Chapter 1

1. Certainly the history of Dickinson criticism from the 1890s to the present, as the quotations above indicate, has preserved a consistent account of the poet. It has stressed the separations in the poems (among grammatical and syntactical units), as well as the separation of any given utterance from a decipherable situation that it could be said to represent; and it has stressed vexed connections among them. Specifically, as the chronology of the poems is not seen to signal development, critics are deprived of one conventional way of discussing the poetry, and this deprivation is often countered by certain primitive groupings of the poems, according to thematic similarities, formal properties, evaluative assessments which discriminate poems that are successful from those that are not—with the constant implication that there is no inherent way of understanding relations among the poems. The taxonomies advanced for Dickinson's poems are different from those advanced for other poets, because when the poems are sorted it is precisely to emphasize idiosyncrasies and repetitions (of traits, themes, syntactic features), as if what Dickinson had to teach us were that there is no way to comprehend the alien except by the most critically reductive strategies of categorizing and comparison.

2. In this essay I primarily exemplify the ways in which poems are associated, rather than only the ways in which variants to words in lines are associated. However, as variants to words in the line and variant poems are central features of the fascicle text, both are discussed. For an amplified discussion of the two subjects, see Cameron, Choosing.

3. The vast majority of my references to Dickinson's poems reproduce them as they appear in Franklin's three-volume variorum edition. Throughout, whenever a poem is initially cited, Fr and the number assigned by Franklin follow in parentheses. When in my discussion I consider a single line that includes variants, I enclose the variants in brackets with slash marks separating the alternative words. When I discuss variants without quoting a whole line, brackets are omitted, and a slash mark alone indicates the presence of alternatives. In a few cases, where Franklin's variorum text seems not to fully capture the ambiguities of the fascicles to which my argument draws attention—
the specific order of variants within the same fascicle, for example, or the interlineation and/or deletion of words within the same poem—I direct the reader to the two-volume facsimile, *Manuscript Books*, abbreviated MB and cited by page number.

4. The sets have many of the characteristics of the fascicles except that they were not stab-bound and tied. According to Franklin, Dickinson stopped binding fascicle sheets around 1864, though there are a few unbound sheets as early as 1862 (set 1 is dated 1862 by Franklin; sets 2–4, 1864). In the late 1860s Dickinson stopped copying fascicle sheets. In the 1870s she began copying fascicle sheets again (sets 5–7 are dated between 1864 and 1866, though, as noted, the majority of the poems in the remaining sets [8–15] are from the 1870s), but she never again bound them (see MB xii–xiii). For a concise discussion of the differences among the bound fascicles, the unbound fascicle sheets, the worksheets, and the miscellaneous fair copies, as well as for Franklin’s speculations about the ways Dickinson variously used the bound fascicles, and for a detailed description of how Franklin reassembled them, see the introduction to *Manuscript Books*.

5. It is important to reiterate that this and the following assertions about Dickinson’s intentions with respect to the fascicles are speculative. While the following pages produce an empirical argument about how the fascicles work, and about what the fascicles are, the basis of that argument is, and could only be, speculative.

6. The earliest fascicles have no variants; the first occurrence of a variant is in Fascicle 5, and there are only five other variants for poems through Fascicle 10. These variants, often multiple and not uniformly positioned at the end of the poem, as in the Johnson edition, are sometimes signaled in the facsimile text by the little “+” signs that Dickinson used near a word to indicate variants to that word. In the facsimile text the variants appear in the following diverse positions: at the end of the poem, to the side of the poem, and underneath or above a particular stanza, word, or line. Sometimes the variants to words are virtually inseparable from the text, as in the second stanza of “I think the Hemlock” (MB 439; Fr400). Frequently a variant appears above the word: “The [maddest/nearest] dream – recedes – unrealized –” (MB 285; Fr304). Or to the side of the line: “The Cordiality of Death – / Who [drills/nails] his Welcome in –” (MB 212; Fr243). Or to the side of and at right angles to the poem, as in “There is a pain – so utter –” (MB 544; Fr515) and “Like Some Old fashioned Miracle –” (MB 449; Fr408). Or underneath the word, as in “Of Bronze – and Blaze –”: “An Island in dishonored Grass – / Whom none but [Daisies/Beetles –] know” (MB 269; Fr319). In the same poem another variant (“manners”) is also noted below the word (“attitudes”) that is on the line. But a third variant appears at the end of the poem, “An/Some – Island,” making it seem that different ways of noting variants indicate different ways of understanding alternatives in relation to each other. Only in the later years of the copying are the variants positioned characteristically at the poem’s end, Dickinson having apparently standardized her placement of them.

Infrequently Dickinson drew a line through words to signal their replacement by alternatives. See, e.g., MB 340 (Fr339), “I like a look of Agony,” in which in the first line of the second stanza, “Death comes,” is decisively crossed out and replaced by “The Eyes glaze once – and that is Death –,” and MB 275–77 (Fr325), “There came a Day – at Summer’s full –,” where substantive decisions against word choices are marked by lines through those words, with the preferred alternatives unambiguously chosen. I say “unambiguously chosen,” but even here the choice unambiguously made may subsequently
have been unmade. A second fair copy, for which no manuscript is extant, presumably written after the fascicle copying, is reproduced in facsimile on four pages preceding the title page of Poems by Emily Dickinson, Second Series, ed. T. W. Higginson and Mabel Loomis Todd (1891). That fair copy adopts some of the canceled fascicle readings which had appeared (erroneously) to have been definitively deleted. There Dickinson restores words in the second, third, and penultimate stanzas.

However exceptional, these excisions insist, by distinction, that Dickinson’s typical way of noting variants is not random but indicates her way of understanding variants. I elaborate in the body of the text.

7. In the fascicles Dickinson often, though not always, drew a line after the variants that concluded a poem, thereby indicating an end to the unit of sense. But because the poems are ordered and bound and because there are sometimes several poems to the bifolium, the collocation oppositely implies a potential relation among poems. (In Fascicle 14, where poems from 1861, 1858, 1862 are bound in that sequence, the implications of “order” are differently unmistakable.)

Moreover, within the bifolium, the method of copying is varied. It is varied because, as indicated, a line is frequently but not always drawn after a poem, and because, although the bifolia are customarily filled, there are instances of blank half-rectos and -versos. This is particularly the case in Fascicle 11, where whole sheets and half sheets are left blank. But there is also a three-quarters blank first verso in Fascicle 15; nine blank lines and a blank verso conclude Fascicle 18, while in Fascicle 13 the first bifolium contains a three-quarters blank second recto. Such variations indicate that Dickinson may be regulating which, as well as how many, poems belong in a particular bifolium. The method of copying is also varied because, while the bifolia are ordinarily composed of single, folded sheets—with a disjunct leaf or slip added rarely, where necessary, to continue a poem—Fascicle 11 contains as many as four disjunct leaves (see Franklin’s tables for Dickinson’s manner of accommodating overflow of poems and for the locations of disjunct leaves within particular fascicles, in Manuscript Books 1413 and 1414, respectively).

Further, while Dickinson characteristically tries to complete a poem on a single page, and if it runs over, it characteristically does so by as many as four lines, in Fascicle 11 there are only two lines on the verso of the fourth sheet. Finally, although Franklin is right to say that the sheet or bifolium is the unit of manuscript integrity (an assumption borne out by Dickinson’s manner of accommodating overflow from the sheet), the sheet or bifolium is not the unit of thematic integrity.

8. The relation “among” the fascicles is itself problematic because, in Franklin’s words, Dickinson “did not number or otherwise label” or index them (MB x). Thus, though in the facsimile they are now arranged according to a presumed chronology, it is only arbitrarily that Fascicle 13 precedes Fascicle 14. This is the case because, while one can determine that certain fascicles were copied in the same year, it is now impossible to determine the particular order in which they were copied within that year. Fascicle 13 would seem to precede Fascicle 14 in that the former dates from 1861 while the latter has poems which Franklin dates from 1862, as well as from 1858 and 1861. But Fascicle 11, too, has poems from 1861, and Fascicle 12 has poems from 1861 as well as 1860. Moreover, by virtue of these different dates, it would appear that in binding the sheets Dickinson worked from a pool of manuscripts, and therefore the exact relation
of Fascicle 13 to Fascicle 14, if Dickinson intended one, cannot be surmised. Fascicles 11 through 14 are the most problematic of the fascicles, since in them the binding practices are inconsistent. Specifically, Dickinson there deviates from her practice of binding poems presumably copied in the same year.

9. Herbert was anthologized in Chambers’s *Cyclopaedia of English Literature*, as he also was in Griswold’s *Sacred Poets of England and America* (New York: Appleton; dated 1849 on the title page and 1848 on the copyright page). Susan Gilbert Dickinson owned the 1844 edition of the *Cyclopaedia* published in Edinburgh by William and Robert Chambers; Edward Dickinson’s copy was printed in Boston in 1847 by Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln. A separate edition of *The Temple* was owned by Susan Gilbert Dickinson. Finally, although there is no proof that Dickinson read Shakespeare’s sonnets, since her letters do not allude to them in particular, Edward Dickinson had a copy of the sonnets in his eight-volume 1853 edition of Shakespeare’s *Comedies, Histories, Tragedies, and Poems*, which we know Dickinson had read, and which Richard Sewall tells us Edward Dickinson purchased in 1857; see *Life* 2:467, as well as Capps, 12, 68–69. See, too, Sewall’s list of books in the Dickinson Collection at Houghton Library, some of them, as indicated by the library’s register, containing markings “probably” or “perhaps” by Dickinson (*Life* 2:678–79). Dickinson mentions Tennyson and Barrett Browning in her letters, and the collections of their poems owned by the Dickinson family are in the Houghton Library.

10. See, e.g., the discussion of Fr304, “The [maddest/nearest] dream – recedes – unrealized –,” in which I argue that the variants must be considered in relation to each other rather than as alternative possibilities: “maddest” and “nearest”; “maddest” because “nearest”—the intoxication being caused by the proximity, not simply conjunctive but, perhaps more strongly, consequent (in *Choosing* 63–66). With respect to variants like these Dickinson sets up a situation that seems exclusionary, and, in letting both alternatives stand she refuses choices she presents as inevitable.

11. Other poems in Fascicle 23 about the apprehension of death (“The Whole of it came not at once – / ’T was Murder by degrees –” [Fr485], “Presentiment – is that long Shadow – on the Lawn –” [Fr487], “He fought like those Who’ve nought to lose –” [Fr480]) and about apprehension of another’s death (“You constituted Time – / I deemed Eternity / A Revelation of Yourself –” [Fr488]) substantiate that possible reading.

Chapter 2

1. Cameron notes, “It is important to reiterate that this and the following assertions about Dickinson’s intentions with respect to the fascicles are speculative. While the following pages produce an empirical argument about how the fascicles work, and about what the fascicles are, the basis of that argument is, and could only be, speculative” (7, n. 6).


3. David Porter, in *Dickinson: The Modern Idiom*, complained memorably that Dickinson had no “project.” The poems were seemingly written one after another, each a new start wholly unrelated to its predecessors, and as often as not unable to get past that start. There was no “development,” and thus Dickinson’s potential greatness went
unrealized. A genius ought to comprehend a world, if not the world; Dickinson was plainly no match for her subject matter, taking stab after stab at articulation. Ultimately for Porter this is what makes Dickinson “modern,” but he is also clearly disappointed in what he takes to be her failure.

