon – and Butterfly – / Extinguished – in the Sea –”. F29’s second poem portrays a male speaker who seems to have lost his bride: “Her sweet Weight on my Heart a Night / Had scarcely deigned to lie – / When, stirring, for Belief’s delight, / My Bride had slipped away –” (Fr611). The second stanza muddies further what happened on that night: “If ‘twas a Dream – made solid – just / The Heaven to confirm – / Or if Myself were dreamed of Her –”. When the poem concludes, it remains difficult to designate what is real and what may be a dream, and apparently “The power to presume” what is real or not remains “With Him” “who unto Me – / Gave – even as to All –”. The poem’s close seems to indicate a concern with faith, rather than being a dream world filled with poetic inspiration: “A Fiction superseding Faith – / By so much – as ‘twas real –”. One could read this, however, as concerned with how one deals with the “Fiction” of heaven while one is on earth. The speaker remains unclear if his bride was only “a Dream – made solid . . . to confirm” the existence of Heaven or if his bride dreamed up him. Again, the power ultimately remains “With Him” who “Gave” us “All,” which brings to mind the omnipotent power of God, and yet “A Fiction” is powerful enough to supersede “Faith / By so much” that the fiction, rather than the faith, becomes real. While others have read the speaker of this poem as male, Ann Swyerski reads it in relation to Barrett Browning: “Within the fascicle context, therefore, it seems safe to conjecture that both speaker and bride in ‘Her sweet Weight on my Heart a Night’ are female; Dickinson is recording her initial awakening to Barrett Browning and the potential of poetry” (85). Swyerski’s use of the term “awakening” here is interesting—although her discussion centers on Barrett Browning, we find in F30, especially in the butterfly/dream world sequences, investigations of an “awakening” to “the potential of poetry,” and an overall focus on poetry’s possibilities versus experience. For Swyerski’s reading of F29, see pages 84-89.

¹⁰ Yvor Winters argues that “The sea is here the traditional symbol of death” (Davis 86); Kate Flores suggests “it is a study in fear, fear of love, of which the sea is here the symbol” (87); Laurence Perrine believes, “The poet is describing a morning walk to the sea – real or imaginary” (88); Eric Carlson sees the poem as “a dramatization of the frightening realization that toying with love may arouse a tide of emotion too powerful to control” (89). John Cody chooses this poem as an example of Dickinson’s awareness that “unless one kept one’s guard up the unconscious was likely to trespass” (Ferlazzo 158). Cristanne Miller writes that “The speaker’s tale becomes a sexual fantasy—repeated either in her imagining of what it would be like to walk by what she sees as a masculine and therefore dangerous sea, or in her imagination as she in fact walks by the sea, or in her metaphorical representation of real dealings with the world of men” (Farr 185). Susan Anderson reads the poem in terms of power relations: “The mouse as persona in poem 520 [Fr656], though, does not derive from the female speaker’s own identification with the figure but from other figures in the poem who assume that she is a mouse. This speaker’s perceived insignificance, however, becomes her means to power. Those who believe she is a mouse naturally assume her to be mousy, but she proves these presumptions false” (90).

Would overflow with Pearl –”. Dickinson refers in a few letters to her books as pearls,¹¹ and overflowing “with Pearl” in the poem could be read as creative inspiration within the dream. Cristanne Miller observes, “the sudden introduction of the conditional ‘Would’ [implies that] what seemed a single action in the past now seems to be a hypothetical or a customary, repeated action” (Farr 185). Although Miller does not read the poem as a dream or as literary inspiration, her observation that the “overflow” of “Pearl” could be a “repeated action” coincides with creative influence. Dickinson’s elegies reflect her close association with female authors, and the claim that “no Man moved Me” could refer to inspiration gained from women writers.¹² The poem shows a narrator by the sea and then suddenly in the sea, and the dream could have led to a “Morning” filled with poetic inspiration. Although other scholars read this poem as nightmarish or symbolic of deep-seated fear, I prefer Keats’s correlation between “the Sea” and being unafraid to take poetic risks, and Dickinson could have seen this correlation in Lord Houghton’s *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats* (145): “In Endymion, I leaped headlong into the Sea, and thereby have become better acquainted with the Soundings, the quicksands, & the rocks, than if I had stayed upon the green shore, and piped a silly pipe, and took tea & comfortable advice” (L90).

“I started” begins a new fascicle sheet and takes up both sides of the page. The open fascicle displays the end of the dream on the left and as we leave that world, just as “the Sea

¹¹ L162: “I look in my casket and miss a pearl –”. Johnson sees the line as perhaps “a reminder that Emmons still has not returned the book which ED lent him” (295).

¹² Dickinson wrote three elegies for Elizabeth Barrett Browning, one for George Eliot, and one for Charlotte Brontë, and refers to Emily Brontë as “gigantic” (L267). The connection could also be to Sue. Hart and Smith argue in *Open Me Carefully* that Dickinson’s letters and letter-poems to Sue reveal “a passionate and sustained attachment between Dickinson and the beloved friend who was her central source of inspiration, love, and intellectual and poetic discourse” (XI). Smith and Hart, as well as other scholars, conclude that Dickinson’s love for Sue went beyond nineteenth-century demarcations of friendship and sisterhood: “Though Emily’s feelings of love, desire, and longing for Susan have often been dismissed as a ‘school-girl crush,’ the letters resonate with intelligence, humor, and intimacy that cannot be reduced to adolescent flurry” (6).

