I N Q U E S T O F T R U T H

Observations on the Development of Emily Dickinson´s Poetic Dialectic

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C O N T E N T S

I N T R O D U C T I O N

While acknowledging the usefulness ("in minor ways") of the new chronological arrangement of Dickinson's poems in the Johnson edition (1955), Charles R. Anderson denies it any real importance in the assessment of her work and refuses to avail himself of it on the following grounds:

> There are no marked periods in her career, no significant curve of development in her artistic powers, no progressive concern with different genres, such as might furnish the central plan for a book on Milton or Yeats.[1]

After making this unfortunate remark Professor Anderson cannot but fall back on the ancient notion of Emily Dickinson's "tendency to return again and again to a few themes or areas", and construct his plan accordingly; thus even his contribution to "the real assessment of her poetic achievement" - a task so heartily recommended by him a few pages earlier - is not exactly what this writer thinks could be done in the field. Despite some really admirable interpretations of Dickinson's poems which Professor Anderson can offer us as a result of his close-reading processes, his book actually adds very little that is fundamentally new to our understanding of her poetic career.

The present treatise begins - of course - with the same acknowledgement of Johnson's scholarship and merit in editing the complete Dickinson texts in their best ascertainable

chronology,[2] but for the writer the very availability of these texts suggests a wholly different procedure for their analysis from the one adopted by Anderson and most earlier critics, of whose methods his is only an example.[3]

Although the earliest Dickinson MSS date as late as 1858 (she would have reached her full maturity as a poet by 1862), it seems a bold generalization indeed to state that there is no such discernible progress in her "artistic powers"as would enable us to assess her achievement on developmental basis. On the contrary, a considerable amount of data can be drawn from her early poems to show her gradual growth into maturity and mastery (after which the inevitable decline in vitality ensued). We actually think it quite possible to indicate, for instance, how her first poetic impulse found expression in a very definite kind of poetic phrase and imagery; how - in the next phase - this impulse was subjected to a sudden and dramatic change due to a deep spiritual experience and resulting in a partial cracking off of her already established modes of expression; and how, through a drastic rearrangement of her symbolic resources, she eventually managed to ensure a new balance between her emotion and her techniques of self-expression.

In the development of a poet it is not the recurrent themes, or his "areas" of interest, that matter so much as do the symbols and images adopted and exploited by him; themes <u>may</u> be revealing of evolving techniques, too, as individual experience accumulates and finds its essence in the most central of them, while the use of symbols - or rather the increasing subtlety and boldness the poet will

display in the application of them - is certainly the most significant index of poetic skill. Accordingly, our analytic procedure will be the reversal of the usual method, for, breaking freely through the traditional categories of her intrests ("Nature", "Eternity", "Death", etc.), we shall try to trace the progressive development of her symbology and to show how exactly she used her metaphoric imagery as tool in her incessant quest for a personal - or even the universal - truth.

The task we have taken, viz., to show the dialectical development of Emily Dickinson's poetic rhetoric - not of her thought or "philosophy", but her way of stating herself in poetry - is a difficult one, maybe even impossible to carry through satisfactorily. Although the present study will, in the first place, be concerned with Dickinson's poetic language and its development, our preference of terms like "rhetoric", "poetic dialectic" for the rather pretentious one "style" shows that this is not to be a mere linguistic analysis or an enumerative synopsis of her stylistic traits. Based on understanding that poetry was for her a means to discover, or recognize, certain individually important aspects of reality, our view of her stylistic development could be called psychological; underline as it does the way in which her evolving experience of life was expressed in and developed by her poetry, it could be called existential (phenomenological) even; yet we wish to escape labelling of any kind. Although helped by the work of many eminent scholars, for whom we freely profess our gratitude, ours has been done independently, not bound up with any school of

criticism (which may, of course, have resulted in certain methodological fuzziness). To those of our readers who find some of our arguments futilely speculative we want to say the following.[4] Only if we examine a poet's poetry in the making, can we understand the way in which the characteristic features of his individual experience are being typified through symbolic representation of this experience, till a symbolic pattern emerges; a pattern which almost seems that of his personality (and underlines all his diction as its unifying style) but goes, in the end, beyond personality, the eventual goal of individual poetry being a synthesis of the self and the world. It is our ambitious hope to reveal this enlarging symbolic pattern in Emily Dickinson's poetry; the exact mode of appearance of the poetic "truth" which she was after.

The discussion will, eventually, be divided into three main sections, respectively called Naming, Questioning, and Communication; a scheme that best seems 1) to reflect the evolution of Dickinson's poetic impulse, 2) to account for the development of her poetic techniques, and 3) to make possible the evaluation of her successes and failures as a self-expressing poet. As to the purpose of the last-named section, we do not hope, even in it, to establish any "canon of her highest achievement"[5] - a feat certainly too demanding of our modest powers of critique - but rather to discuss (with constant reference to Dickinson's poetry) what general possibilities - and on what terms - we think a fully developed personal system of poetic symbols has " to carry through", i.e. to be understood and accepted by other people,

either in its entirety or in part, and in what respects it resembles, or differs from, other verbal models of the world, e.g. those offered us by religion, logic, and science.

A "metaphysical" poet like Dickinson, that will say, a verbally talented artist with a capacity to perceive what we (from his point of view) can call numinous effects in nature and in human life, and with a tendency to interpret his perceptions metaphysically, uses his artistic tool, language, both to capture his experience and to understand it. When confronted by a phenomenon that arouses in him a sensation of numinosity, he, too, is seized by that primordial human impulse which we - in simulation of certain investigators of the primitive speech behaviour of man - will call the naming instinct; a reaction best defined as an instinctive attempt to answer the spontanous question "What is this?" Accordingly our poet's first experiences of numinosity result simply in applying to the objects that caused them the most expressive concepts that he happens to possess. This procedure of naming, as we know from our study of the linguistic theory, ensures him a mental domination over the phenomena in question, a domination which - in the first place - seems to allow for a closer inspection of them; for the symbolic possession of a phenomenal object psychologically implies the understanding of it, even promises the discovery (by means of semantic analysis of some kind or other) of the hidden meaning in it, i.e. the secret of numinosity.

By his inherited language, which supplies him means (i.e. symbols, concepts) to fix and hold his numinous experiences through the naming of their mediums (the awe-inspiring objects), our poet has also been provided with a means to sa-

tisfy his innate craving for metaphysical speculation. The metaphoric habit of speech, so indispensable in the development of language toward generality and abstraction, is eagerly adopted by the poet, who, in lack of an equivalent name or a sufficiently qualitative adjective for his emotion at the face of the numinous, seeks its analogical equivalent in the natural world by asking the metaphorical question "What is this like?" It is just at this point that metaphysics enters the picture for good, as the "answer", the poetic metaphor, by introducing an obviously meaningful analogy, seems to imply an order of things, logical only as it may be, and, given this illusion of having discovered a causality, the poet is lured to experiment more and more adventurously with his language.