Perhaps this brooding analysis has been what’s prompted any number of attempts to demonstrate that Dickinson does have a project, does develop, and does comprehend a world. Much of that work has focused on the fascicles; it has seemed important to show that either the little booklets present thematic sequences (Rosenthal and Gall), or that the fascicles in their entirety present a narrative (Shurr). The most sophisticated of these, Cameron’s, marshals a magisterial deconstructionist machinery to demonstrate that Dickinson is engaged in an ultimately metaphysical project.

But Porter’s disappointment in Dickinson’s evident incoherence, and Cameron’s beautiful account of that incoherence as coherence with Being, has resulted in the dueling deconstructionists obscuring the actual field of play. Neither has paid attention to the philosophical and rhetorical problems, terms, and commitments available to Dickinson in her time. Thus they (and we) miss the sources of her thought and practice in Locke and Hume’s philosophical skepticism. Why should her philosophical commitments matter, especially to these physical objects, the manuscripts? Because the way she wrote, from the propositional starts of her poems down to her generation of variants, was an engagement with what she was taught to think about language.

4. McGann says, regarding manuscript works such as Blake’s and Dickinson’s, “At this point we should be able to see the theoretical importance of these texts for criticism. They are peculiarly significant because they reveal the paradox implicit in the concept of authorial intention. In their earliest ‘completed’ forms these texts remain more or less wholly under the author’s control, yet as a class they are texts for which the editorial concept of intention has no meaning. These texts show, in other words, that the concept of authorial intention only comes into force for criticism when (paradoxically) the artist’s work begins to engage with social structures and functions. The fully authoritative text is therefore always one which has been socially produced; as a result, the critical standard for what constitutes authoritativeness cannot rest with the author and his intentions alone” (75). Earlier he remarks that only a Romantic conception of authorship and editing privileges the author alone, and regards any interventions beyond the manuscript as contaminations (51). It could be argued, of course, that Dickinson is therefore thoroughly Romantically. But her release of poems into letters to her friends suggests that she accepts the interventions of a copying culture in manuscript.

5. In the Introduction. See Bruce Clary’s discussion of Franklin’s several assertions about the fascicles in his dissertation, “Emily Dickinson’s Menagerie.”

6. Alexandra Socarides’s argument in “Rethinking the Fascicles” concurs with Franklin that the unit of composition is the sheet, and proposes that we adjust our reading methods to reflect that (84).

7. Clary objects to certain scholars’ tendency to use anomalous features—such as the presence of mixed-dated poems in Fascicle 14—to justify Dickinson’s sequencing intention—when such anomalous features are not statistically significant enough to warrant the assumption (100).

8. In this respect I must differ from Socarides, who similarly consults the archives, but finds that fascicle-making is not prevalent (Dickinson Unbound 79). This is probably
because, as she observes, there is no ready way to find examples, as they are not archived as a category.

9. See Suzanne Spring’s dissertation, “Forming Letters,” for this and other information concerning composition practices at Mt. Holyoke. Richard Green Parker’s *Aids to English Composition*, in a section entitled “Suggestions to Teachers” (304–7), is probably the source of these practices. See Alexandra Socarides for complementary work on nineteenth-century manuscript practices.

10. In Mabel Loomis Todd’s edition of the *Letters of Emily Dickinson*, Todd records the reflections of Emily Fowler Ford. They did the paper, called *Forest Leaves*, for two years at the Amherst Academy, and Dickinson, the wit, did the “comic’s column” (128). “This paper was all in script, and was passed around the school, where the contributions were easily recognized from the handwriting, which is Emily Dickinson’s case was very beautiful—small, clear, finished. [Dickinson’s bits were irresistible:] One bit was stolen by a roguish editor for the College paper, where her touch was instantly recognized; and there were two paragraphs in the *Springfield Republican*” (129).

11. Lucy Schulz notes, in her essay “Constructing Composition Books,” in *Archives of Instruction*, “Beginning students copied alphabet letters and numbers and short words onto their slates; they responded to assignments in school readers (important to remember that school readers have a longer history than composition textbooks) and practiced what they learned by ‘filling in the blanks’ of a passage, a practice often known as ‘ellipticals’” (151).

12. For at least circumstantial evidence that Dickinson experienced this popular mode of training, see Fr116, “Our share of night to bear –” which contains the line “Our blank in bliss to fill.” See Scheurer on Dickinson’s schooling.

In the sentences which follow, it is required to change the words as in the following examples. The student will notice that every change of words will, in most cases, produce some corresponding change in the idea; but, as the object of the exercise is to give him a command of language, it is not deemed important in these Exercises to exact a strict verbal accuracy.

**Example 1st.** He continued the work without *stopping*.
He continued the work without *resting*.
He continued the work without *cessation*.
He continued the work without *intermission*.
He continued the work without *delay*.
He continued the work without *leaving off*.
He continued the work without *interruption*.
He continued the work without *obstacle*.
He continued the work without *impediment*, &C. [44–45]
Students were similarly made to practice generating synonyms in verse, referred to Crabb’s *English Synonymes*, and exercised in translation in order to achieve flexibility and control in English. Dickinson especially would have been aware that, as Parker puts it, “[T]o the poet especially a familiar acquaintance with expressions of similar meaning is absolutely indispensable. Confined as he is to certain rules, it is often the case, that a long word must be substitute for a short one, or a short one for a long, in order to produce the necessary succession of syllables to constitute the measure, or the harmony, of his verses” (40–41). As Parker’s pronouncement perhaps suggests, composition exercises were not limited to prose. Quoting *Murray’s Grammar* on the practice of poetic composition, Parker affirms that requiring it

will copiously enlarge the writer’s stock of expressions [. . .] It will at the same time, produce a more important and beautiful effect,—it will enrich the intellectual store of thought; for, while in search for an epithet, for an example, or a periphrase, he is obliged to view the subject in all of its possible bearings and relations, that he may choose such particular word or phrase, as shall exhibit it in the most advantageous light. And what study more effectual to call into action the powers of the mind, to exercise the judgment, to whet the sagacity, and give birth to a variety of ideas, which might otherwise have lain for ever [sic] dormant? For these weighty considerations, the practice of verse-making has been recommended by Locke, Chesterfield, Franklin, &c, &c. [242]

15. Note that Campbell’s nominalist identification of thought and word always gives way to the more skeptical account of Hume’s associationism; a word and a thought are still theoretically distinct, as also in Locke.
16. Whether Dickinson read Campbell directly is a question of some interest. Undoubtedly she was familiar with the basic claims as they were filtered down to her through Newman (who enthusiastically quotes Campbell) and Whately. See Nan Johnson’s *Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric in North America* for a comprehensive discussion of the promulgation and diffusion of Campbell’s rhetorical ideas in the works of Newman, Blair, and Whately. Mt. Holyoke’s library may have held a copy as early as Dickinson’s tenure, and it is likely that Amherst College’s library kept a few copies for the industrious, since Campbell was a required text for seniors during her brother Austin’s tenure and her young adulthood. Amherst College’s clubs, such as the Alexandrian, kept Campbell among the several thousand volumes available to members—and perhaps to their extremely well-connected sisters. (Special Collections at Amherst has an undated catalogue of the society’s library holdings. Anneliese Ostendarp’s “The Athenian Society Library” is also helpful, as is George Cutting’s *Student Life at Amherst College.*) One has only to remember that Edward Dickinson wrote the checks (as treasurer)—and that George Gould published Emily’s valentine in the college’s literary magazine, *The Indicator* (in 1850), to realize that her ties to that environment must have been quite intimate. For a survey of Emily’s friendships with young men at the College, see Sewall’s “Early Friendships II” (ch. 18), esp. pp. 418–20. At least one letter (L191) suggests that Dickinson had free access to the Amherst College library.
17. Berlin notes the intellectual lineage: “The qualities of good style—correctness,
perspicuity, vivacity, euphony—are adapted from Campbell. The kinds of style—e.g., concise and diffuse, forcible and vehement—are lifted directly from Blair” (38). And, as Nan Johnson notes, Whately also synthesizes Campbell and Blair (50).

18. H#2359, w/ signature “E. Dickinson 1839.” See Lowenberg, Emily Dickinson’s Textbooks and Bryan Short on Dickinson’s “New Rhetoric.”

19. Dickinson’s “expedient” of varying her metaphors around what has been called an absent center may very well have to do with this caution.

20. For McIntosh, see the introduction, pp. 14-15; for Hagenbüchle, see the whole of “Sign and Process.”

21. See Dickinson’s poem beginning “Publication is the Auction” for an example of these two rhetorics at work. The speaker is both loath to “invest” her snow—to dress or undress in public—and to appear at all, while the Thought is clearly able to be incarnated.

22. My representations of the poems are derived from the manuscripts and the Franklin editions. I therefore adopt the practice of representing a stanza’s lines whole rather than broken (at a page edge), but I also seek to represent the variants as they appear, with crosses, interlineations, or crowding the bottom, rather than imposing an editorial apparatus not Dickinson’s own.

23. In this case, the variants do not simply reflect a struggle but actively represent it, as in “Shall I take thee.”

24. “Gentile” has to be read as “genteel” or “gentle”—see Lucy Goodale’s letter of 6/8/1838: “so you think I have improved in penmanship. E. says I do not write as I did when I came here. I do not know how it happens. Our teachers tell us that although it used to be considered very gentile to write fine, it is not now. But I hope you will not criticise on this for I have written it, as few lines at a time with the first pen I could find and besides all this with a book for my writing table [. . . .]” (Mt. Holyoke, Special Collections).

25. Sue made the transcripts some time after Dickinson’s death, though it is clear she was transcribing poems the “family” had received for years. Dickinson sent twenty-one poems in autograph which still survive to Sue in 1863, on the very high end of her average throughout the years. Poem 1651 may have been written and sent to Sue in 1863 as well. While it’s not necessary to demonstrate temporal proximity in order to justify considering these poems together, Dickinson had a habit of reiterating or reformulating pieces of language she liked—from poems to letters, from letters to poems. While some “scraps” reappear as many as eight years after their introduction, Johnson used repeated phrasing to correlate the composition dates of poems and letters.

Chapter 3

1. As much as possible, when I quote a poem from the Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson, I will endeavor to recreate her punctuation and spelling. To my eye, the marks after the two “ah’s” are closer to exclamation points than to commas, which is the way they appear in Franklin’s three-volume variorum as well as in the Reader’s Edition. It is true that elsewhere the distinction is more obvious. The two exclamation points at the end of the first two and last lines are not ambiguous; each shows a decided period
under the slash mark, but the mark is perched above the line unlike the clear comma after line 5. From the beginning of this essay, then, we are up against questions that can never be fully decided—but the importance of which, as Ellen Louise Hart in this volume shows, are important.

2. The Poems of Fascicle 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First lines</th>
<th>Franklin's Number</th>
<th>Notes*</th>
<th>First Publication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Wounded Deer – leaps highest –</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>copy to Susan lost</td>
<td>1890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sun kept stooping – stooping – low!</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>copy to Sue in pencil</td>
<td>1910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I met a King this Afternoon!</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>no known copies</td>
<td>1893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To learn the Transport by the Pain –</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>another version to Sue</td>
<td>1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the foolish call them “flowers” –</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>no known copies</td>
<td>1896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Ebon Box, when years have flown</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>no known copies</td>
<td>1935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portraits are to daily faces</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>two versions in F8</td>
<td>1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wait till the Majesty of Death</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>no known copies</td>
<td>1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tis so much joy! Tis so much joy!</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>no known copies</td>
<td>1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A fuzzy fellow, without feet,</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>no known copies</td>
<td>1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At last, to be identified!</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>duplicate in F21</td>
<td>1890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have never seen ‘Volcanoes’ –</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>no known copies</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dust is the only Secret. –</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>copy to Sue</td>
<td>1914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m the little “Heart’s Ease”!</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>no known copies</td>
<td>1893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ah, Necromancy Sweet!</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>no known copies</td>
<td>1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Except to Heaven, she is nought,</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>copy to Sue</td>
<td>1890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures are to daily faces</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>two (variants) in F8</td>
<td>1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I cautious, scanned my little life –</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>no known copies</td>
<td>1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I could bribe them by a Rose</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>no known copies</td>
<td>1935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As if some little Arctic flower</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>no known copies</td>
<td>1890</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Obviously any of the poems for which Franklin records no other recipient may have gone to the many people in Dickinson’s epistolary range. As Jane Eberwein and Cindy MacKenzie note in their Reading Emily Dickinson’s Letters, the over one thousand letters available, published in the three-volume Thomas Johnson collection, “represent only about one-tenth of the letters Dickinson actually wrote” (1). Within those missing letters may be copies of any of these poems.