Withdrew –”, we find on the right in two neat, distinct stanzas with no variants, “‘Morning’ – means ‘Milking’ – to the Farmer –” (Fr191B). This linguistic study centered on “Morning” substantiates for me the dream-poem status of “I started Early.” Just as “the morning light” in Keats’s “Sleep and Poetry” brings about a narrator “refresh’d, and glad, and gay, / Resolving to begin that very day” the poem itself (ll.399-402), Dickinson’s movement out of the dream world lands us in a poetic investigation, the concision of which overpowers the four hundred plus lines it takes Keats’s narrator to find the “out-spread wings” and “The face of Poesy” (“Sleep and Poetry,” ll. 393-394). Dickinson’s two quatrains explain how the significance of “Morning” alters according to the person and the situation. The first stanza centers on meaning, such as morning means “Dice – to the Maid –”, while the second stanza highlights time, as in the “Epicures – date a Breakfast – by it –”. What is surprising, especially following a rather mundane opening about “Morning” meaning work, is that “Morning means just Risk – to the Lover – / Just Revelation to the Beloved –”. Dickinson’s inclusion here of a cheating couple could indicate that a “Lover” being revealed to “the Beloved” is a common occurrence; that the revealing light of “Morning” provides the “Risk” and the excitement for one and the heartbreak for the other. “I started Early” presents a dream world imbued with eroticism, an inherent feature as well of *Endymion*, and Dickinson’s linguistic investigation subtly fosters in the consequences of “Thirst[ing] for another love” (*Endymion* 4.87). While Cynthia’s song to Endymion relays the folly of an “enamour’d bride / Cheated” by Bacchus, the “shadowy wooer from the clouds” (4.189-190), Dickinson’s poem highlights the “Risk” of marriage, or of being “the wife forgotten” (L93), which could explain why “Morning” represents “an Apocalypse” for “Brides.” The apocalyptic facet of marriage articulated here represents an aspect of human experience that Dickinson expounds in the fascicle’s closing pair of poems.

As in “He parts Himself – like Leaves –” (Fr655), which opens simply yet ultimately asserts that negative experiences can be beneficial, “‘Morning’ – means ‘Milking’” appears at first to only investigate “Morning.” The closing line, however, seems to comment on “Faith,” which, according to the formula of the second stanza, dates “The Experiment of Our Lord –” by morning. How to interpret this line represents a difficulty: what is “The Experiment of Our Lord,” and how does “Faith” date this “Experiment” by morning? Perhaps human existence is the experiment; thus, “Faith” dates life by morning and “Faith” is measured through the succession of mornings, the passing by of life. The final line’s postulation of how faith and life are related to morning could be a reference to the endless movement of time. No matter what happens to humans, or no matter what those on earth experience during this “Experiment,” morning will always arrive. The possibility of endless tomorrows, with night the only reprieve “from Sighing” for those experiencing “Faint-going lives” (or “snail-paced lives” as *Endymion*’s narrator/poet describes it), reveals a fact of nature (the sun will always rise tomorrow) that *can* be comforting, but may be arduously banal (4.25). This reality “of the gloomy days / Of all the unhealthy and o’er-darkened ways” elaborates why Keats offers beauty in nature, “Such the sun, the moon, / Trees old, and young sprouting a shady boon / For simple sheep,” and in poetry, “All lovely tales that we have heard or read: / An endless fountain of immortal drink, / Pouring unto us from the heaven’s brink” (*Endymion* 1.13-15 and 1.22-24). Dickinson’s poem relies again upon imagery from Christian doctrine to embrace Negative Capability, but the embracement here frustrates the reader since *we* must remain in “uncertainties” regarding the poem’s final argument. Is “Faith” in “The Experiment of Our Lord” the recommendation, or is “Faith” the “Experiment”? Since faith can be defined as belief without proof, the poem explicates Negative Capability and performs it: we cannot be certain, but we relish the “doubts” we have as readers

nonetheless. Similarly, those who believe in the promises of “Our Lord” must do so without “reaching after fact and reason” (Keats L32). Dickinson’s poem performs the meta-poetic qualities that can be found in the Negative Capability of “Faith”.

Keats’s exploration of Negative Capability, of “when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts,” often becomes meta-poetic, which we can see in the final line of “‘Morning’ – means ‘Milking’”. The basis of Keats’s idea, however, is human experience and Dickinson explores this aspect in the fascicle’s next three poems, which explain how negative experiences can be utilized in positive ways. Death, for example, teaches us that “the Living” should be the objects of our “Cherishing” and to “squander” our “Tears . . . on the Dead” insults the “Men and Women” who are “now, / Around Your Fireside.” Life’s unpredictability, rather than being a source of despair and fear, should force us to value what is in front of us, since we never know when we may lose something we cherish. The sixth poem, “‘Tis true – They shut me in the Cold –” (Fr658), explores a self in isolation from others, yet the narrator can withstand the pain of that isolation as well as forgive the ones who caused the “Harm.” In contrast to the narrator “in the Cold,” “Themselves were warm / And could not know the feeling ‘twas –”. The narrator asks the “Lord” to “Forget it” and to “Let not my Witness hinder Them / In Heavenly esteem –”. The final stanza reads:

The Harm They did – was short – And since
Myself – who bore it – do –
Forgive Them – Even as Myself –
Or else – forgive not me –

The narrator can be so forgiving, and ordering Christ to be forgiving as well, because she realizes the difficulty of understanding a situation one has not experienced. Inside, warm, and together, “They” “could not know the feeling” of the “Cold,” and this reliance on experience appears in the next poem:

The Province of the Saved
Should be the Art – To save –
Through Skill obtained in Themselves –
The Science of the Grave

The opening stanza argues that those who are “Saved” should be the ones to save others, and this process is an “Art” as well as a “Science.” Those who understand “The Science of the Grave” should turn this knowledge into an “Art – To save.” The poem moves a statement about “The Province of the Saved” to experience:

No Man can understand
But He that hath endured
The Dissolution – in Himself –
That Man – be qualified