This power of metaphor (to suggest a perhaps non-existent but at the same time a "true" link between two phenomena) probably explains why the young Emily Dickinson, despite all her profound experiences of the divine, never completely relied on religion to give her the answers she was looking for. As language has this seeming (if deceiving) capacity to reveal the underlying relations and analogies in reality, far more complex than the straightforward dogma indicates, she, too, with all her metaphysical inclinations, was tempted to turn to it as her chief means of invading into the depths and secrets of the numinous.

It may be also noted, that, from the very beginning, her question "What is this?" included herself; as she seems to have been well aware that numinosity in the phenomenal world was only her experience of it, a purely subjective state, even her descriptions of natural beauty are always descrip-

tions of its impact on her. Thus it was most natural for the young poet to end many of her early effusions on nature by expanding them into a private metaphor like: "That's what I am, too", or, "It is just like this or that emotion in me", and when later on the chief function of her poetry appeared to be to discover her own role and fate in the world, this function very naturally grew out of her earlier poetic practices. Another example of this experiential participation in the nature of things through poetry is offered by her numerous poems on death. Her first, seemingly external descriptions of people recently deceased factually contain an awesome curiosity about death: what might it be like? - a curiosity, which would later develop into an inner certainty and make her equate death to certain states of her own mind.

So far our discussion seems to have implied that for our metaphysical poet the poetic representation of things - a process we have preferred to call naming - is a purely cognitive act, tending towards knowledge of some kind or other about both the named and the namer. In a good number of cases, however, the Dickinsonian act of "circumference" - the term being the one preferred by her and cherised by all her critics[6] - might also be called "magical", i.e. understood as verbal coercion, and implying a causative act about the world.

We have already noted that in its distrust of dogma and its trust in the power of questioning language Dickinson's mental make-up was different from that of an ordinary believer, or of a mystic, whose speechless worship of the di-

vine is always an act of pure faith. While it is clear that Dickinson's first confrontations with numinosity in nature, as reflected in her poetry, often came very close to what investigators of the mystic experience would call "nature mysticism", a good many of her poems also contain a considerable element of verbal magic, sometimes in guise of prayer, both tending to the same effect, i.e. to the possession of the object depicted.

It is true that throughout her life Emily Dickinson retained - even resorted to - certain characteristics which might be called "childish", or primitive, and her use of the magical metaphor or symbol could, quite easily, be dismissed simply as a crude mechanism of wish-fulfilment. On the other hand: why should we doubt the eventual degree of her sophistication and not see her "causative" images as a means to break through them into a theoretical condition of attainment, that will say, understand them as experiments on the possibility of human equilibrium? We think it just to say that the elements of magic and prayer in Dickinson's poetry are eventually there only to enable her to question the degree and value of fulfilment of human wishes - an argument which, among others, will be discussed in our second section.

After the beginnings and development of Dickinson's symbology and her purely technical devices have been traced and dealt with in all their functional implications, the discussion in the third section will first turn to the general problems which a poet - with all his private aspirations - will encounter when - or if - he tries to

catch his inner visions in order to convey them to other people.

Poetic rhetoric, such as it is created by a poet and exists in his poetry, is never but partially conventional. As it - in a private realm of experience - originates in the naming instinct inherent in the poet, his usage of a verbal symbol is always more or less situational, determined by the circumstance and moment of naming. Metaphors and other symbolic images, when exploited by the poet in a systematic manner - or at least repeatedly - also tend to cluster and take on the function of a private mythology, which builds up and is elaborated till it cannot be expanded any further; i.e. till it constitutes a rather inflexible system of mutually interlinked symbols, which leaves very little room for fresh exploration in the realm of poetic self-expression.

The need for an elaborated system of verbal symbols - in poetry as well as in science - is naturally due to an urge to explore a definite group of problems as closely as possible, whereas the subsequent rigidity of "terminology", of course, is no desirable end in itself but a linguistic phenomenon to be deplored only. It might pass almost for a rule that <u>the first successful application</u> of a poetic symbol - be it either word, simile, or metaphor - in a given context is decisive of all its later usage. The ensuing elaboration of the symbolic context experiments, proves, as well as fixes the symbol for good, and once a significant connotation for it has been found, it is since repeated with greater and greater ease, routine, even

carelessness, i.e. with less and less circumstantial detail.

This is how Emily Dickinson's symbol-making mind undoubtedly worked, too, and this is how "difficult" ("metaphysical") poems in general come about. Words and symbols, which from the primary experience and its first verbal representations have taken on a certain "aura" for the poet, no longer seem to require the frame of reference from which they originally derived their denotative potentiality. The poet tends to forget the reader, who no longer will be given the initiative context that should let him in, and the symbol is accordingly used with a private connotation, which is supposed to be generally known but is not. Dickinson's worst abstractions - her "flat" poems - are a good example of this, as are her "choking" poems, in which the symbols are loaded with so many private associations as to altogether disable them as communication.

Consistent aspiration for abstraction and conciseness was allegedly a major characteristic of Dickinson's throughout her career, but most conspicuous this feature is in her very late verse. Few scholars have paid enough attention to it, obviously considering it either too abstract to analyse properly, or only repetative of her earlier themes. For us, though, who are not interested in her themes, or her "philosophy" (the latter being for some critics the only legitimate starting point for a fruitful analysis), but in the dialectical development of her diction, Dickinson's latest poems offer so

illustrative an example of the "petrifaction" process described above that analyzing them both as to their content (for which her earlier poems with far richer imagery provide the only proper frame of reference) and their form seems remunerative enough, especially if any general conclusions about the linguistic processes in poetry can be suggested thereby.

As textual analysis is the main concern in this study, we have not considered it necessary to include any introductory passage on Emily Dickinson's life or personal relations (unless Chapter 1 can be called one). There are several excellent biographies to be had (all listed in our bibliographic index), from which the reader can obtain whatever general information about the poet and her life he may wish. Also to compensate for our briefness on these matters we have supplied a considerable apparatus of references and notes, in which additional information as to various biographical passages in the text is offered. Not to make the proper text too loaded with learned quotation either, the notes also include interesting critical observations by other critics, affirmative as well as contradictory of our own. Especially when a problem - or a group of problems - has already been dealt with in an exhausting manner, we shall be satisfied with a reference to, or a brief quotation from, the scholar in question without plunging any deeper into the subject. Only on points as to which we feel we can offer some fresh and novel views shall we dwell in greater length, and these points, as we have several times observed, mostly concern Dickinson's technical and stylistic

development as a poet.

The quoted text of the poems is that of the Johnson edition, with all its original "oddities" of spelling, punctuation, and stanza division, of which the numbering is given in brackets after each poem (or fragment) quoted; the year of its supposed composition is mostly provided, too. The few extracts of Dickinson's letters which we have cited are also from the Johnson edition of them, of which the volume and number are similarily given after each quotation.