3. Updating the theory, we might say—grossly oversimplifying the discussion—that semiosis takes up where mimesis leaves off. Books on semiotics update such words by explaining why semiosis (the study of signs—of the language and figures in the work) is more relevant to conversations about poetry than is mimesis (the starting point in reading a poem for its literal coherence). This is offered with apologies to such texts as Michael Riffaterre’s Semiotics of Poetry and Robert Scholes’s Semiotics and Interpretation. The process (its pleasures and problems) of reading poetry, say such theoreticians, lies
in the ability to recognize and respond to implied and stated comparisons/contrasts, to move from the literal to the figurative and vice versa. They say a great deal more, but let this be enough for this essay’s focus on magical transformations, something highly relevant to a discussion of semiotics.

4. Admittedly, Dickinson also calls on a “Necromancer! Landlord!” in “What inn is this” (Fr100, F5), in which, apparently, a newly dead person explores the new home; she also refers to the art in two of the four versions of “A Dew sufficed itself” (Fr1372), all playful uses. In “Nature affects to be sedate” (Fr1176), written in pencil on a fragment of stationery, she seems to begin a more serious experimentation with the practice: “But let our observation shut / Her practices extend / To Necromancy and the Trades / Remote to understand / Behold our spacious Citizen [Nature] Unto a Juggler turned —.”

5. Some twenty years ago while I worked on another project at Harvard’s Houghton Library, a kind keeper of its treasures showed me a fascicle page. It was, then, within a vault-like closet that was within a room holding Dickinson furniture that was within the Amy Lowell collection. She pulled out a manila folder from a green box (such as is used for magazines). Within that folder was one sheet—I wish I could remember which, for such an opportunity never came again. The miracle to me was that the three holes were intact—not torn—and that the string was included in the folder. To my eyes it was twine, something thicker than sewing thread and thinner than cooking twine. Having heard for years that Dickinson’s early editors virtually tore the delicately constructed books apart, I changed my view to respect the care with which that thread had been pulled through those holes—and kept for such eyes as mine.

6. Jackson calls into question the very term “lyric,” particularly with its association of first-person, primary private emotion. See her questions on “a series of lyrics” or “one big lyric” (58) and “public and private” materials (60ff). As for the term “fascicle”: see Heginbotham, Reading the Fascicles 8 for a review of possible other terms and the history of Mabel Loomis Todd’s use of the term, one which continues as an alternate to “Manuscript Books.”

7. See Heginbotham, Reading the Fascicles of Emily Dickinson 9–13 and “Dwelling in Possibilities” 20–28 for a review of cautionary comments, some by the most distinguished names of the founding scholars of Emily Dickinson, including Ralph W. Franklin. To put their argument too simply, the fascicles are more like scrapbooks, made for filing purposes, than consciously created little books that today might be called chapbooks, each with a carefully chosen beginning and end and careful arrangements of poems next to other poems.

8. See (again) Heginbotham, Reading the Fascicles of Emily Dickinson. Much of it is predicated on reading poems within fascicles in which Dickinson “repeated” a poem. Influenced by Neil Fraistat’s 1986 study of poets from Horace to Whitman (Dickinson was not included), Poems in Their Places, on contextual reading, I compared the same poem in a new context in four pairs: Fascicles 1 and 14, both of which include “The feet of people walking home” (Fr16); Fascicles 3 and 40, which include “I hide myself—within my flower” (Fr80); Fascicles 6 and 10, which contain radically different versions of “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers—” (Fr124); and Fascicles 8 (without this essay’s focus on the “Necromancy” poem) and 21 in which the poet/speaker revels: “At last—to be identified” (Fr172). See Reading 155 and Franklin, MB 1451 for the more complete list of “duplicated” poems. Ellen Hart’s essay in this volume discusses the different versions of “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers—” (Fr126).
9. See, among many others: Ruth Miller, who, working with a previous and now discredited ordering, was nevertheless prescient in observing that, while readers should not seek to find a single event or subject reflected in any fascicle, single fascicles “have polar feelings” (248) and that we must “let Emily’s choice guide them” (8); Rosenthal and Gall, who connect the cycles with the sequences of Whitman and with modernist long-link poems, compare a fascicle to “a magnetic or electrical field . . . created by its component parts and transformed by those same parts” (101); Willis Buckingham, who, reviewing the *Manuscript Books*, says that “Each fascicle . . . may well constitute an intended sequence of interrelated poems” (614); and not last but certainly among the most compelling to try to describe the fascicles, Sharon Cameron, whose entire complex book I oversimplify with this excerpt, says, “to read the poems in the fascicles is to see that the contextual sense of Dickinson is not the canonical sense of Dickinson” (*Choosing 19*) and that “To see a poem contextualized by a fascicle is sometimes to see that it has an altogether different, rather than only a relationally more complex meaning when it is read in sequence rather than as an isolated lyric” (32). In fairness, some major Dickinsonian pioneers have offered cautionary comments about the value of reading the poems in their fascicle comments. For a sample of such critics, see Heginbotham, *Reading* 13–14 and 157 n. 10. Just so, this volume includes vigorous disagreements on the subject. See Hubbard’s essay, for example.

10. We do not know what Dickinson herself called the “Fascicles,” the name given the books by Mabel Loomis Todd from the word for “a bundle” (and related to the word for “symbol of power”). Tantalizing possible references are to “My books—so good to turn” (F1512, F24) and similar poems; “a little manuscript volume of yours,” and “what portfolios of verses you must have,” as Helen Hunt Jackson spoke of something from Dickinson (L937a); and “a pamphlet,” as a letter from Dickinson to Bowles suggests (L193). Emerson had much to say about the “portfolio” poets, but that term connotes the work of an amateur, a term few Dickinsonians would accept for these poems.

11. Michael Riffaterre’s *Semiotics of Poetry* describes the “hypogram,” the unseen hub in a poem about which its stated language and images revolve. He does not mention Dickinson in his work, but her habit of the elided subject or pronoun referent and the games she frequently plays via circuitous or incomplete syntax and sometimes wild metaphors make her a great test case. The text of a poem, says Riffaterre, is something that “results from the transformation of a word or sentence into a text, or the transformation of texts into a larger whole.” Hence, he continues, “a constant component of poetic significance is that the poem’s language looks as much like a ritual or a game (in many cases the poem is akin to a generalized pun) . . . as it does like a means of conveying sense.” The reader’s job, he says, is to perceive rather than to rationalize “what the detour turns about” (164). In other words, Michael Riffaterre is talking about what Dickinson calls “inference” in the last line of this fascicle.

12. See *Reading the Fascicles*, chapter 1 for a discussion of the way Dickinson centers the collection of Fascicle 21 with “They shut me up in Prose” (F1445) opposite “This was a Poet” (F1446). The two poems contrast the effects and purposes of prose (daily life, dullness) with those of poetry (freedom, readiness to bloom, ability to unsettle the reader) privileging the writer’s task: to surprise her readers.

13. It now seems redundant to criticize the thesis of William H. Shurr in one of the earliest of the fascicle studies. Shurr posits that Dickinson’s “There came a Day . . .” (F1325, F13) marks a high point in a relationship with “the Master,” whom he too-
confidently names as Charles Wadsworth. Further, in his book, he claims that the entire fascicle project is an account of the affair between the two. In order to make eight-hundred-plus poems fit this storyline, he leaps and lingers through all forty little books.

14. Barbara Mossberg alone, I think, takes on the poem, linking it (interesting in the fascicle context—which she does not mention) with the volcano poems. In discussing “Ah, Necromancy Sweet!” Mossberg speaks of the “sinister satisfaction of the “Ah”: “Only evil takes pleasure in evil,” she says. “The witch is the poet wanting the pain she inflicts to be immortal, incurable, irremediable—as permanent as the word” (192). David Porter mentions it in his first book on Dickinson, but only to discuss Dickinson's idiosyncratic use of the subjunctive mood (137). The poem does not make it onto the interesting list of “Poems with Spiritualist Implications,” appendix to Paul Crumbley's important article on “Dickinson’s Use of Spiritualism” (251).

15. See, for example, Christopher Benfey, who says that “My Life had stood” (Fr764, F34) “is about possession by the daemon . . . about the knowledge that power in a woman can seem destructive, and that you cannot live without the daemon once it has possessed you” (87). Paula Bennett’s reading of the same poem is much the same: “My Life had stood,” she says, “perfectly captures the nature, the difficulties, the risks involved in [the] task of self-definition and self-empowerment” (My Life A Loaded Gun [5]). In the poem, continues Bennett, “she is murderous. She is a gun. Her rage is part of her being” (7). More generally, Wendy Barker says that “at the heart of her own darkness lurked a monster at times as terrifying as the sun itself: her own energy, of necessity, often suppressed, loomed like a powerful force that seemed more akin to Satan than to God” (28). And E. Miller Budick’s study of the “symbolic vitality of Dickinson’s language” speaks of the “turbulence” and “cosmic disruption” of Dickinson’s diction and rhyme (13), saying that “her poems parade before us words veritably gone mad, words that . . . masquerade as the absoluteness of cosmic law” (43). An important overview of Dickinson’s spirituality is that by Joseph Raab (1998).

16. The “Mirth of Mail,” along with the images in the second stanza, calls to mind “The Rock of Ages.” Barton Levi St. Armand compares the poem to Thoreau’s comment that “Your ticket to the boxes admits you to the pit also” (“Heavenly Rewards” 232); Joanne Feit Diehl offers a reading through the “Romantic Imagination,” and says that Dickinson fuses “the threat of the Edwardsean pit with the Emersonian faith in the self,” and in so doing, subverts Emersonian power” (182); Judith Farr, in a similar vein, says that Dickinson’s art “is founded on thrilling loss” (Passion 182); most recently, Alfred Habegger has weighed in, considering the poem part of Dickinson’s relationship to Bowles. “A wounded Deer” with its Old Testament typography (“smitten rock”) is, says Habegger, Dickinson’s response to their disagreement about women in the public sphere, “a portent of what lay ahead for the tortured writer” (392).

17. Such debates are the focus of Margaret Dickie’s “Dickinson in Context” (1995); Mary Loeffelholz’s “What Is a Fascicle?” (1999); Cristanne Miller’s “Whose Dickinson?” (2000); and Heginbotham’s “Reading Dickinson” (2008, 90–91). The latter is one of several essays, including those by Tim Morris and Alexandra Socarides, that touch on the subject in A Companion to Emily Dickinson, edited by Martha Nell Smith and Mary Loeffelholz. Of course, the debate really began with the earliest reviews of the Manuscript Books, particularly those of Rosenthal and Gall (1983) and William Buckingham (1984), and the denigration of such studies by David Porter (“Dickinson’s

18. For discussions of the “intentional fallacy” in such criticism, see Heginbotham, “Dwelling” 39–41.

19. As with the first poem in the fascicle, the next two have attracted critical commentaries in other contexts. For example, Joanne Feit Diehl has noted the Keatsian quality of the “terrifying” figures in “To learn the Transport.” In her reading the “patient Laureates” suggest God, “the mysterious Bard” (102). I would add to Diehl’s reading the element of play (even admitting the “anguish”) brought to the gravity of Bardolotry. Readings like those of Diehl and mine in this section seem to complicate at least one poem that Dickinson’s earliest readers thought simple: an “Anonymous” reviewer in 1892 says that “To learn the Transport” “has a sweet, sympathetic note”; Martha Hale Shackford, however, notes “the subtlest harmonies” wrought out of “apparent contradictions and discords” (Blake and Wells 49 and 86).