To qualify Despair
To Those who failing new –
Mistake Defeat for Death – Each time –
Till acclimated – to –

The final stanza presents the possibility that “The Science of the Grave” is not necessarily “Death.” The poem observes the immortal and the human sphere: the one who has endured is “qualified / To qualify Despair / To Those who” are not yet “acclimated – to” “Defeat.” This “Defeat” is on earth, however, since the teacher is teaching those who “Mistake Defeat for Death.” The poem’s conclusion is about life rather than death, and those on earth who understand “The Science of the Grave” as well as how “To qualify Despair” should teach others that “Defeat” is not “Death.” However, in order to learn or teach, one must become “acclimated – to” defeat. The final line could also refer to death, meaning that one has to deal with defeat in life while also becoming “acclimated – to” the inevitability of death. The reference to defeat and death relates the last stanza back to the first, indicating that “The Province of the Saved” could allude to Christ’s sacrifice to save humanity. Although not explicit, the poem may be concerned with the “Art” of Christ, especially since “’Tis True,” the preceding poem in the fascicle,

addresses the “Lord.” One could interpret Christ as the only one who can obtain the “Skill” and “The Science of the Grave” and *come back* to use his “Art – To save” on earth.

Despite the too-happy conclusion to *Endymion*, the poem somewhat encompasses Negative Capability by portraying labor as an integral aspect of beauty. The poem opens with the statement that “A thing of beauty is a joy forever,” yet in order to witness this beauty, “on every morrow” we must wreath “A flowery band to bind us to the earth” (1.6-7). For Keats and Dickinson, the labor can be worth it. For Dickinson, “Art” can “save”. For *Endymion*’s speaker, in “Spite of despondence” and “the unhealthy and o’er-darkened ways” of the earth, “in spite of all, / Some shape of beauty moves away the pall / From our dark spirits” (1.8-13). However, sometimes the “Power” of beauty and poetry fails, which is one way of reading Dickinson’s “I took my Power in my Hand –”. When the fascicle is open, one finds “The Province of the Saved” on the left and “I took my Power in my Hand –” on the right. Both use images from Christian discourse and both explore “Defeat,” yet the bold narrator on the right utilizes an un-named “Power” to go “against the World,” which contrasts with the specific “Art – to save” on the left. Read in isolation, the poem is typically associated with Dickinson’s poetic aspirations: “I aimed my Pebble – but Myself / Was all the one that fell – / Was it Goliath – was too large – / Or was myself – too small?”¹³ While the fascicle’s poems thus far have reflected upon the positive side to painful or negative experiences, “I took my Power in my Hand” describes a failure in which nothing positive, or even conclusive, results. Sometimes, “the World” just wins.

Dickinson may have ascertained the potential (negative) “Power” of “the World” from what she knew of Keats’s “legend.” Keats’s letters reflect moments of confidence, such as “I

¹³ In regards to “I took my Power in my Hand,” Capps writes that Dickinson “uses the story of David and Goliath to warn against ill-considered aspirations, and, in the role of David, Emily loses” (38-39). Adrienne Rich reads “The Province of the Saved” as an example of “the poet’s relationship to her poetry” (Ferlazzo 194).

was never afraid of failure; for I would sooner fail than not be among the greatest” (L90) or “I think I shall be among the English Poets after my death” (L94), but Keats knows his imagination can fail: “the slip-shod Endymion . . . is no fault of mine . . . It is as good as I had power to make it – by myself. Had I been nervous about its being a perfect piece, & with that view asked advice, & trembled over every page, it would not have been written” (L90). Keats’s ambition to see *Endymion* in print belies any concern for criticism. Rather than “ask advice, & tremble over every page,” Keats just *writes* to see it in print—“I am anxious to get *Endymion* printed that I may forget it and proceed” (L51). Keats *needs* the poem to be printed in order for it to be finished, and he needs to finish it in order to progress as a poet. If Dickinson did read Lord Houghton’s *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains*, then she would have been made aware of Keats’s writing process with regard to *Endymion*, including the above statement showing Keats’s need to “get *Endymion* printed” (81). Lord Houghton’s detailed “Life and Letters” section includes Shelley’s stanzas from “Adonais,” where the “anonymous slanderer” is shown to be the “viperous murderer” (144), as well as lines from Lord Byron’s *Don Juan*, which claims that Keats “was kill’d off by one critique” (140). The section also includes the letter in which Keats describes *Endymion* as “slip-shod” (145). Dickinson may have envisioned Keats as the “stock victim” of the reviews of the “slip-shod” poem. In contrast to what Dickinson deduced from these accounts of Keats’s legacy, Dickinson’s “delay ‘to publish’” appears to have allowed her to compose and create without striving to be “finished” in (and perhaps by) print. Rather, Dickinson’s workshop indicates a sustained, continuous effort to perfect her craft without the concern of “critical assassination.”

Although a mysterious defeat at the hands of “the World” rings of dismay, one turns the page to find beauty renewed through the observation of “Some such Butterfly be seen / On