1. The Numinous Character of Dickinson's Poetic Impulse

It was Rudolf Otto who half a century ago (1917) introduced the term numinosum into the discussion of religious phenomena and their historical evolution, and from his work it soon spread into common literary use to denote the mixture of terror, fascination and awe aroused in the human mind by the sense of a transcendent presence, mysterious and indescribable but directly recognizable as divine.[1] Although it seems to be customary rather to use the term (numinous, numinosity) only when discussing the "purely" religious experiences of man, and to find some other denomination for the corresponding states of mind, let's say, of an artist[2], there are, we think, good grounds for adopting this awesome epithet - in the very sense Otto meant it to be used - to describe the quality of Emily Dickinson's primary inspiration. The following discussion will try to expose these grounds.

First of all, Dickinson's general attitude toward all poetry seems to have been permeated by reverence usually felt only for a numinous object or essence, which attitude was emphatically displayed in a conversation reported by a friend, who had inquired about her tastes and aesthetic criteria. Instead of any vague theoretizing about the

qualities of good poetry, she simply described her spontaneous physical reaction to it:

> If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire ever can warm me I know <u>that</u> is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know <u>that</u> is poetry. These are the only way I know it. Is there any other way.(L II, 342 a)

Dickinson's last question, which should, of course, be read in the negative ("There cannot be any other way"), seems to imply that even as a product of human activity, genuine poetry contains a transcendental element, whose true nature so far passes our understanding that it can only be felt, not defined. Rudolf Otto puts it as follows:

> The truly 'mysterious'object is beyond our apprehension and comprehension, not only because our knowledge has certain irremovable limits, but because in it we come upon something inherently 'wholly other', whose kind and character are incommensurable with our own, and before which we therefore recoil in a wonder that strikes us chill and numb.[3]

For Emily Dickinson poetry, as well as the whole process of poetic creation, evidently <u>was</u> a truly numinous mystery, a means by which man, although he little knew how, could reach for the divine truth, and catch the only true reflection of it. From the beginning she would know her genuine inspiration as the presence of the numen, and she often reflected on the awe she experienced at the excess of her own feeling:

> A something in a summer's Day
> As slow her flambeaux burn away
> Which solemnizes me.
>
> A something in a summer's noon -
> A depth - an Azure - a perfume -
> Transcending extasy.
>
> And still within a summer's night
> A something so transporting bright
> I clap my hands to see -
>
> Then vail my too inspecting face
> Lest such a subtle - shimmering grace
> Flutter too far for me -
>
> (122)

The mixed feeling of fascination and awe, which a numinous phenomenon arouses in the human mind, was most powerfully experienced by the young Dickinson in nature and made her try to depict, over and over again, these numinous objects of her interest:

> Flowers - well - if anybody
> Can the extasy define -
> Half a transport - half a trouble -
> With which flowers humble men:
> Anybody find the fountain
> From which floods so contra flow -
> I will give him all the Daisies
> Which upon the hillside blow.
> (137)

> The Murmur of a Bee
> A Witchcraft - yieldeth me -
> If any ask me why -
> 'Twere easier to die -
> Than tell -
>
> The Red upon the Hill
> Taketh away my will -
> If anybody sneer -
> Take care - for God is here -
> That's all.
> (155)

While it is true that the young Emily Dickinson very seldom made as straightforward a reference as the one above to God as the supposed cause of her 'trouble', which may be simply due to her finding it difficult to connect these almost pagan feelings of awesome joy with the orthodox (Trinitarian) concept of God's austere, guardian-like being, her whole activity as a poet was, from the beginning, directed by a reverent wish to 'circumscribe' the divine, to catch - in order to reveal - the mystery of the numinous both in nature and in human life:

> Some things that fly there be -
> Birds - Hours - the Bumblebee -
> Of these no Elegy.

Some things that stay there be -
Grief - Hills - Eternity -
Nor this behooveth me.

There are that resting, rise.
Can I expound the skies?
How still the Riddle lies!
(89)

Linguists have long since agreed that it was the experience of numinosity which for the primitive man meant the beginning of language, myth, and religion alike, and that the vocal sound used as a symbol for the phenomenon which aroused the numinous sensation enabled him to act about the latter either in the way of worship or ritualistic domination.[4] We might - half playfully, more than half in earnest - argue that for our poet, too, her numinous inspiration resulted in the discovery of all these three. Inspired by the numen she would discover and evolve her poetic gifts to be able to express her full experience of the divine, and while the numinous for ever remained her true subject, language was her tool, practising poetry her religion, and the end of all her poetic activity the acquisition of truth about this all; a truth, possibly, which would incorporate her own being with the divine.

The full consciousness of her calling was, of course, to come relatively late, only after she was already well launched on her poetic explorations, but from the first she must have felt that her poetic inspiration ran from a very deep spiritual source and that in spiritual matters, therefore, she was capable of subsisting entirely on her own. As early as in winter 1847-48, when she was staying at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, she - during one of the recurrent waves of religious revivalism there - obstinately

refused, as one of the very last "bad ones", to give "declaration for Christ", that is, to be converted in the conventional Presbyterian manner. Even at this early age religious feeling in her was evidently too deeply and intimately experienced to be displayed in public, or to let any dogma regulate its outward forms; she would find for it her own rituals and practice.[5]

Just how and when she began to write poetry in earnest is impossible to ascertain now, for she obviously rewrote all her earliest MSS around 1858.[6] Since that time, though, her daily practice of poetry was a fact, and few critics have failed to note the fervent devotion with which Emily Dickinson gave herself to it. Richard Sewell is reported to have observed that she

> wrote her poems in much the same spirit that her devout contemporaries prayed. It was a daily ritual with her, sustaining and refreshing, a very organic part of her religiously oriented life... a communion with her soul and her maker in the very best Puritan tradition.[7]

For a Puritan the purpose of prayer - conversation with God - was to examine his own heart in order to find there the hidden signs of predestination that would determine the course of his life. It is quite possible that after her ordeal at Mount Holyoke, which - as some scholars suggest - imprinted its indelible marks on her character,[8] Dickinson - at last left alone to connect her relations with her Maker and His universe - tried to compensate her earlier sinful hardness by ever the more ardent worship in poetry of the mysterious divinity that at times seemed to unveil itself to her in human experience. As she had failed to accept the <u>common</u> truth of the Christian Faith, it was only by

the everyday testing of her ability to discover a private truth about human life that she felt to be fulfilling her own destiny. Mrs. Todd Bingham remarks:

> Throughout the years she was lashed to the moral law which was for her the expression of God's purpose regarding her life.[9]

Thus, in a sense, those critics who have called Emily Dickinson a religious poet are right, for her whole attitude to life was devotional, i.e. based on a deep experience of the divine. Poetic reflection on divinity in all its numinous manifestations in the world was the Law of her religion, and poetry was her ritual, "carried out for the sole purpose of producing at will the effect of the numinous".[10] How much like a private worship her act of composing poetry actually was can be elucidated by a further quotation from C.G. Jung:

> Religion, as the Latin word denotes, is a careful and scrupulous observation of..."numinosum", that is, a dynamic existence or effect, not caused by an arbitrary act of will. .. I want to make clear that by the term "religion" I do not mean a creed. It is, however, true that on the one hand every confession is originally based upon the experience of the numinosum and on the other hand upon πίστις, the loyalty, trust, and confidence toward a definitely experienced numinous effect and subsequent alteration of consciousness. ...."Religion", it might be said, is the term that designates the attitude peculiar to a consciousness which has been altered by the experience of the numinosum.[11]

In the above sense Dickinson's final resolution to confine herself within the walls of her home (in a sense a delayed substitute of the conversion which proved impossible at Mount Holyoke) can be considered a true sign of "a consciousness which has been altered by the experience of the numinosum", for she evidently felt that seclusion alone would give her

the leisure to "observe" the divine at will, and to carry out her daily ritual of poetry as a pious duty. Even if we admit that the eventual cause of her withdrawal was unhappy love, we do so only on the condition that it was as much the love as the unhappiness which prompted her. In love she had discovered divinity at its most mysterious and numinous, and even if the feeling was to remain unrequited , it was just in order to keep the divine mystery intact; the very numinosity of love denied approach and consummation.

There is one point on which we want to be unusually emphatic from the very first, viz., that for Emily Dickinson poetry was never a substitute of a desired object, but the only means to master and regulate the desire, the excess of which was too overpowering to let her act about it in any other way, making her even recoil from the object itself. Thus, in the end, the thing or person that gave her the shock of divine desire, became of secondary importance, and what alone mattered was the numinous feeling, the capture and analysis of which proved the chief occupation of her life. According to Rudolf Otto, this is the habitual effect of the numinous on a person who has been long exposed to it:

> Possession of and by the numen becomes an end in itself; it begins to be sought for its own sake; ... In a word, the vita religiosa begins...[12]

In 1863 Dickinson herself would, half proudly, half ironically, sum up the fruits of her devotion to the numinosum as follows:

I lived on Dread -
To Those who knew
The Stimulus there is
In Danger - Other impetus
Is numb - and Vitalless -

As 'twere a Spur - upon the Soul -
A Fear will urge it where
To go without the Spectre's aid
Were Changelling Despair.
(770)

The life she chose to live, however absurd it might seem to other people (and even to herself), was of inner necessity, and no other kind of life could have offered her the same divine dread and the same sense of self-inflicted destiny. She had chosen to become the poet of the numinous.

II

Indeed, when early in 1862 Emily Dickinson reported of herself:

I had a terror - since September - I could tell none - and so I sing, as the Boy does by the Burying Ground - (LII,261)

and,

I felt a palsy, here - the Verses just relieve - (LII, 265)

it was only herself she could blame for her "terror". Like a priestess she had cultivated her peculiar capacity for numinous experiences till it had developed into an extraordinary sensibility and mental tension, which reached its climax during the winter 1861-62. At this critical period she wrote the above lines to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a well-known man of letters, who

became her "preceptor" and "tutor" for the rest of her life and whose correspondence, as she confessed in a much later letter (June, 1869), preserved her mental health: "You were not aware that you saved my life." (L II, 330)

To Higginson she evidently seemed only to be asking for literary advice, whereas for Dickinson herself the correspondence meant probably both more and less. She craved, above all in the first hand, for communication, to be understood and comforted in the grasp of her divine inspiration, while the idea of publishing her poems seemed secondary to her. What mattered was not the outward polish and presentability of her verse but its capacity to capture and convey the inner reality she had just discovered. This was her chief concern when she wrote to Higginson:

> Are you too deeply occupied to say if my verse is alive? ... Should you think it breathed... I should feel quick gratitude. (L II, 260)

The tone of her letters to Higginson is movingly humble and proud at the same time; humble in its petition to be understood, and proud in its refusal to be corrected. The mixture of helplessness and assurance of her fifth letter to Higginson (August, 1862) is pathetic:

> I think you called me 'Wayward'. Will you help me improve? I suppose the pride that stops the Breath, in the Core of Woods is not Ourself - (L II, 271)

She was most assured that her inspiration was genuine, and suspected in spite - or even because - of Higginson's letters that she had succeeded in capturing her vision; what troubled her was the overpowering tension and awesome

ecstacy she had to succumb to in order to have it.

In his biography of Dickinson, T.H. Johnson very aptly deals with her urge to reveal the sources of the numinosum in the universe, and her subsequent terror and fatigue. Commenting on her fourth letter to Higginson (July, 1862), where she had told him her proud secret ("My Business is Circumference"), Johnson writes:

> Her intent in creating a poem is to elicit 'awe' from the object or idea by which she is inspired, and to project it with 'circumference'. ... All sensitive people share her love of hills, the sundown, the noise in the pool. Few feel 'awe' to the point where, if caught with the Dawn or the Sunset, 'they would feel the only Kangaroo among the Beauty'. ... The solemn wonder, the profound and reverend dread is a fear, a terror, inspired by deity. This is the Awe she felt to be never far away, and she wished to take her tutor's hand when the woods became too dark to penetrate alone.[13]

That Higginson was interested enough to answer her initial letter and then continue the correspondence was probably sufficient aid, for though she frequently expressed her gratitude for his advice ("I shall observe your precept - though I dont understand it, always;" L II, 271), she seems never to have followed it. Her working habits and the cultivation of her techniques, well on the way by this time, continued the same - in Higginson's words, as "spasmodic", "uncontrolled", and "wayward" - as before, while her mental crisis gradually abated.

When Emily Dickinson died (May 15th, 1886), even her sister Lavinia, who was well aware of her poetic pastime, was surprised to discover the actual amount of MSS which had gathered in her box. Most of them were fair copies,

stitched up in neat 'volumes', but

> Nearly two hundred survive in worksheet draft only. They are the rough originals, always in pencil, and jotted down on paper scraps: on flaps or backs of envelopes, discarded letters, wrapping paper, edges of newspapers - in fact, on anything that lay conveniently at hand.[14]

It can also have happened that

> more than once she turned a fair copy into a worksheet draft which she ultimately abandoned, thus leaving the poem in a particularly chaotic state.[15]

The casualness of her working habits was, no doubt, due to her dependence on the numinosum, as was her decision to obey rather her own dispositions than any regulations of formal poetics in the process of carrying out her vision. On her brave one-woman quest of truth she might be frightened, following the wrong route, even lost, but publicity seemed the last thing she was seeking as a recompense for it:

> How dreary - to be - Somebody!
> How public - like a Frog -
> To tell one's name - the livelong June -
> To an admiring Bog!
> (288, c. 1861)