20. Cameron notes that the version with “Portraits,” which appears in the second bifolium, and the second, which varies only in the word “Pictures,” appears in the fifth and last bifolium. “Because something is being narrated,” says Cameron, “the double instances cannot be seen as variants . . . but rather in terms of refrains” (Choosing 87). Cameron calls such serendipity “so idiosyncratic that it appears almost unprecedented in nineteenth-century American Poetry” (56). Bernard Frank, who does not note the near duplication nor the fascicle setting, concludes that there is no preference by Dickinson for either the “Portrait” or the “Pedantic Sunshine” in what he nicely calls “a mixed elegy” (202).

21. Guthrie speaks of Dickinson’s willingness to risk all through her poetry, of her “Promethean spirit” as she “makes forays into a place where it is always ‘north’” (Vision 61).

22. For example, Judith Farr speaks of it as part of the conversation with Master (Passion 213); coming just short of specifying him, Farr notes that Dickinson “herself was a volcano that concealed fiery depths beneath her quiet demeanor” and that Samuel Bowles called her “half angel, half demon” (214–15).

23. Harper’s (April 1852), in a learned and level tone; Putnam’s (January 1853), presented in Horace Greeley’s “Modern ‘Spiritualism’”; and Knickerbocker, not so likely part of the Dickinson household but one that may have made its way into conversations by their learned friends (April 1851, June 1852, August 1854—a satire). The so-called Rochester Rappings were of particular interest and were especially the butt of satire (Kucich 36–54). Journals that featured the movement included American Whig Review 14 (December 1851); Atlantic Monthly (1859); Gleason’s Pictorial Magazine 4 (June 1853); Brownson’s Quarterly Review (1854 and 1860); five different “Editor’s Drawer” columns in Harper’s in 1852–53; Graham’s Magazine (1855); New York Tribune (1850); and an article by John Greenleaf Whittier in United States Magazine and Democratic Review 13 (1843). On this subject, too, see Russell M. Goldfarb and Clare Goldfarb’s Spiritualism and Nineteenth Century Letters, 422–32.

24. For example, Orestes Brownson’s Spirit Rapper, published in 1854 (Kerr 65) was a popular book circulated in Boston in 1854, as was C.W. Roback’s The Mysteries of Astrology and Wonders of Magic, including a History of the Rise and Progress of Astrology and the Various Branches of Necromancy.
25. James Russell Lowell in 1851 turned his contempt into the humorous “The Unhappy Lot of Mr. Knott” (Kerr 22); in 1852 Artemus Ward, did so in “Among the Spirits”; and in 1856 Herman Melville did the same in “The Apple Tree.” Among those whose irony on the subject verged on glee were Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens), William Dean Howells, and Henry James. On the other hand, just about every member of the famous Beecher clan, including Harriet, reflected a serious concern in the subject, free from irony (Kerr 22–33). Braude notes that “the power of Emerson’s ideas helped fuel the movement he despised” (45). Even though Emerson and Thoreau spurned the movement, their lectures were enthusiastically attended by Spiritualists. The point of all this is that it would have been difficult for Dickinson not to have experienced the wave of spiritualism (and its interest in necromancy).

Chapter 4

1. My thanks to Anja Angelsen, Paul Goring, Jeremy Hawthorn, and Eli Løfaldli for contributions made during the writing of this essay, and to Paul Crumbley and Eleanor Heginbotham for comments and advice.

2. For an earlier and fuller treatment of the larger implications of this method of binding, see Alexandra Socarides, “Rethinking the Fascicles: Dickinson’s Writing, Copying, and Binding Practices.” Ralph Franklin describes the paper as folio (folded during manufacture, at which stage an embossment is added, G. & T. within a decorated vertical oval measuring 1.5 cm x 1.5 cm). The paper, he reports, is laid, cream, and blue-ruled (MB 482). The manuscript fascicle is MS Am 1118.3 (104–8) at Houghton Reading Room, Harvard College Library.

3. The notes to Susan were Fr457A, MS Am 1118.3 (292); and Fr477A MS Am 1118.3 (262). Susan received only two poems out of twenty-three: in 1862 as a whole, she received (in Franklin’s estimate) about eighteen of the 227 poems composed in the course of that year. Had the significance of those poems relied in any important way on their immediate or overall placement in a fascicle sequence, one would have thought that Dickinson would want to reflect that in some way. Of course, their placement in an overall and ongoing sequence could not have been reflected: Dickinson did not cease compiling poems in this way until much later, in the 1870s. There is also the possibility that withholding other poems from a fascicle helped her to disguise their larger meaning: sending only two was a form of camouflage. But this would suggest that Dickinson did not want to reveal significant aspects of her life to Susan, something most readers no longer accept, or that her audience, if she had one, was not local and known to her. However we choose to read this, it seems clear that Dickinson believed that the poems were quite capable of standing on their own.

4. Franklin records several exchanges between Dickinson and Henry Vaughan Emmons in 1853 and 1854 suggesting that she might have lent him “individual sheets, containing a few poems on each, unbound” (MB 8–9, 26).

5. This is not quite the same as saying that Dickinson did not want the poems to be read in the order of the fascicles. The motive then would be a desire to hide their contents and carefully to leak poems that had would not betray the story they contain. The two best-known interpretations of the fascicles are Dorothy Huff Oberhaus, Emily
Dickinson’s Fascicles: Method and Meaning, and William Shurr, The Marriage of Emily Dickinson: A Study of the Fascicles. But I should not be understood as saying that poems chosen for inclusion in correspondence are necessarily the best, either: Dickinson did not always retain copies of the poems sent in letters, and the choice of poem was often tailored to the correspondent—which is why Susan Dickinson, a devout Christian, often received more orthodox poems.

6. The distribution of poems by year was: 1858–43 poems; 1859–82; 1860–54; 1861–88; 1862–227; 1863–295; 1864–98; and 1865–229. These figures do not include working drafts. Of course, not all of the poems were included in the fascicles and sets. And many critics would argue the opposite: that the volume of poems in years with fascicles compared to years without suggests that the poems in years with are part of a massive poetic project united by an overall purpose or design.

7. And as R. W. Franklin writes in an appendix to his 1981 edition, seventeen poems were twice entered in the fascicles and sets: four are the same; two have a single variant, and the others “show substantial variation in their appearances, with the repetition recording further work on the poem” (MB 1415).

8. It was William Shurr who argued that the fascicles tell the tale of an impossible love affair between Dickinson and a married man, by whom she had a child: this man predeceases her. He claimed that there were “many poems which refer to a loved person as already dead,” and that one of these (“We cover thee—sweet face —,” Fr461, F22), “describes such a mysterious death, of someone deeply loved by Dickinson” (177). Dorothy Huff Oberhaus emphasizes the fascicles as a narrative of Christian doubt and faith, in which Dickinson “staked all on a single goal: the hope of being among the sacred sheep at the Judgment.” She reads “A solemn thing within the Soul” as deriving from a recurrent Christian and devotional tradition where the cultivation of souls is compared to harvesting (63).

9. Three of the poems in F22 were sent to friends: two to Susan Dickinson, and one to Samuel Bowles. The ones to Susan (Fr457 “Nature – sometimes sears a Sapling” and Fr477 “He fumbles at your Soul”) were thought to have been sent before they were recorded in the fascicle: in both instances, the latter version was altered from consecutive lines of verse in letters to lines divided by quatrains (eight lines to two quatrains in the first; twelve lines and a couplet to three quatrains and a couplet in the second). The one to Bowles (Fr478 “Just Once! Oh Least Request!”) was sent after it had been recorded in the fascicle, and in both versions there are two quatrains.

10. The gentiana nivalis, for example.

11. Beam can also suggest any large piece of timber, either in a building or a ship—and Dickinson plays on the convergence of eye-beam and structural support in very deliberate ways: the repeated event in the prison is what keeps her speaker from falling apart. It sustains her.

12. The literal situation might also include the following: the speaker recalls standing outside the prison before being admitted and confined there; the speaker is outside the prison at a regular time to visit someone inside. Bernard Mandeville, THE FABLE OF THE BEES: OR, Private Vices, Publick Benefits. The SECOND EDITION, Enlarged with many ADDITIONS. AS ALSO An ESSAY on CHARITY and CHARITY-SCHOOLS. And a Search into The NATURE of SOCIETY (LONDON: Printed for Edmund Parker at the Bible and Crown in Lombard-Street, 1723), 62. Not mentioning human eyes may
mean that the contrivance in question is a precursor to the Judas Hole—the earliest usage of that term is 1865, according to the *OED*, but there were apertures that performed a similar function (Burchfield 1:1517).

13. In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault writes: “In view of this, Bentham laid down the principle that power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so. In order to make the presence or absence of the inspector unverifiable, so that the prisoners, in their cells, cannot even see a shadow, Bentham envisaged not only venetian blinds on the windows of the central observation hall, but, on the inside, partitions that intersected the hall at right angles and, in order to pass from one quarter to the other, not doors but zig-zag openings; for the slightest noise, a gleam of light, a brightness in a half-opened door would betray the presence of the guardian. The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen” (196–97).

14. Nor can the error be blamed on erroneous dating: in Johnson’s edition of the poems, which Guthrie used, J65 is attributed to 1862, however (*Poems of Emily Dickinson* 2:503–4).

15. For a more detailed look at Dickinson’s illness, see Norbert Hirschhorn and Polly Longworth 316.

16. William Wordsworth, *Poetical Works*, 155–57. The word “plashy” is associated in the poem with the young hare “who is running races in her mirth”: much of its action from the eighth stanza onwards takes place beside “a pool bare to the eye of heaven” (156).

17. James R. Guthrie, *Emily Dickinson’s Vision*: 186, n. 8. Guthrie’s reading of the self-conscious element in the poem is in a footnote: What is slightly unappealing about the self-conscious argument is that it suggests that poetry is a substitute for real life, and a rather poor one at that.


19. L233 was to the unknown recipient addressed as “Master,” in 1861; L249 to Samuel Bowles in early 1862; L293 to Lavinia in 1864; L1042, one of the last, to Higginson in the spring of 1886. This connection between the poem and “The Prisoner of Chillon” is most comprehensively advanced by Jane Donahue Eberwein in *Dickinson: Strategies of Limitation*, 87–88. For a psychological discussion, see Vivian Pollak, *Dickinson: The Anxiety of Gender*, 129–31. There the phrase “When Memory was a Boy” is associated with the recovery of a “prelapsarian past” (134).

20. Bonivard in *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*,

21. For example, “see” is used 146 times (and is the 32nd most common of her words); “eye” 92 times (58th most common), and “eyes” 88 (61st).

22. In *Emily Dickinson’s Fascicles*, Oberhaus attends mainly to the fascicles, not the sets. Martha Lindblom O’Keefe’s privately printed *This Edifice: Studies in the Structure of the Fascicles of the Poetry of Emily Dickinson* also stops at the fortieth fascicle.