Brazilian Pampas” (Fr661). The poem reiterates nature’s fleeting beauty and again “the merry-winged guide” leads us into the world of sleep and dreams. However, since “I had no Cause to be awake / My Best – was gone to sleep –” (Fr662) does not describe an actual dream, the poem seems to investigate the restorative power of sleep, which Keats portrays as powerful and necessary for poetic inspiration: “yet I must not forget / Sleep, quiet with his poppy coronet: / For what there may be worthy in these rhymes / I partly owe to him” (“Sleep and Poetry,” ll. 347-350). Dickinson’s revision, however, shows sleep to not always work since the narrator in “I had no Cause” wakes up to writer’s block. This awakening contrasts with the fascicle’s earlier sequence of “I started Early” leading into the contemplation of “Morning,” as well as with Keats’s “Sleep and Poetry” narrator arising and “Resolving to begin that very day / These lines” (ll. 402-403). In “‘Morning’ – means ‘Milking,’” the term “Morning” focuses a linguistic investigation, and here the narrator asks “Sweet Morning” to “Recollect – to Me –”. The poem recalls a moment, perhaps of previous inspiration, where “‘Twas such an Ample Peace – / It could not hold a Sigh – / ‘Twas Sabbath – with the Bells divorced – / ‘Twas Sunset – all the Day –”. The poem’s description of such a beautiful “Circumstance” utilizes diction present in other Fascicle 30 poems: finding “Peace” foreshadows the ending line of “The Martyr Poets” (Fr664) where “Some seek in Art – the Art of Peace –”, and the “Sunset” is discussed towards the fascicle’s close, although in a very different light than here, in “An ignorance a Sunset / Confer upon the Eye –” (Fr669). The narrator’s “wishfulness” to return to “Circumstance the same” causes her to choose “but a Gown – / And taking but a Prayer – / The Only Raiment I should need – / I struggled – and was There –”. The ending stanza could mean several things, such as the narrator returns via her imagination to the previous “Circumstance”; the writer’s block ends through the narrator’s struggle, and she is again able to find an “Ample Peace” through literary

production or inspiration; or, since she still “had no Cause to be awake,” the narrator simply returns to sleep.

While “I had no Cause” may reflect Dickinson’s wariness regarding Keats’s commitment to the power of sleep, the fascicle’s next three poems render plausible a reading of “I had no Cause” as a re-discovery of poetic ability. “I fear a Man of frugal speech –” (Fr663) contemplates the difference between a “Haranguer” or “Babbler” and “He who weigheth” before he speaks. The narrator is “wary” of the man who thinks before he speaks, since “I fear that He is Grand –”. While hundreds of Dickinson’s poems consist of only two quatrains, the fascicle’s three dream poems consist of at least twenty lines, while all three poems following Dickinson’s “I had no Cause” contain eight lines. The sparse use of words to produce complicated ideas within each poem performs what “I fear a Man of frugal speech” argues, and Dickinson’s concision clearly revises Keats’s position that “a long Poem is a test of Invention which I take to be the Polar Star of Poetry” (L25).¹⁴ Following “I fear” is “Rehearsal to Ourselves,” a poem which investigates the power of memory, even (or most especially) painful memories: “a Withdrawn Delight – / Affords a Bliss like Murder – / . . . We will not drop the Dirk – / Because We love the Wound” (Fr664). The meta-poetic factor inherent in Keats’s understanding of Negative Capability, where a poem may be the only good to arise from the experience of suffering, is echoed in Dickinson’s “The Martyr Poets” (Fr665), which encapsulates the power of “frugal speech” and “a Withdrawn Delight.” Pain leads to Art: “Poets” and “Painters” produce “their Work –” from “their Pang.” The poem argues that art transcends time and the physical existence of the artist: “That when their mortal name be numb – / Their mortal fate – encourage

¹⁴ Although Dickinson has long been associated with the hymn quatrain, this regularization of Dickinson has been challenged in recent years. See, for example, Martha Nell Smith’s *Rowing in Eden* and *Open Me Carefully*, edited by Ellen Louise Hart and Martha Nell Smith.

Some –”. Dickinson’s variant for “name” in the third line, “fame,” links the idea to Keats’s postulation that “Happy he who trusts / To clear futurity his darling fame!” (“Sleep and Poetry,” ll. 358-359). Dickinson’s variant and Keats’s trust in fame’s “futurity” reflect confidence in poetry, whether or not one has a recognized “mortal name.” The poem argues that art’s purpose, for viewer, reader, or artist, should be “the Art of Peace –”, and this description revises Keats’s claim that “the great end / Of Poesy” is to “be a friend / To soothe the cares and lift the thoughts of men” (27). Rather than focusing on the *poet’s* aim “To soothe the cares” of apparently male readers, Dickinson’s statement encompasses what the artist and the audience seek in art. In my mind, it is not accidental that Dickinson makes “Art” synonymous with “Peace” during the Civil War.¹⁵

However, the fascicle’s third dream poem, which follows “The Martyr Poets,” rejects the positive side to ambivalence. The previous embracement of the power of sleep, dreams, and poetry is negated as the scale tips too heavily on the side of human suffering. In “I cross till I am weary / A Mountain – in my mind –” (Fr666), the object of the narrator’s mental quest is never revealed. “I cross” utilizes aspects of dreaming present in nineteenth-century theories, such as confusing representations of time and geography, and how “dreams remain fragmentary and elusive to analysis” (Finnerty 104). The narrator travels over mountains and through seas, and “then / A Desert – find –”. By the fifth stanza, “the Grace” is “At last . . . in sight,” but the reader of the poem, and perhaps the dreamer as well, does not know what that “Grace” is, and the narrator never reaches it: “I shout unto my feet – / . . . They strive – and yet delay – / They perish – Do we die – / Or is this Death’s experiment – / Reversed – in Victory?” The fragmented confusion reminiscent of dreams occurs in this final stanza. The narrator’s feet appear to perish,

¹⁵ In fact, Wolosky contextualizes this poem within Dickinson’s war poetry (see 125-126).

but the “I” present throughout the poem suddenly becomes “we.” If the feet perish in the dream, but the dream ends before the poem does, then the final lines could be inspired by the dream’s images and read as a question regarding human experience: if “the Grace” is merely “in sight,” then is it unattainable? “Do we die” on a daily basis if we are just waiting and searching for a “Grace” that can only be known after death? Inserting life as the “Reversed – in Victory” of “Death’s experiment” allows the final two lines to be read as the narrator questioning if life is nothing more than a crossing “till I am weary / A Mountain – in my mind.”