On the other hand, as Emily Dickinson was assured enough to inquire of Higginson's opinion, and let a good number of friend[s/]know of her poems, her later obstinate refusal to publish seems not so much due to an aversion for publicity as to aversion to alter her established method of composition (which resulted just in the kind of diction Higginson and other "preceptors" were itching to "correct").[16] This method was best described by Dickinson herself in a poem, which seems to reflect her relation to Higginson as her "tutor", and her general attitude toward all conventional rules of

aesthetics:

> Myself was formed - a Carpenter -
> An unpretending time
> My Plane - and I, together wrought
> Before a Builder came -
>
> To measure our attainment -
> Had we the Art of Boards
> Sufficiently developed - He'd hire us
> At Halves -
>
> My Tools took Human - Faces -
> The Bench, where we had toiled -
> Against the Man - persuaded -
> We - Temples build - I said -
> (488, c. 1862)

These lines, self-assured and self-critical at the same time, seem to reveal the most essential trait of her mode of composition: its complete reliance on momentary flashes of inspiration instead of any prefabricated plans based on universal systems of philosophy or aesthetics. By nature and by practice, her characteristic tool is the plane, not, for instance, the axe: how should she master the regular "Art of Boards" with it? What she was building had no established plan; the temple it was to be took form only through the moment-to-moment thrust of her testing tool.

In the critical introduction to their anthology of Emerson's writings Alfred Kazin and Daniel Aaron note:

> It may be that all real spiritual experience is conveyed only in short flights, in definitions and epigrams and 'wise sayings' which give definite names to things and so convince us of their reality; they lay down a pattern of stepping-stones across what would otherwise be the terror of an utterly alien world.[17]

To what extent Dickinson was influenced by Emerson's style or ideas is disputable;[18] in what she was most like the great sage of Concord was that she worked at the construction of her spiritual edifice by chips, not by

blocks or beams. From the beginning she seems to have been led by a truly Transcendental assurance that all her numinous experiences were but carriers of one basic truth, and that they, faithfully recorded and explored, would yield her vision a final oneness. Relying on her momentary vision alone, she never tried to postulate anything final, even positive, about what this eventual truth should be, but always spoke of it only in the negative, questioning, doubting, refusing to accept what seemed obvious; as if removing with her plane bits of unnecessary items of reality to reveal its true form. So her "temple" was like those orient shrines which are carved out of a rock, and her nibbling at it, from every accessible angle, lasted a whole life-time. Whether, or in what respect, it can be considered completed at all, is too early to discuss here; possibly what she through her poetry learnt of the ultimate nature of reality was of such a character as ever to remain inexpressible in words. In poetry, though, unlike positivistic logic, all that can be asked can <u>not</u> be answered;[19] now and then we may be putting a question, which can be only suggestively asked, about "something inherently 'wholly other,' whose kind and character are incommensurable with our own", and which remains its only answer: the symbolic exposition of a numinous experience.

Howbeit, what Dickinson <u>did</u> learn was how to put a metaphysical question, how to sharpen, and to keep sharp, her plane. Poem by poem she worked to dispose of the unnecessary in her poetic language, till she mastered the perfectest art of metaphysical riddling.

In 1859 she was still questioning in her youthful, verbose manner:

> Will there really be a "Morning"?
> Is there such a thing as "Day"?
> Could I see it from the mountains
> If I were as tall as they?
>
> Has it feet like Water lilies?
> Has it feathers like a Bird?
> Is it brought from famous countries
> Of which I have never heard?
>
> Oh some Scholar! Oh some Sailor!
> Oh some Wise Man from the skies!
> Please to tell a little Pilgrim
> Where the place called"Morning"lies!
> (101)

Some twenty-five years later, not actually knowing any more of what she was awaiting, she would put her numinous question in a far more superior way. That poetic rhetoric has its own developing dialectic cannot possibly be more clearly shown than by comparing the following poem with its early sketch; the controlled suspense of the later version, one feels, comes as close to the solution, its ignorance as close to knowledge, as ever might be expected of poetic language asking metaphysical questions. She seems no longer even to be asking:

> Not knowing when the Dawn will come,
> I open every Door,
> Or has it Feathers, like a Bird,
> Or Billows, like a Shore -
> (1619, c. 1884)

III

The age Emily Dickinson lived in was one of transition, and as independent as she generally seems to have been of

the contemporary schools of thought, she could not possibly help being influenced by the scientific, technical[4], and social upheavals of her time. Even in New England the old Puritan order was breaking up, and while to some this meant the liberation of the spirit for new and vaster prospects, it also meant to many a thoroughgoing spiritual readjustment; a painful period of transition from the old to the new. Robert E. Spiller has noted the resemblance between the cultural situation of the nineteenth and the seventeenth centuries:

> The poets who sang in that great age of scientific inquiry following the disturbing discoveries of Galileo and Newton were forced to open their minds to the evidences of Nature even where they seemed to be in conflict with the supposed rules of an arbitrary God. The nineteenth century was facing a similar intellectual crisis. Once again the spirit of scientific inquiry was destroying old dogmas and re-asking the old questions.[20]

Of course it was the coming of the new age that freed Dickinson's mind, too, to seek her own truth in and about the world, and from Emerson and the other Transcendentalists she certainly learnt some of her self-reliance and found support in her struggle for freedom from dogma. The techniques of her spiritual readjustment she had, however, to develop herself, and they really turned to be astonishingly like those used by the seventeenth-century metaphysicals. When discussing the role of the prevalent cultural atmosphere in Dickinson's development Allen Tate has regarded her as a poet born in "the perfect literary situation", in which

> The poet attains to a mastery over experience by facing its utmost implications. There is the clash of powerful opposites, and in all great poetry - for Emily Dickinson is

> a great poet - it issues in a tension between abstraction and sensation in which the two elements may be, of course, distinguished logically, but not really. We are shown our roots in Nature by examining our differences with Nature; we are renewed by Nature without being delivered into her hands. ... Only a few times in the history of English poetry has this situation come about: notably, the period between about 1580 and Restoration. There was a similar age in New England from which emerged two talents of the first order - Hawthorne and Emily Dickinson.[21]

That it is not Emerson but Hawthorne and Dickinson whom Tate considers the most metaphysical writers of the age can obviously be explained by the fact that Emerson was not primarily a poet but a thinker, even a mystic, who on his very look-out for 'correspondences' "was more concerned with the one in the many than with the many in the one".[22] The other two writers, however, were genuinely troubled by the discrepancy there now existed between the realms of thought and reality, "between abstraction and sensation", and their constant search was for personal integrity in a world of too many facets and 'correspondences'. It was Emerson, though, who stated the Transcendental belief, common to them all in one form or another, that in his experience man has direct access to the divine and that

> Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact. Every appearance in nature corresponds to some state of the mind, and that state of mind can only be described by presenting that natural appearance as its picture. ... A lamb is innocence; a snake is subtle spite; flowers express to us the delicate affections. Light and darkness are our familiar expression for knowledge and ignorance; and heat for love.[23]