25. The poem’s use of “s” and “l” combinations in particular is characteristic of this fascicle’s attention to language as a system of sounds as well as sense: here it is “long sleep”; “Stretch of limb”; “stir of Lid”; in Fr.457, it is “Fainter leaves” and “further Seasons.”


27. Habegger 440. Habegger also makes the same connection between Susan’s letter and Higginson’s report of Dickinson’s comment.

28. Perry Miller 336. Zepper’s book, a manual on preaching organized according to traditional rhetorical categories (exordium, narration, proposition, confirmation, refutation and epilogue) was published in 1598: the comparison was a traditional one, then.

29. Dickinson’s own fondness for playing and listening to the piano is recorded by several of her friends: her pianoforte is currently housed at Harvard, where it is described thus: “Pianoforte; Renaissance revival square piano; floral and scroll carved legs and apron. Hallet, Davis & Co., Boston, Massachusetts; circa 1845. Brazilian rosewood, Brazilian rosewood veneer, spruce, ivory, iron; height 93.9 cm., width 207.0 cm., depth 99.0 cm. Emily Dickinson received this piano from her father in 1845, when she was fourteen.” Dickinson Family Artifacts (Dickinson Room), Houghton Library, Harvard University.

30. After leaving Amherst College, Park went on to become the Bartlett professor of sacred rhetoric at Andover Theological Seminary (1836–47), and then Professor of systematic theology at Andover, “arguably the most important position in nineteenth-century divinity” (Bruce Kulick, introduction to Park *Memorial Collection* n.p.). Park was described as “the greatest theologian of his time, the greatest American theologian since Jonathan Edwards” (Albert H. Plumb, “The Relation of Professor Park’s Theology to His Sermons,” in Park, *Memorial Collection*, 6), albeit a more liberal version whose Common Place Book criticized Edwards for too much emphasis on everlasting punishment and God’s wrath (see Vanderpool 291).


33. Sewall 359. Johnson and Ward Letters 1:64. Smith had moved to Europe for health reasons, first to Paris, France, in 1837, and then to Germany, where he embarked on a course of study that took him to Halle and Berlin between 1838 and 1840, when he returned to America. J. Alfred Guest, Amherst College Biographical Record, 1963: Biographical Record of the Graduates and Non-Graduates of the Classes of 1822–1962 Inclusive (Amherst, MA: Trustees of Amherst College, 1963), xlvi. A review of Henry Boynton Smith: His Life and Work (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1881) mentions August Neander in Berlin and F. A. G. Tholuck at Halle as the most prominent of the lecturers he heard (New Englander and Yale Review 40, no. 163 [November 1881]: 796). Dickinson wrote (in 1848, to Austin, while she was at South Hadley), that “Professor Smith. preached here last Sabbath & such sermons I never heard in my life. We were all charmed with him & dreaded to have him close.” Pomeroy Belden, a hellfire preacher, she was less impressed by: in the same letter she notes that he had been invited to South Hadley but hoped that “it will, WILL not be until my year is out” (L22).

34. He is alluded to in L9, to Abiah Root (12 January 1846): “I don’t go to school this winter except to a recitation in German. Mr. [Coleman] has a very large class, and father thought that I might never have another opportunity to study it” (L9). Coleman’s friendship with Neander resulted in the former’s A Church without a Bishop: The Apostolical and Primitive Church, Popular in Its Government, and Simple in Its Worship (Boston: Gould, Kendall and Lincoln, 1844), including an introductory essay, by Dr. Augustus Neander.

35. See the entry on Coleman in Johnson and Ward Letters 3, p.936. The connections between Amherst College and German institutions of higher learning did not end in the 1840s: Richard Henry Mather (class of 1857) studied at the University of Berlin (1858–59) and later became Instructor of Greek at Amherst College (1859–61: he was an assistant professor there between 1861 and 1864). See Guest, Amherst College Biographical Record, 1973 p. 84.

36. The phrase is from Gould’s daughter, Nellie Gould-Smith, in her introduction to In What Life Consists, and Other Sermons. The phrase “music of words” is quoted in Habegger 311: he also discusses the possibility of a romantic attachment between Gould and Dickinson (238–39). As Habegger also points out, Gould was one of the five editors of the Amherst College Indicator, published in June 1849 and April 1850. In the Amherst College library edition, his name is written in pencil beside a pen-portrait, and the reader is informed that he takes “a high stand” wherever he goes (The Indicator 2 [1849–50]: 30: Gould was over six feet tall). Dickinson had a valentine letter published in The Indicator (Letters 1:92). For a discussion of its contents, see Erkkila 144–45.


Chapter 5

1. In grouping Oberhaus, Heginbotham, and Cameron together, I am not suggesting these three works should be conflated with each other, but merely pointing out that none has achieved one of their principal goals: namely persuading readers that the fascicles provide stable contexts for the reading of the poems themselves. Taken individually, all these scholars, including those with whom I disagree the most, have, as I say, greatly enriched our understanding of individual poems and of the synergy that passes between them in the fascicle context (to my mind, fascicle scholarship’s greatest contribution to date). But the problem of fascicle unity itself, at least in this writer’s opinion, is irresolvable given the way Dickinson writes. For a more nuanced treatment of some of these scholars, see Crumbley’s essay on Fascicle 40 in this book. (See 192, 247 n.1, 248 n.3)

2. In Choosing not Choosing, Cameron sought a way out of the problem of fascicle unity by shifting the burden of analysis away from the thematic and toward structural issues instead. Taking as her model the poet’s habit of leaving variants in place, Cameron argues that the individual fascicles are structured along analogous lines. Just as Dickinson left multiple word choices as, effectively, parts of her poems, refusing to choose between them, so with the fascicle groupings. By offering readers multiple viewpoints on one or more ideas, they allow Dickinson to mediate through her poems’ arrangements a prismatic, even disjunctive, “self,” that chooses and “not chooses” at the same time. This is a powerful thesis that avoids or at least puts the brakes on what has been the most arguable aspect of fascicle readings: the desire to make individual fascicles tell unified narratives. However, while I agree that Dickinson’s poems, in the fascicles as well as outside them, offer multiple (and often contradictory) viewpoints, I see no need to tie this multi-perspectivalness to fascicle structure itself. (See Socarides for a similar critique.)

3. In email correspondence, Vivian Pollak pointed out, rightly, that I am substituting chronological “unity” for thematic or structural unity. This is unquestionably true, and it puts my entire argument on a speculative basis since there is no way to be sure Dickinson did not copy into Fascicle 16 poems written at a much earlier date. However, I believe there are enough poems in the fascicle that “work” better if one assumes they were written in response to the war to justify my approach. Among the most important of these poems are “’Twas just this time, last year, I died” (Fr344), “’Tie the strings of my Life, My Lord” (Fr338), and “’Tis so appalling – it exhilarates –” (Fr341). On the other hand, there are at least two poems, “Before I got my eye put out –” (F336B) and “He showed me Hights I never saw –” (Fr346B), which could well have been written without the war in mind. For a Gothic reading of Fr16, see Wardrop in Martin (142–64).

4. See “Emily Dickinson and Her Peers” 290–95. Also see Sr. Armand 108–9 and Phillips 46–51. My treatment of “I felt a Funeral” in this essay represents a condensed version of my comments on the poem in the earlier essay.

5. The evidence for “It dont sound so terrible – quite – as it did –” (Fr384) is quite strong—consisting, again, of verbal echoes in Dickinson’s letter to Bowles. However, the poem’s title line makes clear that the impact of Stearns’s “murder,” as Dickinson calls it in this poem (and in the Bowles letter), was fading by late summer when, according to Franklin, Fascicle 19 was put together. That this poem coexists with poems such as “The
Grass so little has to do" (Fr379B), and "I cannot dance opon my Toes –" (F381B), also in Fascicle 19, thus urges strongly against taking the unusual degree of thematic unity in Fascicle 16 as a model for other fascicles. In this respect, Fascicle 16, which at eleven poems is the smallest of the fascicles, may well be unique.

6. The multi-perspectivalness of Dickinson's Civil War poetry has been pointed out by many different scholars. Barrett, for example, notes that “[w]hile some of [Dickinson’s Civil War poems] are marked by Dickinson’s characteristic oblique and indirect stances, still others read like conventional elegies and sentimental depictions of soldiers’ Christian martyrdom on the battlefield” (“Introduction,” 18). Similarly, Friedlander describes Dickinson’s “wartime writing” as “encompass[ing] multiple, contradictory forms of response, a diversity of representational strategies and of the attitudes expressed that strongly suggest a project of coming to terms with war” (“Battle of Ball’s Bluff” 1583). To my knowledge, only Phillips and Marcellin suggest that Dickinson actually used the voices of others (i.e., dramatic monologues, or as I shall call them, dramatic lyrics) in diversifying her approach, a position rebutted by Richards (“‘How News’” 163–64). Although I agree with Richards that Dickinson was keenly aware of her fragmentary knowledge of war itself, like Phillips, Barrett, Marcellin, and Friedlander, I do not think this stopped her from trying to imagine how others (both soldiers and noncombatants) responded to it. Indeed, the very line I have taken for my title, “Looking at Death, is Dying,” suggests that Dickinson’s intense scrutinizing of others was based on a strong belief in empathic connection. The main point, however, is that all these scholars agree on the substantial diversity of Dickinson’s Civil War verse, a point also made at book length by Wolosky as well as in her essay on Dickinson’s Civil War poetry in Pollak.

7. “I am quite ready to die an ignominious death, as a private or officer, or do anything for our beloved country,” Stearns said to his father (quoted in [Stearns] 78). See also St. Armand 114). St. Armand believes that Stearns was in fact hoping for a martyr’s death, in which case, he achieved at least half his goal. The other half I leave to God.

8. Along with Cameron, one could list Wolosky (“Emily Dickinson,” in Bercovitch 427–80, Crumbley 11–43), Marcellin, and Messmer, whose monograph, A Vice for Voices, addresses Dickinson’s multiple voices in her letters.

9. For more on lyric contract see notes 35 and 36, and pages 111, 128–29 of this essay.

10. Although “dramatic monologue” has been the term of choice today for any poem employing an imagined speaker, Browning, the putative inventor of the genre, did not use it. According to Páraic Finnerty in “‘It does not mean me, but a supposed person’: Browning, Dickinson and the Dramatic Lyric,” the term “was first used in the mid-nineteenth century . . . [but it] was not fully defined until 1908, when the American critic Samuel Silas Curry classified it as one end of a conversation.” Browning’s own terminology stressed the hybridic nature of his verse, variously identifying his poems as “dramatic pieces,” “dramatic lyrics,” “dramatic idylls,” or “dramatic romances.” In The Poetical Works Complete 1833–1888, he says of his poems that “the majority” might come “under the head of ‘Dramatic Pieces’; being, though often Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine” (Italics mine. Quoted in Browning, The Poems and Plays 3). “Dramatic lyrics” best describes Dickinson’s practice as well as that of other Anglo-American poets of the period. In such poems, which in themselves, I would argue, constitute a lyric subgenre, the poet explicitly blurs the line between the lyric and the dramatic by (effectively) fulfilling all
the criteria for the lyric (meter, rhyme, stanzaic pattern, etc.), save one, the speaker’s imaginary status, or, put another way, his or her objectification. These poems thus introduced the possibility of “objectivity” (that is, a realist stance) into the heart of that most subjective and personal of poetic genres, the poem of the poet’s “I,” precisely the kind of poem that until recently most scholars assumed Dickinson wrote to the exclusion of everything else.