Dickinson takes up Keats’s commitment to “Poesy” as a counter to the mind’s “Mountain” in her interpretation of the *Ubi Sunt* form, which she portrays on an entire fascicle page without any variants. Dickinson’s *Ubi Sunt* follows “I cross” and represents one last glimmer of hope, if you will, before the fascicle makes its decisive move into the “Shame,” “Disgrace,” and “Decay” that plague human experience. Keats also uses a version of the *Ubi Sunt*, which traditionally cues a sense of nostalgia through the use of questions with “gone” as the implied answer, in the final stanza of “To Autumn”: “Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they? / Think not of them, thou hast thy music too” (ll. 23-24). While the season of re-birth and renewal is gone, Keats’s poem is not nostalgic. Rather, it celebrates loss and understands the integral role that the “stubble-plains” of autumn play in the unalterable cycle of seasons. Dickinson’s version of the *Ubi Sunt* takes up Keats’s celebration of loss, but focuses on the cyclical movement of seasons to articulate a comfort that can be found within this fact of nature and life on earth. In Dickinson’s poem, certain seasons ask where other seasons have gone, and the stanzas change as the questioned seasons reply. Dickinson’s poem represents the fluidity of the seasons, and the grammatical fluidity that closes the first stanza of “To Autumn” portrays a similar movement. The fluidity in Dickinson’s poem ends with a sense of containment. Despite the questioning and

answering of different months, the poem answers that they are all contained “Here –” within “the Year –”. Keats’s “To Autumn” celebrates death because the transience makes nature and human life beautiful, but “To Autumn” also offers “a philosophical understanding that this is the only real world we have,” and Dickinson poignantly translates this notion into her *Ubi Sunt* (Stillinger 477). The seasons are only and always “Here” on earth; “the Year,” despite all the fluctuations that will occur in one’s life as time passes, will always contain those seasons, and *this* “is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”

However, Dickinson does not end the fascicle with this image of nature’s comforting dependability. Instead, she elaborates upon the idea that life may be nothing more than a crossing “till I am weary / A Mountain – in my mind.” The ending of “I cross” is clarified in Fascicle 30’s eighteenth poem, where the narrator contemplates how nature reveals the inferiority of humans: “An ignorance a Sunset / Confer upon the Eye – / Of Territory – Color – / Circumference – Decay –” (Fr669). The “Amber Revelation” can “Exhilarate” the viewer of the sunset, yet the “Revelation” can also “Debase” since its power highlights “Our inferior face” upon the “inspection” of “Omnipotence.” Although the fascicle earlier presented the poetic inspiration found in nature’s beauty, this poem articulates that nature can expose humanity’s imperfections, a contrast which “‘Morning’ – means ‘Milking’” associates with morning, as does *Endymion*’s narrator/poet: “the fresh to-morrow morn / Seems to give forth its light in very scorn / Of our dull, uninspired, snail-paced lives” (4.23-25). The final stanza of “An ignorance” answers the question posed at the end of “I cross”: “And when the solemn features / Confirm – in Victory – / We start – as if detected / In Immortality.” Taken together, the two poems seem to discuss human existence. The exasperation in “I cross” becomes debasement in “An ignorance.” One can be exhilarated by “a Sunset,” yet nature’s beauty also reveals the inferiority of humans’

“solemn features.” While on earth, we are debased by nature and scrutinized by an omnipotent presence, and the narrator’s realization of this reality startles her so completely that she can compare it only to suddenly finding herself in the immortal sphere. “An ignorance” confirms the previous dreamy doubt that her experience is taking place on earth, and that she is indeed awake.

Dickinson’s rejection of fantasy here contrasts with *Endymion*’s dreams-do-come-true ending, and the fascicle’s nineteenth poem represents her rejection of the divine Word. Dickinson’s mistrust of any transcendent guarantees, such as those offered by religious teachings within Dickinson’s Amherst as well by Keats’s understanding of the poet’s ability to create worlds, arises at least in part from the Civil War. Shira Wolosky’s study convinces me that Dickinson had “several doubts about its [the divine word’s] nature” (137). Wolosky argues that the war made “metaphysical enigmas” immediate and pressing for Dickinson, concluding that Dickinson “is disturbed that evil should have any place whatever in a benevolent pattern. . . . Her criticism is directed toward the experience of suffering at every level and questions its justification even by so great a good as salvation itself” (67).¹⁶ In contrast to the fascicle’s first poem, the fascicle’s nineteenth poem, “One Crucifixion is recorded – only –” (Fr671), portrays a narrator who lacks any awe for this “One Crucifixion.” The narrator implies that the “One” is the only one “recorded,” but there may be more: “How many be / Is not affirmed of Mathematics – / Or History –”. One cannot find records of other crucifixions in history or in mathematics, yet the narrator knows “There’s newer – nearer Crucifixion / Than That –”. The narrator’s awareness of more recent and more close-to-home crucifixions presumably stems from personal experience since history and math provide no help. The sublimity described in the opening poem

¹⁶ Since Wolosky’s landmark study in 1984, Dickinson scholarship has continued to problematize the long-held assumption that Dickinson was the poet of privacy. For an overview of re-evaluations regarding Dickinson and the Civil War, see Faith Barrett’s “Public Selves and Private Spheres: Studies of Emily Dickinson and the Civil War, 1984-2007.”

is gone, and this experience-wise speaker dismisses the idea that Christ's "Crucifixion" should be the only one "recorded."