For a poet, and in fact, to anyone who felt called to name these natural facts and spiritual analogies, the existence of a secret logic in the universe would become a reality:

> It is easily seen that there is nothing lucky or capri-

cious in these analogies, but that they are constant, and pervade nature. These are not the dreams of a few poets, here and there, but man is an analogist, and studies relations in all objects. He is placed in the centre of beings, and a ray of relation passes from every other being to him.[24]

Let us compare this Transcendental credo, which probably paved at least a few stepping stones also for Dickinson on her solitary way to truth, with what we are told of the metaphysics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries:

But for one of any faith, man was in truth a microcosm or "little world", whose four "humors" corresponded to the four elements. Astronomy and geology were organically related to physiology and medicine. Man was connected not only with the stars, but with the mineral, vegetable, and animal realms.... Although the belief in correspondences and an organic universe had existed for centuries, Renaissance thinkers were particularly eager to bring order into complexity by finding connections not only between the macrocosm and the microcosm, but between all created things. The great chain of being, which extended from the lowest to the highest orders of creation, involved a series of corresponding realms, each with its head and own internal order.[25]

Whether it was the Emersonian " A Thread Runs through All Things" or her own innate inclination that made the young Dickinson turn all the multifarious happening of the world into the logical analogies of her poetic images, the impulse and results of this procedure were surprisingly similar to those of the metaphysical school proper. Joseph E. Duncan argues that the chief effect of the Renaissance (originally mediaeval) doctrine of "the great chain of being" on later poetry was linguistic, as if poetic language was expected to perform for man the universal synthesis in which both religion and science in the 17th century - constantly ambuscaded by sciences - failed.

It is highly important for metaphysical poetry that the system of correspondences both inspired further analogical

reasoning and provided the methods and tools for it. Since correspondences were regarded as both literal and meaningful, logical analogy could be thought of as an instrument for discovering truth. The metaphysical conceit was apparently a product of the Renaissance tendency to discover significant analogies almost everywhere. ... While a dependence on a system of correspondences was common to most Renaissance thinkers, it is at the core of much metaphysical poetry and is one of the most important characteristics of the metaphysical style, contributing to various witty devices besides the conceit.[26]

In the days of Jonathan Edwards it had still been possible to believe in the balance of human will and divine grace, in the intercommunion of the planes of individual and universal happening; now all that seemed airy speculation at best. The most sophisticated view of Transcendentalism, a movement so soon to dissolve into the ruthless, materialistic Gilded Age, would be to see all its importance in that it "inspired further analogical reasoning", and yet, speaking of Dickinson, this seems nearest to truth. A time of revaluation and analysis of traditional culture - similar to the seventeenth century (and not very dissimilar to ours) - had come: a time for probing human existence in art and with language, instead of orienting oneself in it through religious or philosophical dogma.[27] What obviously prevented Emerson from ever becoming a <u>great</u> metaphysical poet was his naïve belief - in the time of great doubt - in the possibility of restoring the unity of man and universe through ideas alone, while - as Tate suggests - the true metaphysical tinge in poetry comes from a basic distrust of the prevailing system and from an all-devouring interest in language (art) as the last means to keep man's cracking universe together. In this sense it was Emily Dickinson

rather than any of the Transcendentalists who was out to meet the challenge of her age.[28]

One of the aims of the above, rather superficial discussion has been to show that Dickinson, as a poet, is entitled to the epithet "metaphysical", and that her poetry could be - as it actually has been[29] - studied under this critical label. That we have chosen another kind of approach to her is due to our wish not to categorize her too early but to display all the phases of her spiritual and poetic development before levelling our final "judgement" on her. While her interest in language was certainly prompted by considerations and attitudes (all originating in her "numinous" inspiration) similar to those of the seventeenth-century metaphysicals, there are however points, notably her basic attitude to Christianity, on which we feel we should stretch the critical term 'metaphysical' too far to make it fit her at all. So we shall put it aside altogether, possibly to return to it only when discussing her final, fully developed techniques of metaphysical riddling.

2. Discovering Her Language

" A poem does not state ideas but rather tests ideas" is one of the happy aphorisms on poetry by Cleanth Brooks;[1] speaking of the first poetic exercises of Emily Dickinson we could make slight misuse of it and say:"A poem does not employ language but rather tests it".

Whatever the sources she derived her language from - whether from school books, vernacular, Shakespeare, or contemporary American and British authors[2] - she certainly adopted it first as such, with all its conventional idiom, and also used it as such, as if testing its possibilities before she started to transform it into the tool it was to be in her metaphysical quest of truth. Judging by her early letters, it was evidently very easy for the eager schoolgirl to learn all the traditional and fashionable finesses of her native tongue, and even her very first (known) poetic endeavours, the two valentines from the early 1850's (nos. 1 and 3 in Johnson), exhibit a precocious sharpness of expression. Yet there is a wide difference between the diction of the young poetess and that of the mature artist, the former still exploring the realm which the latter was to rule with such mastery, even dictatorship.

The peculiar way of editing Dickinson's poems, and

the ensuing lack of any kind of chronological order in their publication, may account for contrary notions, but in their now fairly accurately established order of composition at least it would seem difficult indeed to mix up the rigid if witty "drollery" of Dickinson's early experiments with the wilful extravagance and deliberate distortion she was to display in the diction of her later poems. On the other hand, the difference between the early and the late Dickinson is certainly hard to define if we gaze only at her vocabulary or her thematic interests at different periods of her life. Her vocabulary, as has been shown,[3] was not exceptionally large or unusually differing from the common usage, nor did it probably change very much within her adult years; her thematic interests, as indeed her choice of metaphoric and other poetic material even, were largely decided by her personality, circumstances and the peculiar character of her inspiration and persisted much the same throughout her life. To us the difference seems, primarily in the first hand, a technical one, best recognizable in her developing exploitation of metaphoric and other imagery: whatever poetic material came her way, it had to undergo a linguistic "sea-change" and prove its usefulness by the symbolism it could be turned into.

Before we proceed to a detailed textual analysis here, it seems sensible to check and define the few terms we shall need in the discussion. They are, naturally enough, the following (very troublesome and fickle) concepts: image, (symbolic) metaphor, and symbol. Even if our approach to Dickinson's poetry is not grammarian, nor even

necessarily a strictly linguistic one, we have chosen to follow Miss Brooke-Rose in her definition of image, which for her is simply

> something visualised, but for which language is not made to work metaphorically.[4]

For our purposes this definition of the term (image, imagery), restricting its scope to those cases of poetic rhetoric in which a poet is simply describing his sensual (visual, acoustic, tactual) or mental (imaginative) perceptions or impressions, is a happy one for emphasizing the fact that a metaphor is born organically out of factual description. As any description is naturally apt to resort to the metaphoric habit of language, a clear line between image and metaphor is, of course, difficult to draw. The main difference between the terms is, naturally, that metaphor, "any replacement of the more usual word or phrase by another",[5] is still an image, part of the whole imagery of a poem, whereas there are also others, non-metaphoric (or should we say pre-metaphoric?), descriptive images, all together making up the whole symbolic context of the poem.