11. Along with Finnerty, Cristanne Miller has also recently adopted the term “dramatic lyrics” for this subset of poems in Dickinson’s opus. (See Reading in Time: Emily Dickinson and the Nineteenth Century, 12, 148, 207n.27, 241n. 43) It is possible that Dickinson’s use of personae will become the next big issue on Dickinson criticism, as it goes directly to the heart of how we read her, even as Virginia Jackson argues (Misery 6–7).

By definition, posthumously spoken poems involve invented speakers; however, some of Dickinson’s posthumous poems make a clear identification with the poet, while others, just as clearly, do not. The real problem lies with those many poems, be they posthumously spoken or not, which can be read fruitfully both ways at once, for example, in Fascicle 16: “Before I got my eye put out,” “He showed me Hights,” and “I like a Look of Anguish.”

12. See, for example, the following poems in Browne: Anonymous, “Enlisted To-Day” (45–47); Margaret Junkin Preston, “Only a Private” (69–70); Forcyethe Willson, “Boy Brittan” (74–77); Francis O. Ticknor, “Little Giffen of Tennessee” (78–79); Walt Whitman, “Come up from the fields, father” (133–35); Maria La Coste, “Somebody’s Darling” (174–75); and Kate Putnam Osgood, “Driving Home the Cows” (213–14). For an extremely helpful site listing online resources for Civil War poetry, see http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/lcpoetry/cwanth.html (accessed December 23, 2009).

13. For some poems featuring veteran soldiers see in Browne: Bayard Taylor, “Scott and the Veteran” (43–45); Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, “Malvern Hill” (110), and Forcyethe Willson, “The Old Sergeant” (151). I should add that although Dickinson was clearly drawing on stereotypes for both “’Twas just this time” and “Tie the strings,” in each case, the poem bears her own stamp.

14. “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (King James version 1 Cor. 13:12). Spiritualist forms of consolation were especially instrumental in popularizing the literalization of sight in the afterlife both during and after the war and heavily influenced nominally Christian writers such as Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, concerned with salvaging what they could of an embittered faith. See Phelps and McGarry. Discussing both the Civil War and the nineteenth century’s cult of a “love religion,” St. Armand touches on Dickinson’s links to spiritualism in Emily Dickinson and Her Culture (99–101, 147).

15. For a perceptive comparison of Dickinson’s attitude towards volunteerism and that of Julia Ward Howe, see Bergland 134–45.

16. See in Piatt, for example, “Her Blindness in Grief” (49–51), “That New World” (61), “Comfort by a Coffin” (64 and 65). Nowhere do these two strong women poets come closer than in their shared skepticism regarding the efficacy and, indeed, good faith of conventional forms of consolation.

17. In Exod. 33:20, God says: “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.” In “To pile like Thunder to it’s close,” Dickinson puts it more succinctly: “For none see God and live –” (Fr1353).
18. Both Farr (Passion 158–60) and Cameron (81–83, 149–51) read “I showed her Hights” (F346A), and “He showed me Hights” (F346B) as concluding in rejection. I also lean toward that view. However, the conclusion of “He showed me Hights” is sufficiently ambiguous that it can fairly be listed as a posthumously spoken poem for purposes of discussion here. Certainly it deals with what one can reasonably hope to “see”/“know” after death.

19. As Wolosky observes, Dickinson was profoundly ambivalent over the question of self-sacrifice for the greater good, which, of course, is the soldier’s first duty (“Public and Private” 118–25). At points, as in “The Martyr Poets – did not tell –” (Fr665), which I follow St. Armand in interpreting as about soldiers (112), she appears to pay homage to their self-sacrifice, but in other poems, like “It feels a shame to be Alive –,” she appears to question whether the sacrifice was worth it or not (Fr524).

20. Basing his thinking on “When I was small, a Woman died –” (F318), Friedlander argues that Dickinson was intrigued with the idea of publishing and that, in its patriotic fervor, this poem shows signs of her intention to fit her verse to the marketplace (1584–85). Although, as I have demonstrated, I too think Dickinson drew on popular Civil War poetry, I do not think Friedlander’s further assumption—that Dickinson was “testing” alternatives with the marketplace in mind—is necessary to explain her derivativeness, nor the contradictions to which it gave rise.

21. Spiritualism’s rise and progress in the nineteenth century and its impact on women writers in particular has been canvassed with some thoroughness from different angles by Braude; Buescher; Bennett, in Poets; and Goldsmith.

22. For a similar emptying out of the speaker’s immediate reality in another spiritualist poem, see my discussion of “Sister Josie” by Clara Longdon in Bennett, Poets 118–19.

23. In total, Shiloh cost 110,053 lives and Fort Donelson, 32,167.

24. One suspects that “rapt”’s derivation from rapere—to seize, carry off, plunder, or rape—is operative in this poem, albeit subliminally.

25. According to the 1859 Webster’s, to wink, which shares the same root as “to wince,” is to shut one’s eyes briefly. Meanings for the phrase “To wink at” include “to seem not to see” and “to overlook, as something not perfectly agreeable.” In the context of Dickinson’s poem, not winking would then mean being able to look steadfastly at something that is disagreeable, as, for example, the speaker does in “I like a look of Agony” (Fr339), the poem I treat next, and, as I discuss below, as Stearns’s father was spared having to do by the doctors who handled the young man’s body on its return to Amherst.

26. Dickinson’s emphasis on smoke and lightning strongly urges a reading of “When we stand” as a Civil War poem. See, for example, Piatt’s “My Dead Fairies.” Here the mother-speaker tries to protect her son from the ugly realities of war, by substituting his “rain” over the “blood” she cannot say, and using “lightning” for gunfire, saying of the “fairies” (i.e., the confederate soldiers) that they were “drowned in drops of – ‘Rain?’ / They were burned to death with lightning” (19). “Smoke,” of course, was conventionally associated with battle, as, for example, in President Stearns’s remarkable last sketch of his son, published in the memorial volume Adjutant Stearns (1862): “as soon as the smoke had cleared away, and the roar of cannon ceased, a beautiful bird rose and hovered over the camp, and sang. . . . Thus calmly rise the spirits of Christian soldiers” (158).
Stearns’s point—that once the smoke has cleared one can see clearly (and praise God with a calm mind)—is so eerily close to that in Dickinson’s poem, that it is hard not to wonder if he was the butt of the poem’s sarcasm. The book itself was in the Dickinsons’ library.

27. Commenting on “My Triumph lasted till the Drums” (F1212), Wolosky contrasts Dickinson with Julia Ward Howe, noting that Dickinson “eschews such a visionary grasp of the whole, remaining caught instead in a fragmentary present. And her ultimate image of repudiation is a ‘Bayonet,’ whose contrition offers ‘nothing’ to the dead it neither redeems nor restores” (“Public and Private” 113).

28. Interestingly “I like a look” is a rewrite of a much earlier and much less successful poem, “A throe opon the features —” (F105B, Fascicle 5), suggesting that the war sharpened Dickinson’s pen as well as her thoughts on death.

29. “Minie balls” were a kind of muzzle-loading rifle bullet, named after their inventor, Claude Etienne Minié. However, given Dickinson’s emphasis on the contrast between Frazar’s “big” heart and the comparatively tiny size of the ball that killed him, a submerged graphic pun on either “minim,” which according to Webster’s (1859) literally meant “something exceeding small,” or on “miniature,” seems possible here.

30. See also pp. 104–14, for St. Armand’s full discussion of Stearns’s importance to Dickinson, her family, and the town of Amherst.

31. According to the 1859 Webster’s, a lodge was “a small house, or habitation, in a park or forest,” and a porter was “a man that has the charge of a door or gate; a door-keeper.” Their presence in this poem is odd enough to suggest that Dickinson is making a specific point with them. As a noun, “lodge” appears only once in her poetry, and “porter” is used only twice. Neither word is used in her letters in the sense used in this poem.

32. See “This World is not conclusion” (F373; Fascicle 18): “It beckons, and it baffles / / Philosophy, dont know / . . . / Narcotics cannot still the Tooth / That nibles at the soul . . .” Also written, according to Franklin, in the summer of 1862, this poem strongly suggests that Dickinson’s dark night of the soul was precipitated, as Wolosky argues, by the war.


The content of this and the next paragraph is deeply indebted to Vivian Pollak, who in an extended phone conversation walked me through the distinctions I wished to make between poems generally expressive of Dickinson’s polyvocality (or heteroglossia) and dramatic lyrics.

34. Beginning with Reynolds, Beneath the American Renaissance, literary studies of the heteroglossic nature of nineteenth-century culture are legion. Some of the more important for me are Danky, Fahs, Haralson, Lehuu, Levine, Lott, Okker, Price and Smith, Sizer, Wald, and the essays in Bennett, Kilcup, and Schweighauser. For single-author studies and for anthologies, see the “Works Cited and Recommended” section by Schweighauser in Bennett, Kilcup, and Schweighauser. Bluntly, there is almost nothing in Schweighauser’s capacious bibliography that does not support or provide evidence for the heterogeneity of nineteenth-century culture and the poetry to which it gave rise.
35. As Virginia Jackson argues, the romantic lyric (putatively, the poem of the poet’s “I”) was not an all-dominating form in the nineteenth century. It only became so under the aegis of the New Criticism in the 1930s, when what she and Yopie Prins call “lyrical reading” received its academic imprimatur. Browning’s importance lies in the fact that he was the first to create a theoretical space between dramatic lyrics and the romantic lyric, against which he was revolting. Browning’s defense of his own, as he saw it, realist, poetic is encapsulated in the poetic prologue to his last volume, Asolando. It hardly needs saying, however, that such a theorization of the breaking of the “lyric contract” was only possible once the contract itself had been established—as it was in the Lyrical Ballads. That is, the seeds for lyrical reading and hence for the romantic lyric’s ultimate triumph were laid in 1798, flying in the face of centuries of verse (e.g., sonnet sequences, satires, epics, Provencal love poetry, and so on) wherein the role of convention in the construction of speakers and the situations they described was taken for granted. In this sense Dickinson’s inordinate use of “I” did make her a pivotal figure of great importance. The question now is, how far can her “I” be trusted, or, put another way, when she uses “I,” how do we know it is Dickinson speaking or a “supposed person”? Can we? Or has that aspect of her work become permanently destabilized as well?

36. On this point Phillips writes, “The critics who assume that the origins of [“I felt a Funeral”]’s images and events are only in the poet’s preoccupation with the self deny the efficacy of imaginative intelligence in transfiguring perceptions of the experiences of others as well as oneself into evocative language. But those critics also deny Emily Dickinson a measure of her humanity” (52), a point I view as well taken.

Chapter 7


2. For some readers this is far more than simply the beginning of a practice; it is the beginning of a structure, sequence, or narrative that will come to fruition in the thirty-nine fascicles that follow. See Oberhaus, Emily Dickinson’s Fascicles, in which she argues that Fascicle 40 is “a carefully constructed poetic sequence and the triumphant conclusion of a long single work, the account of a spiritual and poetic pilgrimage that begins with the first fascicle’s first poem” (3). See also Shurr, The Marriage of Emily Dickinson, in which, starting with Fascicle 1, he maps the “phases or stages of the events” that he argues unfold chronologically over the course of the fascicles (5). See Heginbotham, Dwelling in Possibilities, in which she reads each fascicle as its own sequence. Heginbotham does not directly link the first to the last, but instead analyzes the connections among and between various fascicles, calling the first fascicle the “impressionistic introduction to the fascicle project” (120).