In stark contrast to the world we are left with at *Endymion's* close, the fascicle's final pair of poems exemplifies Dickinson's understanding of Negative Capability, which she focuses on an earthly institution sanctified by heaven: marriage. The final lines of "One Crucifixion" spill over onto the next fascicle page, which contains "The Sweetest Heresy received" (Fr670), allowing the statement, "There's newer – nearer / Crucifixion / Than that –", to be quickly appeased by a "Faith" that can "accommodate but Two." Karl Keller reads "The Sweetest Heresy" as Dickinson's agreement with "the Puritan arrangements for man and woman," where marriage is "a sufficient religion" (27). The poem argues that "The Ritual" of marriage is "so small" and "The Grace so unavoidable" that "To fail – is Infidel –". "The Sweetest Heresy received" is a neatly-packaged, ten-lined argument with no variants, and the poem's commanding simplicity seems to support Keller's conclusion. However, we turn the page to find the fascicle's closing poem, which also contains no variants and complicates the portrait of security in Puritan arrangements. Although competing, the statements of both poems seem final, complete without any second-guessing or multiple options from which a reader can choose.

The speaker of the final poem, "Take Your Heaven further on –" (Fr671), may also be getting married since "Dressed to meet You – / See – in White!" invokes the image of a bride. This bride, however, is a "Sufferer polite –", and she seems to be speaking from beyond the grave: "This – to Heaven divine Has gone – / Had You earlier blundered in / Possibly, e'en You had seen / An Eternity – put on –". The "Sufferer polite" could be a woman who waited for her suitor to "blunder in" and propose marriage to her. However, he arrives too late and she has already gone "to Heaven divine." For the man left behind, "to ring a Door beyond / Is the utmost

of Your Hand –”. The “Sufferer polite” commands him to “apologize” “To the Skies,” rather than to her, since the sky is “Nearer to Your Courtesies.”¹⁷ In print, “Take Your Heaven further on –” is normally presented as a single stanza, indicating a fluid, almost breathless exasperation aimed at the one the narrator has left behind. In the fascicle, however, three single words are set off on lines of their own: “in,” “beyond,” and “Hand –”. The effect remains one of vexation, but there is such little blank space on the sheet that the three relatively small gaps created by these single-word lines indicate a visual pause before “Possibly,” “Is the utmost,” and “To the Skies.” These gaps allow one to envision an over-whelmed speaker who needs a moment to catch her breath. The pause before “Possibly” also highlights the speaker’s uncertainty that “Had You earlier blundered in” “e’en You” would have “seen / An Eternity – put on –”. The speaker may be uncertain that he would have “blundered in” at all. In contrast to the convenient, happy ending of *Endymion* and the neat, clean idea of marriage presented in “The Sweetest Heresy,” the fascicle closes with a scrawled, winded message from the one who has disappeared “to Heaven divine.”

The final poems represent that beauty is *not* truth, truth beauty, and reflect the fascicle’s overall meditation on Negative Capability. The closing image of a “Sufferer polite” solidifies Dickinson’s caveat to man’s capability “of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts”: the experience of suffering can subsume the solace offered by embracing ambivalence. The

¹⁷ “Dressed . . . in White!” may represent the influence of *Aurora Leigh*. After Aurora’s cousin, Romney, has found her book, he tells her: “‘Ah, / But men, and still less women, happily, / Scarce need be poets. Keep to the green wreath, / Since even dreaming of the stone and bronze / Brings headaches, pretty cousin, and defiles / The clean white morning dresses’” (2.91-96). The white dress in this passage is to show how poetry “defiles” it, while a later reference associates the white dress with yearning for marriage: “‘There? Dear, you are asleep still; don’t you know / The five Miss Granvilles? always dressed in white / To show they’re ready to be married’” (4.634-636). A narrator as a “Sufferer polite – / Dressed to meet You – / See – in White!” could be a reference to Aurora, who is struggling to be a “Woman and artist” (2.4), as well as an allusion to Barrett Browning and Dickinson, who also struggle “in this twofold sphere” where “still the artist is intensely a man” (7.777-778). The poem could also represent the speaker’s choice to be a Bride of Christ, something critics have associated with Dickinson’s reclusion. However, even if one interprets the poem this way, the speaker remains a “Sufferer polite,” indicating that the choice to be a Bride of Christ may not have been a positive one.

penultimate poem's confidence in marriage is almost too fierce. The fascicle closes with an image of someone who quietly, politely suffers in life, waiting in white for something that comes too late (or not at all), and who perhaps continues to suffer, still "in White," in heaven. The final poem affirms that humans will fail at marriage, rejecting the penultimate poem's attempt at Truth, and a "Sufferer polite," whether she is in heaven or on earth, does not constitute an image of Beauty. The fascicle's conclusion indicates that the schism between the promise of poetry and the power of the experience of suffering presents too great a leap, revealing the "self-sufficiency" Dickinson found in her art as well as the realization that poetry could not always "bring order out of chaos" (Wolosky, *A Voice of War*, 157). Although the fascicle explores the solace of ambivalence, it denies that Beauty and Truth "are One."

The schism found in the fascicle is minutely alluded to by the narrator/poet's remark in the final book of *Endymion* that the "loftiest Muse" has failed him: "so on / I move to the end in lowliness of heart" (4.1 and 4.28-29). Dickinson may have glimpsed the schism from the biographical accounts of Keats's life that were available to her, such as Higginson's portrait in 1862 of Keats's "critical assassination," which apparently his "winged wonders of expression" could not avoid. Keats offers gorgeous attempts to remain unhindered by the "unhealthy and o'er darkened" ways of earth, but Keats ultimately fails to figure out how to reconcile human life with the idealism found in dreams and imagination—he gives up on his *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*, and while the narrator/poet exclaims, "'tis with full happiness that I / Will trace the story of Endymion," the poem's quick and convenient ending reflects why Keats later describes *Endymion* as "slip-shod" (L90).