While a certain descriptive image may be felt personally significant, even highly symbolic, and some (especially atmospheric) symbolism can be developed through descriptive imagery alone, it is only a metaphor which seems capable of making this implicit symbolism explicit, of proving the symbolic value of an emotive image by finding it the analogous concepts in some other

sphere of experience. It seems to us that the development of a "meaningful" image into a personal symbol always goes through metaphor, as the latter is the natural mediator of poetic language striving, on the one hand, toward symbolic generality of archetypal patterns and on the other, toward structural abstraction and clarity of phenomenal description.[6]

One successful metaphor may reveal the potential symbolism of a certain image; symbols, on their part, are not born momentously. It is only through repeated metaphoric use that an image, or certain parts of it, seem to gain individual symbolic value. Philip Wheelwright writes on this observation:

> It is necessary to mention the stable and repeatable character of a symbol; for when an image is employed as metaphor only once, in a unique flash of insight, it cannot accurately be said to function symbolically. It acquires a symbolic nature when, with whatever modifications, it undergoes or is considered capable of undergoing recurrence.[7]

Significant symbols in poetry seem to be born only out of imagery which has been exposed to continual metaphoric treatment. According to this notion, we shall henceforth treat of these terms (image, metaphor, and symbol) as successive phases of abstractive symbolization in poetry, the first usually denoting for us the pre-metaphoric figurative material out of which metaphoric images (metaphors, in short) deduce the eventual symbolic connotations for certain central key-words or figures. Symbols, once born, tend to lead an individual existence; they can be - and often are - removed from their original figurative context into others, in which they may even

gain new shades of symbolic value, surrounded as they are by new and different figurative material.

II

It seems, indeed, to have been the young Emily Dickinson's habit - possibly even in a greater degree than is customary with poets in general - to adhere to a happy image which she felt to offer enough room for personal symbolism; this she would employ over and over again, in various metaphoric contexts and in different moods, to force out of its natural dimension all the analogy to her own life and feeling it could possibly afford.

We cannot resist admonishing here that, as revealing as the choice of imagery may be of the character and individual circumstances of a poet, very little, actually, can be deduced of the images themselves to illustrate his development as a poet. The mere counting and categorizing of images does not amount to much real information ; far more important is the study of the processes through which the poet learns to employ and develop them. And, in regard of our poet: as humanly touching as certain images may seem as revelations of her personal history, the most interesting thing about them is to note how she worked with this emotional material to make it yield all the information - all the relative

truth - it could offer her about life and her own position as its exponent.

Her chief characteristic as a poet was, no doubt, a keen eye for analogies both in nature and in human life, and from the beginning this capacity nearly always resulted in finding just the right descriptive (image or images) for each mental content. First, it is true, she seemed rather to work from outside in, from precept, so to say, as certain conventional figures of speech kept offering themselves ready-made for her poetic use and she needed only to give them a symbolic reinterpretation in the terms of her own experience. Yet it was this apprenticeship (the exact length of which is difficult to tell now as we cannot be sure whether she preserved all her earliest exercises) that taught her the metaphoric approach to reality for good, and soon she was fully capable of translating her every experience directly into personal imagery, which through its metaphoric analogies gave up the experience to poetic analysis.

To demonstrate the process of symbolic development which all Dickinson's images had to undergo we have chosen first, out of the Johnson store of her very earliest verse, a series of poems which center around a very conventional metaphoric image indeed, viz., that of "sailor on the sea of life". The first of them - one of the rare cases which can be dated earlier than 1858 - was written around 1853, the next two about (or shortly before) 1858, and the two last probably in 1859.

From a very vague and general symbolism the image strives toward a wholly personal connotation, which is reached at the moment it is capable of adequately reflecting the poet's most urgent emotional need, her own look for a spiritual harbour:

On this wondrous sea
Sailing silently,
Ho! Pilot, ho!
Knowest thou the shore
Where no breakers roar -
Where the storm is oer?

In the peaceful west
Many the sails at rest -
The anchors fast -
Thither I pilot thee -
Land Ho! Eternity!
Ashore at last!
(4)

Adrift! A little boat adrift!
And night is coming down!
Will no one guide a little boat
Unto the nearest town?

So Sailors say - on yesterday -
Just as the dusk was brown
One little boat gave up it's strife
And gurgled down and down.

So angels say - on yesterday -
Just as the dawn was red
One little boat - o'erspent with gales -
Retrimmed it's masts - redecked it's sails -
And shot - exultant on!
(30)

Whether my bark went down at sea -
Whether she met with gales -
Whether to isles enchanted
She bent her docile sails -

By what mystic mooring
She is held today -
This is the errand of the eye
Out upon the Bay.
(52)

Exultation is the going
Of an inland soul to sea,
Past the houses - past the headlands -
Into deep Eternity -

Bred as we, among the mountains,
Can the sailor understand
The divine intoxication
Of the first league out from land?
(76)

'Twas such a little - little boat
That toddled down the bay!
'Twas such a gallant - gallant sea
That beckoned it away!

'Twas such a greedy, greedy wave
That licked it from the Coast -
Nor ever guessed the stately sails
My little craft was lost!
(107)

Besides the advancing refinement of the poet's purely rhetorical devices (apostrophe, rhetoric question, parallelism), we note, in the first hand, her developing dexterity in symbolic metaphorizing. The image which has struck the poet as "true" has proved its "truth" by yielding her a whole series of meaningful metaphoric interpretations of itself. (Literally paraphrasing we can discern at least three different metaphoric approaches to the presiding image: a young, exultant sailor at sea in look for a new harbour - his fear of sea in face of shipwreck - his lonely death by sea, each aspect reflecting the poet's prevalent state of mind.) This is, of course, very simple fingering exercise, but indispensable for discovery of relevant poetic material. Once the symbolic value of an image has been tested and proved, it can be exploited for bolder and bolder metaphoric equations, as the following example shows:

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

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

Rowing in Eden -
Ah, the Sea!
Might I but moor - Tonight -
In Thee!
(249, c. 1861)

When Mrs. Todd and Colonel Higginson were together preparing the first series of Dickinson's poems for publication (1889), the latter, while personally very fond of this particular poem, hesitated to include it in the selection "lest the malignant read into it more than that virgin recluse ever dreamed of putting there".[8] The cautious gentleman was right, in his way, for especially to anyone not acquainted with the series of which the poem is a sequence, it really suggests a greater degree of sensuality than it actually intends to. Howbeit, the poem deserves to be singled out for the admirable workmanship the poet has achieved by now; by constant testing she has finally tailored imagery which fits her awaking feeling perfectly close - closer, perhaps, and more revealing (even to herself) than she originally intended.[9]

There is also another series of poems in which Dickinson used sea as her presiding image. The original metaphor was again adopted from the conventional (hymnal?) usage, but was soon turned to her own personal ends with a peculiar twist of the general denotation. This is our second series:

My River runs to thee -
Blue Sea! Wilt Welcome me?
My River waits reply -
Oh Sea - look graciously -
I'll fetch thee Brooks
From spotted nooks -
Say - Sea - Take Me!
(162)

Least Rivers - docile to some sea.
My Caspian - thee.
(212: both c. 1860)

The Drop, that wrestles in the Sea -
Forgets her own locality -
As I - toward Thee -

She knows herself an incense small -
Yet small - she sighs - if All - is All -
How larger - be?