3. For one explanation of how this works, see Cameron, Choosing Not Choosing 3–29.

4. For characterizations of Fascicle 1, see Cameron, Choosing Not Choosing, where she refers to it as “a grouping that asks about the relation between nature, death and immortality” and suggests the questions that it poses: “Is death part of nature or does
it mark the end of nature? Can death be redeemed in nature or can it only be rectified by immortality?” (85). See also Paul Crumbley’s article, “Fascicle One: The Gambler’s Recollection,” in which he argues that “The twenty poems that make up the first fascicle trace three cycles, each of which shows speakers moving into or away from the memory of consensual selfhood epitomized by the gambler.” Last, see Heginbotham, Dwelling in Possibilities, for a study of the relation between Fascicle 1 and Fascicle 14, in which she describes the setting of Fascicle 1 as “a woodsy garden” and argues that the poems move through time, “beginning with the autumn of the gentian and moving to the summer of the rose” (120).

5. See Werner, Emily Dickinson’s Open Folios: Scenes of Reading, Surfaces of Writing, where she argues that each “volume” of the fascicles “constitutes a ‘room of her own,’ an enclosed textual space in which Dickinson explored the contents of privacy and power” (12). See also Dickie, “Dickinson in Context,” where she suggests the insular nature of the fascicles by arguing that they create a problem for feminist critics because they give us a picture of “the poet in her workshop at a point when feminist critics have been working to bring her out into the world” (321).

6. For instance, we know that there were often pre-fascicle drafts that Dickinson usually destroyed once she copied a poem onto fascicle paper and that Dickinson also often made drafts of her letters, which she destroyed once she made a copy suitable for sending. More problematically, we know that certain correspondents—for instance, her cousins Louise and Frances Norcross—were selective about which of Dickinson’s letters and poems they chose to share with Dickinson’s editors. The Norcross sisters also edited and transcribed many of Dickinson’s writings themselves instead of handing over the originals. For this reason, it is hard to know the extent of what Dickinson sent them and what these documents looked like. (See White, “Letter to the Light: Discoveries in Dickinson’s Correspondence,” 2–4, where she reproduces a recently discovered full letter to the Norcross sisters, therefore giving readers some insight into what they cut from Dickinson’s letters.) For many critics, the most problematic situation is that many of Dickinson’s manuscripts were mutilated, erased, and destroyed by one or more persons. Most fingers point at Austin Dickinson and Mabel Loomis Todd, both of whom had something at stake in tempering Dickinson’s expressions of affection for her sister-in-law, Sue. For a thorough discussion of the role that Austin Dickinson and Mabel Loomis Todd have played in the reception of Dickinson’s poems and letters, see Smith, Rowing in Eden: Rereading Emily Dickinson, 10–49.

7. Many thanks to Maggie Humberston at the Lyman and Merrie Wood Museum of Springfield History, who was able to find these circulation numbers for me.

8. For other readings of this poem, see Dandurand, “Another Dickinson Poem,” 434–37; and Petrino 153.

9. See chapter 2 of Socarides, Dickinson Unbound, where I undertake a more thorough investigation of this text and, in particular, the issues about genre that it raises.

10. While Johnson and Ward suggest that Dickinson may have enclosed a poem in her letter of January 11, 1862, to Samuel Bowles, this poem has never been identified and therefore the enclosures to Higginson have, for a long time, been considered her first. See Letters of Emily Dickinson, 390–91.

11. “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers” (Fr124) had been sent to Sue in three different states of revision, had been published in the Springfield Daily Republican on March
Notes to Chapter 8

1, 1862, and had been copied into both Fascicle 6 and Fascicle 10. For the rich history of the writing, revision, and publication of “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers –,” see Poems of Emily Dickinson (1998), 159–64, and Hart and Smith, Open Me Carefully: Emily Dickinson’s Intimate Letters to Susan Huntington Dickinson, 97–100. “I’ll tell you how the Sun rose –” (Fr204) and “The nearest Dream recedes – unrealized –” (Fr304) had been copied into Fascicles 10 and 14 respectively, the first in early 1861 and the second in early 1862. “We play at Paste –” (Fr282) is the only poem that had not already been copied into a fascicle and may not have been sent to anyone prior to its inclusion in this letter. According to Franklin, three years later Dickinson made a fair copy of this poem on embossed notepaper with the heading “Emily” and signature “Emily,” although it was not folded or sent. See Poems of Emily Dickinson (1998), 300.

12. Although Higginson said the enclosures were “Your Riches, taught me, pov - erty –” (Fr418) and “A bird came down the walk” (Fr359)—see Letters of Emily Dick - inson (1958), 405—Johnson decided otherwise, and Franklin concurs with Johnson’s assessment. “There came a Day at Summer’s full” (Fr325) had been copied into Fascicle 13, “Of all the Sounds despatched abroad” (Fr334) into Fascicle 12, and “South Winds jostle them –” (Fr98), in addition to having been sent to Louise and Frances Norcross as well as Thomas Gilbert, had been copied into Fascicle 5.

13. See L74a and L74c, L173, and L198. Many thanks to Leslie Morris and the staff of the Houghton Library at Harvard University, who gave me access to these unpublished manuscripts.

14. For a strict marking of what genre Dickinson is writing in when, see Mitchell, Measures of Possibility: Emily Dickinson’s Manuscripts. For a discussion of the “lyrical letter,” see Hewitt, Correspondence and American Literature, 1770–1865, 142–72. For a discussion of Dickinson’s “letter-poems,” see Hart and Smith xxv–xxvi.

15. Note that the word “flood” in the fascicle version has been changed to “shatter.” This was not indicated as a variant in the fascicle and is the only word that has been changed.

16. Many thanks to Eric Fraser at the Boston Public Library for giving me access to this manuscript, which is reproduced in full in So carides, Dickinson Unbound, 61–63.

17. See Heginbotham, Dwelling in Possibilities, 116. See 125–32 for an extensive study of this poem in both the Fascicle 1 and Fascicle 14 contexts.

Chapter 8

1. For consistency with the essays here, I use “fascicles,” the name used by some of Dickinson’s most influential editors. Mabel Loomis Todd refers to “fascicules.” R. W. Franklin uses “fascicles,” departing from his predecessor, Thomas H. Johnson, who calls them “packets.” I prefer “manuscript volumes,” a common nineteenth-century term. Helen Hunt Jackson wrote to Dickinson: “I have a little manuscript volume with a few of your verses in it—and I read them very often” (L444a). Lavinia Dickinson used the term while working with the poems she discovered after her sister’s death. “Sets” is the name Franklin gives to his organized groups of unbound sheets where stationer - ies match, and poems are arranged on the page as they are in the fascicles: “sets” are “grouped here by similarity of paper and date” (MB xi).
2. In *Open Me Carefully: Emily Dickinson’s Intimate Letters to Susan Huntington Dickinson*, Martha Nell Smith and I assign documents to the early, middle, and late periods of each decade, unless there is reliable evidence for specification.

3. Debate in Dickinson studies over whether line breaks are intentional, or a matter of line length and paper size, began soon after the publication of Franklin’s facsimile edition. Poet, painter, and literary theorist Susan Howe was among the first to challenge the editor’s claim that the divisions are accidents. See the section of Franklin’s introduction to the variorum, pages 34–36, beginning: “Available space ordinarily determined the physical line breaks in Dickinson’s poems.” Franklin writes that his edition, “unconstrained by incidental characteristics of the artifact,” “restores the lines, though also recording the turnovers” (35–36). A section called “Division” lists the last word of each physical line that differs from the measured line, without rationale for or explanation of how this information might be used.


   A number of Dickinson scholars disagree with Howe and support Franklin’s position. See work by Jay Ladin, Cristanne Miller, Domhnall Mitchell, Christina Pugh, and John Shoptaw. My own views were originally influenced by Howe and by manuscript scholar and textual editor Martha Nell Smith. I am also indebted to the work of Marta Werner and Jerome McGann.

4. Franklin’s text and my own differ from Johnson’s in two instances: Johnson capitalizes the “c” in “chambers” and the “s” in “snow,” whereas I do not, and Franklin does not.


7. Email correspondence, July 2008.

8. I am grateful to Tilly Shaw, my dissertation adviser at the University of California, Santa Cruz, for providing me with the phrase “distributes the centers of the verse.” In the introduction to his verse translation of *Beowulf*, Heaney discusses the midline dynamic of alliterative poetry, explaining that “where end-rhyme puts the most prominent aural feature at the end of the verse, alliteration creates a dynamic across the middle of the line” (xix).

9. I first encountered the term “range of rhyme” in James Guthrie’s 1989 essay, “Near Rhymes and Reason: Style and Personality in Dickinson’s Poetry,” where Guthrie’s analysis of style is useful, yet marred by his problematic claim that her choice of near rhyme serves as evidence that her style is “self-referential” and her personality “eccentric” (75).

10. I make similar points in two other essays. See “Hearing the Visual Lines: How Manuscript Study Can Contribute to an Understanding of Dickinson’s Prosody,” with
Sandra Chung; and “Alliteration, Emphasis, and Spatial Prosody in Dickinson’s Manuscript Letters.”

11. In editing Dickinson’s writings, identifying capitalizations can be difficult. Johnson’s penciled notes, as he edited poems at Harvard University’s Houghton Library, show that he occasionally crossed out a letter and changed his reading of a capitalization, especially with “O/o” and “C/c.” Franklin’s capitalizations sometimes differ from Johnson’s, as noted above. Martha Nell Smith and I did not always agree on capitalizations for our transcripts of manuscript poems in “Emily Dickinson’s Correspondences: A Born-Digital Textual Inquiry.” In “Editorial Notes” to the electronic edition we record our differences.

12. “The Development of Dickinson’s Style” deserves more attention. Morris calculates that “eighty-eight percent of Dickinson’s rhymes are of three phonetic types: exact, consonantal, and vowel rhymes,” that the early poems mainly employ exact rhyme, “80.4% in 1850–1854, down to 68.1% in 1858, then in 1864, 28.3% and in 1865, 29.9%” (162). I disagree with Morris when he maintains that “after 1865, Dickinson wrote so little poetry that analysis of trends is not reliable” and that she “stopped her great outpouring of poetry in 1866, and the technique she had developed through so many hundreds of poems shows no strong growth in any direction thereafter” (163). However, his conclusion that “rhyme and enjambment developed over time” will lead to new directions in fascicle scholarship and prosody studies.

13. In two previously published essays on Dickinson’s prosody, I discuss at greater length the role of studies in elocution and handwriting on her visual strategies of manuscript. See “Hearing the Visual Lines,” with Sandra Chung; and “Alliteration, Emphasis, and Spatial Prosody in Dickinson’s Manuscript Letters.”

14. It is striking that prosody, an area of knowledge that today most people know little about—few even know the word, or they assume it involves prose—was once routinely studied in grammar classes in American schools. In two previously published essays on Dickinson’s prosody, I discuss at greater length the role of her studies in elocution and handwriting on her visual strategies of manuscript. See “Hearing the Visual Lines,” with Sandra Chung; and “Alliteration, Emphasis, and Spatial Prosody in Dickinson’s Manuscript Letters.”

15. I use the same examples from Ebenezer Porter in “Hearing the Visual Lines,” and I also discuss Porter’s work in “Alliteration, Emphasis, and Spatial Prosody in Dickinson’s Manuscript Letters.” The instruction of this particular elocutionist, so well known to Dickinson, is the most effective way to show the meticulous care readers were urged to take in articulating each consonant and vowel.

16. Another critic to explain the importance of the dash as a “tool” that “graphically suggests sound and meaning” is Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, who writes in her 1968 study, The Voice of the Poet: “Whereas punctuation in general was becoming more syntactical and more fixed as the nineteenth century advanced, Emily Dickinson never abandoned the rhetorical basis” (196). Lindberg-Seyersted sees the dashes as “pointings” and describes them as “indicators of the pause of anticipation or suspense” and “as giving the stress of italics to certain words” (196). Lindberg-Seyersted explains in a footnote that her quotations are from “‘Stops’ or How to Punctuate,” by George Paul Macdonnell, writing as Paul Allardyce, published in London in 1884. For an overview of critical theories on Dickinson’s dash before 1968, see Lindberg-
Seyersted’s complete section on “Punctuation and Other Graphic Representations of Sound and Meaning,” 180–96.