Fascicle 30 shows a positive and specific relation to Keats, a relationship which was overlooked for years, or considered adversarial or vague by those who contextualize Dickinson's

poetry within the Anglo-American Romantic tradition. When one disregards the fascicle context, it seems to me, one risks losing valuable connections that reflect Dickinson's involvement with various and multiple discourses. Dickinson's originality often makes influences difficult to pinpoint, yet Fascicle 30 echoes Keats's portrayal of the power and the failure of the poet to create worlds. While I do not wish to imply that my interpretations of Fascicle 30's poems foreclose other options, or even that close readings of individual fascicles provide the only proper approach to Dickinson's work, I admit that I value what "proximate poems" affirm about Dickinson's influences, and I consider the recognition of these influences to be more difficult when the context is shaped by an editor, biographer, or teacher rather than by the fascicle (Heginbotham xi). Eleanor Heginbotham argues that "the fact of the fascicles deserves attention. Regardless of whether they were complete or finished or intended as prepublication studies, as self-publishing artifacts, as gifts, as scrapbooks, or as workbooks, they *exist*" (ix). In contrast, Shira Wolosky believes that the fascicles "cannot provide privileged evidence of textual connections, when the methods of entry, as Franklin himself vividly presents them, correlate neither with the order of composition nor with any other clearly ascertainable procedure" ("Emily Dickinson's Manuscript Body," 88-89). While Dickinson's "procedure" is not "clearly ascertainable," since I recognize the difficulty in following the train of thought in a single fascicle, the operation of the fascicles nevertheless offers fascinating interpretive opportunities that may be lost within alternate contexts. The fascicles certainly do deserve attention; even if we cannot be certain as to what Dickinson wanted to accomplish with them, the fascicles can help us to unravel and complicate even our most sacred assumptions regarding Emily Dickinson.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

Emily Dickinson's body of work is unclear and inconsistent, yet I argue her power stems from this inconsistency, and the lack of instructions requires readers to "dwell in Possibility" (Fr466). I view her commitment to genre-blurring and poetic experimentation as a commitment to puncturing the fierce distinction drawn in the mid-nineteenth-century (as well as our own) between the public and the private. The extent of Dickinson's experimentation is best understood if one studies her body of work, which includes her correspondence, printed poems, fascicles, and later drafts and fragments. However, access to and study of the manuscripts has been (and continues to be) rigidly restricted, and Dickinson's poems have been understood since 1890, when the first volume of her poems appeared, as tiny, neat, private packages of "unstudied" hymn stanzas. The mythological Emily Dickinson arose in the 1890s and has survived into the twenty-first-century. She was a woman who fell madly in love with a man already married and she turned to poetry to stay sane; her unconventional and strange verses remained in a locked box and the mysterious, love-spurned, childlike poet died without any thought towards publication, leaving behind no artistic philosophy because she never understood herself as a poet.

The caricature's simplicity represents commitments to keeping a certain type of genius in its place—protected, cloaked, and distanced from social and literary spheres. The central thread of Dickinson's role in literary history denotes a foil to Walt Whitman, the democratic, uncontrollable rebel poet who single-handedly fathered American poetry. While the myth of Dickinson as the iconic private poet has been debunked in the past few decades, contemporary Dickinson criticism focuses largely on discovering Dickinson's intentions, and debates often center on the "true" form a Dickinson poem should take. The dangers of simplicity appear again,

since the debates have been unfortunately described as the “Dickinson Wars”: one side values reading Dickinson’s manuscripts while the other claims reading the manuscripts does not provide privileged interpretations. But the debate as “war” necessitates taking a side: you should read Dickinson only in manuscript or you arrive at the same interpretation regardless of how the poem is read—in print, in manuscript, online, in a library, in a class, or on a bus. Most Dickinson scholars do not approach Dickinson’s work with such simplicity, yet the discussion about the nature of poetry, when it is presented as requiring one to choose a side, renders Dickinson’s work as a source of angst, which steers far from the idea that “Some seek in Art – the Art of Peace –” (Fr665).

Dickinson’s work and the reception of that work is better understood not as a war, but as a complex set of varied texts that have given rise to countless discursive publics. According to Michael Warner, a discursive public is brought into being by texts and their circulation: “it is a space of discourse organized by discourse. It is self-creating and self-organized; and herein lies its power, as well as its elusive strangeness;” “its boundaries and its organization” are set “by its own discourse rather than by external frameworks;” and a discursive public “addresses people who are identified primarily through their participation in the discourse and who therefore cannot be known in advance” (68-69, 73-74). They are “queer creatures,” these discursive publics, and have been largely ignored or misunderstood throughout modernity (7). But they play a pivotal role in one’s understanding of language, and Warner’s discussion elucidates Dickinson’s work in a healthy, positive, and complex way that allows me to focus not on the “Truth” of Dickinson’s intentions, but on what types of publics these texts have created and what types of publics Dickinson’s poems address.

Dickinson's three predominant spheres for experimentation (her correspondence, the fascicles, and the "radical scatters") represent an overall commitment to blurring the distinction between public and private forms of communication. In her correspondence, apart from the practical application of keeping in touch with friends and family, Dickinson toys with intimate communication through a blending of prose and poetry and experimenting with nominal and poetic addressee. Rather than approaching the letters as a way to "fill in the gaps," Dickinson's correspondence has come to be seen as an artistic genre invested in more than "keeping in touch." Contrary to the isolationist image of Dickinson, her letters root her in her time period, and her epistolary experimentation is both unique and a technique of the time, particularly of the Civil War era. Dickinson's practice of sending poems as gifts indicates her perception of the power of poetry to console, to celebrate, to remember, or to feel less alone. However, more importantly, the act of giving a poem, rather than writing it, for a specific person at a specific time reveals Dickinson's understanding of context and poetic addressee. The recipient's biographical and psychological context would fill in the gaps of the poem. Sue or Samuel Bowles, for example, would read the same poem in a different way, yet each would view the poem as written for her or him. In the twenty-first-century, as well as in the nineteenth, who Dickinson had in mind when she wrote the poem becomes impossible to pinpoint, yet knowledge of the poem's context offers an additional layer of interpretation. The context varies and morphs throughout time, since we cannot read the poem as Sue or as Bowles, although our reading is influenced by knowing to whom she sent the poem and why, and we can use case studies of individual poems sent in letters to witness how context shapes interpretation. It is within the space of intimate communication that Dickinson toys with its conventions; it is here that she

practices a commitment to non-referential poetry and learns to complicate and manipulate the conventions of the lyric form.

Rather than inhabiting a space constricted by traditional verse forms, Dickinson's workshop allowed her to experiment on a small level, such as the manipulation of grammar, meter, and rhyme within a single poem, as well as on the level of "Circumference": her "sceneless" poems continually and endlessly spread outward, supporting multiple, various, even contradictory interpretations without allowing readers to be certain the "true" meaning has been or can be attained. In addition to her correspondence, Dickinson's poetic experimentation exists in two separate yet related spheres: the fascicles and the "radical scatters." The fascicles show an attention to detail and a concern for context, while the later drafts and fragments reveal a project centered on the way visual details and materiality affect inspiration and interpretation. While contemporary scholars do see visual experimentation as integral to the fascicles, Dickinson invested a substantial amount of time and effort in placing poems in a shared space. What that space means for the poems within is something we are only recently discovering, and each fascicle offers numerous and multiple possibilities. It seems possible that the fascicles taken as a whole represent an additional sphere of experimentation—they may be poetic experimentation on a grand level, a project perhaps comparable to Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. We are not there yet, and the narrative readings of the forty fascicles have proven insufficient. In this sense, the fascicles, now and in the nineteenth-century, can be seen as placeholders for a future public that will better understand them.

However, the fascicles also derive from the specifics of the mid-nineteenth-century—they do seem concerned with Emerson's definition of "poetry of the portfolio" and they align with how Dickinson understood her world. Dickinson accessed contemporary poetry most often

through a context set by the works of multiple authors, such as in anthologies, or surrounded by news, such as in periodicals. Dickinson understood the work and lives of poets she revered, such as Keats, Barrett Browning, Milton, and Shakespeare, through anthologies and periodicals. Dickinson understood through her reading how much one's understanding of art was determined by what surrounded it; what surround it most often, and what surrounded Dickinson, aside from her correspondence and her own writing, was print. Despite the editorial frustration expressed at the lack of clarity throughout Dickinson's publication history, Dickinson's poems have been quite easily rendered into traditional forms and simplified into print. The conversion ushered Dickinson into the American literary canon. But now we can evaluate and attempt to understand what the fascicles are—on the most basic level, the fascicles are poems in a shared space. Some argue the fascicles are a rejection of print, while others see them as a means of keeping order. An important layer of inquiry, however, is the fascicles' investment in exploring the influence and power of context.

A single fascicle can create multiple, open-ended, self-sustained and self-creating publics. As I show in my final chapter, a single fascicle offers a better understanding of Dickinson's literary influences, which are often subsumed due to the difficulty of pinpointing echoes within individual poems read in isolation. But the fascicles are enmeshed in other discourses, such as nineteenth-century manuscript culture, Romanticism, Modernism, and Post-modernism. Dickinson did not force a public into being by creating the fascicles, yet they currently offer endless, evolving options as to how they are discussed, read, and understood. Reading Dickinson in print and in manuscript allows one to investigate the influence of editing and publishing and to discuss artistic process. Dickinson and hypertext create new, endless possibilities for understanding the effects of poetry and the role "the Poet" and poetry play in

daily life. Dickinson understood what poetry offers. While she must have had clear intentions with regard to her fascicle project, it is an intention she never felt the need to state. Rather, individual fascicles and individual poems address a future public that comes into being when readers focus their shared attention on the fascicle as object.

The wide, endless “Circumference” of even a single Dickinson poem reveals the complex operation of discursive publics. For over a century, Dickinson has been both blamed and embraced for the mystery of her poetry, yet most often Dickinson’s poetry has been seen as a mystery that needs solving—and readers, scholars, editors, reviewers, and even Dickinson’s acquaintances have searched for the solution in the person of Emily Dickinson. Dickinson may have been frustrated by the options offered to her, but she embraced the realm of possibility to see what new ways she could use and be inspired by language. The complexity surrounding the term “public” parallels the complexity surrounding Dickinson—neither can be cataloged, defined, or demarcated sufficiently. The myth of Dickinson has always permeated her work, even though it has morphed through various eras—from unstudied to prophetic and isolated to writing to keep from going over the too-near edge into madness. But Dickinson’s opus reveals that she moved within a complexity that we are only beginning to unravel; she understood how public and private communication were most often approached, and she sought new ways to create poetic addressees. She blurred the distinction between prose and poetry in ways that aligned with and extended beyond her time period. She is much like George Orwell’s diarist—writing in fascicles and on discarded “scraps” to a future, unimaginable public. But her texts created publics in her lifetime, and she was appreciated in the nineteenth-century for her vividness, her unconventionality, and her directness. Editors have discovered and re-discovered traditional, conventional poems within the “chaotic mass,” and we are now fortunate enough to

return to (or at least attempt to return to) the chaos. We can combine the regularization, mythologizing, and canonization with the experience of reading Dickinson's work in manuscript. This powerful combination leads to new, fascinating, open-ended publics, indicating what can happen when an author refuses to be clear.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Trisha Kannan grew up in San Diego, California, and majored in creative writing at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She lived in England before coming to the University of Florida. She completed her M.A. in English in 2004 and her Ph.D. in 2011.