17. See also Paul Crumbley’s Inflections of the Pen.

18. Wylder agrees with Porter that “various attitudes or tones [are] conveyed through the different vocal inflections,” and concludes that a “rising slide” “indicates that the word it follows is heard with an upward slide,” and that “such an intonation conveys attitudes of question, incomplete thought, tender emotion, or something implied or insinuated.” She notes that the mark may appear “high above” the word, and that “the higher the slide, the more intensive the inflection heard with the word, or the more emphatic the attitude conveyed” (68–69).

19. “Wild nights – Wild nights !” is the first of four manuscript images included in The Last Face; see Wylder’s print translation of the poem on page 77.

20. In Open Me Carefully, Smith and I did not have the option of using alternative typography to represent the multifaceted dashes; we use the symbol of an apostrophe to denote the mark. See, for example, “Ah – Teneriffe !” (121) where exclamatory dashes appear in three places, including after the signature at the end of the poem, “Emily –.” (In the correspondence to Susan Dickinson, the exclamatory dash often follows Dickinson’s signature.) Fascicle 35’s “Ah – Teneriffe – receding / Mountain,” “about 1863,” also uses the exclamatory dash, after “Ah” in the opening line, above, and in the last lines: “Ah – Teneriffe – We’re / pleading still –.”

21. In the second stanza Franklin does not capitalize “Again”; Johnson does.

22. I also make this point in “Hearing the Visual Lines,” and in “Alliteration, Emphasis, and Spatial Prosody in Dickinson’s Manuscript Letters.”

Chapter 9

1. In referring to the fascicle as a meditation, I draw on a key term in Dorothy Huff Oberhaus’s important study of Fascicle 40. In Emily Dickinson’s Fascicles: Method and Meaning, Oberhaus situates the poems in “The Christian meditative tradition,” arguing that “the fortieth fascicle is a carefully constructed poetic sequence and the triumphant conclusion of a long single work, the account of a spiritual and poetic pilgrimage that begins with the first fascicle’s first poem” (3). My aim in this essay is not to refute Oberhaus but rather to draw on her careful readings as they contribute to my own interest in a different kind of meditation: Dickinson’s artistic meditation on the life of poems and her role as a poet. Mine is an alternative analysis in which Jesus does not play the central role that Oberhaus attributes to him. In keeping with my more secular orientation, I identify lovers and readers where Oberhaus identifies Jesus and readers as primary addressees. Readers interested in a meticulous reading of the poems as part of a Christian conversion narrative should read the Oberhaus book. For additional scholarship on the religious significance of the fascicles, readers might also consult Martha O’Keefe’s 1986 work, This Edifice: Studies in the Structure of the Fascicles of the Poetry of Emily Dickinson. The reading I present here does not propose a coherent narrative that unites either the poems of Fascicle 40 or the poems that make up all forty fascicles. I am more interested in the way poems in Fascicle 40 provide a thematic rather than a narrative meditation.
2. We do not of course possess a complete record of Dickinson’s correspondence, so it is impossible to know for certain how many of her poems she would have distributed through letters at this point in her life. It is safe to say that by this time she had sent out at least 251 poems.

3. Though my reading is not connected to narrative, important scholarly work has proposed narrative structures for the forty fascicles. I have mentioned in note 1 that Dorothy Huff Oberhaus presents the fascicles as contributing to a Christian conversion narrative. Ruth Miller, the first scholar to publish a study of the complete fascicles, also identified clear narrative features, only for her each individual fascicle contained a narrative the main features of which were repeated in all forty: “Each 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” (249). The most controversial scholarly effort to identify a narrative that unites all the fascicles was provided by William Shurr in The Marriage of Emily Dickinson: A Study of the Fascicles. Drawing on what he refers to as “snatches of narrative . . . that connect to establish a ‘program’ which is carried on throughout the fascicles and beyond” (4), Shurr argues that the “narrative core of Dickinson’s fascicle poetry is the classic love triangle involving the married couple and the outsider” (30). For Shurr, the married couple was the clergyman Charles Wadsworth and his wife, and Dickinson was the outsider. Readers interested in the narrative dimensions of Dickinson’s fascicles would benefit by consulting these works.

4. I should point out that in constructing Fascicle 40 Dickinson used a “greenish white, and blue-ruled” paper (Franklin, MB 974) that Franklin designates as “SUPER (blue rule)” (1408). This paper does not appear in any other bound fascicle and shows up on only one other occasion as one of the two sheets that make up Set 4 (1022). Dickinson’s choice of paper does distinguish this fascicle from other bound fascicles, though it is difficult to say how significant this might be. Her tendency was to use the same paper for a series of fascicles, but this pattern changed with the last three fascicles, where she uses a different kind of paper for each one. It is tempting to speculate that her inconsistent use of paper is one indication that consistency itself was becoming less important and that she was already questioning the value of material consistency that here applies to common paper choice and will later extend to the stacking and binding of individual sheets. Whether this was part of an emerging wish to free poems from material forms of containment represented by common paper choice and stab binding is impossible to say with any certainty.

5. According to R. W. Franklin’s record of “Poems Published in Dickinson’s Lifetime,” there were a total of seven years when Dickinson poems appeared in print: 1852, 1858, 1861, 1862, 1864, 1866, and 1878 (Poems, 1531–21). Of these, 1864 is the only year when more than one of her poems was printed. The most appearances of any poem in any other year was two: “I taste a liquor never brewed” (Fr207, F12) appeared twice in 1862 and “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” (Fr1096) twice in 1866.

6. R. W. Franklin identifies five variants of the poem, for which he estimates the dates of composition to be “about 1862, 1863, 1865, 1871, and 1883” (Poems, 311). Guthrie concentrates his discussion on the version of the poem that Franklin identifies as
written in around 1865 (312). Guthrie cites the date of composition as 1864, the date assigned by Thomas H. Johnson (233).

7. I have presented the first lines of “I hide myself – within / my flower,” as they appear in Fascicle 40. The first line of Fr80A does not include a dash or a comma.

8. Concern with the political outcomes of copyright legislation reflects sensitivity to tensions widely viewed as inherent within the legal establishment of literary property. This is a point stressed by L. Ray Patterson and Stanley W. Lindberg in the early pages of The Nature of Copyright: A Law of Users’ Rights. They state first that “the primary purpose of copyright . . . is to promote the public welfare by the advancement of knowledge” and second that from “its statutory beginnings in early-eighteenth-century England, copyright has been the product of a precarious attempt to balance the rights of the creators—and those of their publishers—with the rights of users, present and future” (2). In what follows, I outline the way Dickinson illuminates the tendency among authors and within the reading public to forget the precariousness of the balance struck between private and public interests. I present Dickinson as concerned about the ease with which private and authorial legal rights take precedence over public and communal interests to the detriment of American democracy. By drawing attention to this concern within Dickinson’s writing, I hope to show that while her approach to copyright and literary ownership may be distinctive, her conclusions place her in the company of other writers, politicians, and citizens.

9. What I am describing here is the importance of Locke in establishing the legal status of the author as perceived in terms of possessive individualism. In The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke, C. B. MacPherson describes the essential makeup of the possessive individual: “As with Hobbes, Locke’s deduction starts with the individual and moves out to society and the state, but, again as with Hobbes, the individual with which he starts has already been created in the image of the market man. Individuals are by nature equally free from the jurisdiction of others” (269). Gillian Brown affirms the crucial role of Locke in Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America where she writes that “by the mid-eighteenth century the notion of individual rights promulgated in the political philosophies of Hobbes and Locke comprised an article of cultural faith” (2).

10. For an overview of public awareness of and interest in copyright debates, see Melissa Homestead’s American Women Authors and Literary Property, 1822–1869, especially 4–11.

11. Here it is worth noting that in making what may appear to be a bold statement about the duties of democratic authorship Dickinson is in actuality entering a prominent cultural debate while also affirming a meaning inherent within the etymological history of “property.” Alan Hyde’s etymological analysis in Bodies of Law makes plain the way Dickinson’s concern with the public character of property reflects a dimension of the word’s history that has been overshadowed by the term’s specialized function in legal discourse. “The central pun involved in every invocation of ‘property,’” he observes, “is inherent in its name: property, however defined, always mimetically represents both a supposed private, individual, isolated self (propre, one’s own), and, at the same time, the proper, as defined publicly or socially through the social conventions that give us propriety, propre (clean)” (54).

12. Benjamin Friedlander’s essay on “Publication – is the Auction,” “Auctions of the
Mind: Emily Dickinson and Abolition,” provides a careful exploration of the poem’s treatment of publication as a form of slavery. Though his conclusions differ from mine, he effectively outlines the social and economic dimensions of the poem.

13. Mitchell presents a much different interpretation of Dickinson’s approach to authorial ownership in *Measures of Possibility.* There he writes, “...in the same way that the Divine Author gives life (and perhaps even imaginative ideas) to humans, the human author—the genius or originator—passes these meanings on to the reader, who ‘bears’ but does not own or originate them...” (286). Mitchell presents Dickinson as standing in opposition to the utilitarian position I have been describing and concludes that in “Publication – is the Auction” Dickinson argues that authorial ownership should extend to the ideas themselves and not the particular embodiment or expression of those ideas. Central to his interpretation of the poem is his belief that originating power somehow passes from the divine to the poet but stops there and does not pass from poet to reader. I read the poem as claiming that originating power is never transferred from the divine source to the poet or to the reader; instead, it circulates through them equally. For a fascinating presentation of a completely different way to read this poem in light of copyright legislation see 267–70. See also 78–83 in *Monarch of Perception* where Mitchell acknowledges a broader range of interpretive possibilities for this poem though he arrives at the same ultimate conclusion.

14. Marlon B. Ross establishes the precedent for displacement of the message by the medium as far back as the medieval scribal practice of textual embellishment. Because embellishment “brings attention to the prideful self with its intrinsically fallible apprehension of divine authority and its constant yearning to claim God’s authority as its own,” “the scribe’s unpaid labor for the profit of salvation contains within itself the tendency to degenerate into paid labor for mere profit, whether it be worldly fame or monetary gain” (234).

15. There are a great many Dickinson poems that stress the importance of the poet as vehicle for a message that lives on in readers and is not to be confused with the person of the legal author. “The poets light but Lamps” (Fr930), “A word is dead, when it is said” (Fr278), “A word made Flesh is seldom” (Fr1715), “To pile like Thunder to it’s close” (Fr1353), and “I would not paint – a picture” (Fr348, F17) are but a few prominent examples.

16. Oberhaus concludes of this poem that the speaker wonders “will she ever have readers for her ‘Experiment?’ and “will her poems serve them as she intends?” (53). Oberhaus also equates positive answers to these questions with spiritual salvation. I do not rule out this possibility, but rather choose to concentrate more narrowly on the poem’s commentary on the poet’s relationship to readers.

17. The poem that follows “Unto Me? I do not / know you –” in the second bifolium is “Denial – is the only / fact” (Fr826), a poem in which the speaker teases out the implications of denial. I read this poem as lending credibility to the possibility that the speaker of the previous poem has indeed denied Jesus’s offer of a heavenly home. The fact that in the final line of the first stanza the speaker of this poem links denial to “The Day the Heaven died –” would further reinforce this reading.
Chapter 10