The Ocean smiles - at her Conceit -
But she, forgetting Amphitrite -
Pleads - "Me"?
(284, c. 1861)

It is generally important to note how quick a Dickinsonian image is to change its symbolic value - or rather to yield new possible values. Here, for instance, the first apostrophic metaphor seems to refer to her thirst for life, which the sea again symbolizes; in the next instances, however, it seems to be either God of love(r), probably the latter, which for her little substance is the sea. The same tendency to experiment with various metaphoric interpretations of one and the same image is typical of all Dickinson's early poetry. Within a couple of years (1858-60) she would develop this "serial" technique to perfection, which means that by metaphoric analysis of certain central images - or groups of images - she 1) extracted from them all the symbolism available for her own "private" use and 2) learnt to expose her central symbols as generally and briefly as possible.

Dickinson's own "private" use of symbols (to question her existence and fate) will be discussed later; here a few words on the kind of generality her symbols, from the beginning, were striving for.

For the young Dickinson a meaningful - or numinous, if you choose - experience took shape in a meaningful image, in whose total undifferentiated Gestalt the experience was seen reflected, and to make this image give up the greatest possible amount of information about her experience (its numinosity), she would develop several related metaphors - often a whole cluster of them - based on the same initial image. This procedure we could call structural analysis of an image (imagial whole), resulting in the emergence of a symbolic pattern on a new level of generality; a pattern, which attached itself to the image, or to the most prominent part of it, as its symbolic connotation.

Sometimes the emerging pattern was clear enough to allow the poet to name it by a single, abstract concept, in a metaphoric equation which we could call a "definition" of the emotive significance of the initial image. Joseph E. Duncan, one of the few critics to note Dickinson's "essentially new way of analyzing her poetic material by transposing it into a new framework" (by which he evidently means her technique of repeated metaphoric equation), has also remarked her fondness of abstractive "definitions"; according to him,

> she apparently analyzed her own experience to write clipped, precise, and universally applicable definitions of words describing psychological states.[10]

These "structural" definitions abound in Dickinson's late verse (in which the abstractive principle has been brought much further, into the poetic "structure" itself), but as no. 76 above shows, they occur in her earliest poetry as well, to name an imagial whole, as part of the analyzing process. In 1861, for instance, Dickinson wrote:

"Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird -
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chillest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet, never, in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of Me.
(254)

By means of one extended metaphor the poet gives a moving but admirably clear definition, not of the general psychological state, but of her own double experience as one who hopelessly hopes and as one who observes it with astonishment and admiration. The poem is mastery, but, again, it was not born out of the blue: it had been preceded by a whole series of "exercises" on the symbolic dimensions of the image of bird.

As early as 1854 Dickinson had sent her future sister-in-law Susan Gilbert, at the time the human object of her most devoted tenderness, a poem beginning

I have a Bird in spring
Which for myself doth sing -
The spring decoys.
And as the summer nears -
And as the Rose appears,
Robin is gone.

Yet do I not repine
Knowing that Bird of mine
Though flown -
Learneth beyond the sea
Melody new for me
And will return.
(5)

As the poet was a keen observer of bird life, it was natural for her to make this initial equation, to let the Robin, whose departure had for years marked the inevitable pass of the

season, stand for her cherished but departing friend. Of all birds the Robin - possibly seconded only by the Bobolink - features most often in her poems, and in one of her earliest she again calls "a missing friend" by the name:

I had a crimson Robin -
Who sang full many a day
But when the woods were painted,
He, too, did fly away -
Time brought me other Robins -
Their ballads were the same -
Still, for my missing Troubadour
I kept the "house at hame".
(23)

Another poem with MS from the same year (1858) but clearly later as to its style is a developed variant of no 5. In its far bolder exploitation of the image it means the next step toward no 254, which we here consider as the hub of the series. We quote it full:

It did not surprise me -
So I said - or thought -
She will stir her pinions
And the nest forgot,

Traverse broader forests
Build in gayer boughs,
Breathe in Ear more modern
God's old fashioned vows -

This was but a Birdling -
What and if it be
One within my bosom
Had departed me?

This was but a story -
What and if indeed
There were just such coffin
In the heart instead?
(39)

The reader will note again the shift in the symbolic import of the central image: the "Birdling" is no longer only the untrue - or forgetful - friend but the poet's feeling for her (Sue?) as well, and to symbolize this feeling, the image can be even metaphorically reversed:

Her heart is fit for home -
I - a Sparrow - built there
Sweet of twigs and twine
My perennial nest.
(84, c. 1859)

After all these exercises it was not to be wondered if later, when the imagial motif was again picked up for poetic reflection (in no. 254), it so easily revealed its central symbolic value as the "definition" of the poet's own perennial hope, by which definition, too, it was attributed all the accumulated connotation of a symbol.

Although the function of a Dickinsonian "definition" seems to have been to find a personally relevant symbolic focus for each group of images being experimented with, the exposition of a definition did not mean that the dialectic development of certain imagery would stop at it; on the contrary. In no. 250 (see p. 90) the poet deftly doubles the symbolic bird to make it refer both to departing chance (Robin) and her own persistent hope, thus uniting the older interpretation with the new, but a very counterstatement of no. 254 is offered by the following bitter and self-ironical verse, which - especially in the last stanza - negatively echoes the characterization given of hope in it and again shifts the focus of the image from its symbolic import ('tenor') to the imagial carrier ('vehicle') of the meaning:

'Tis not that Dying hurts us so -
'Tis living - hurts us more -
But Dying - is a different way -
A kind behind the Door -

The Southern Custom - of the Bird -
That ere the Frosts are due -
Accepts a better latitude -
We - are the Birds - that stay.

The Shiverers round Farmer's doors -
For whose reluctant Crumb -
We stipulate - till pitying Snows
Persuade our Feathers Home
(335, late 1862)

Without the previous meditation on hope the imagery here would probably never have gained the pungent accuracy of its symbolism, as only through it was the exact manner of the poet's identifying herself in the bird confirmed, a hidden symbolic structure revealed. In no. 335, the admirable absurdness of bird life in its persistant hope and in all its symbolic reference to human life has been simply subjected to the test of reality and found no longer admirable but merely absurd; the symbolic pattern discovered has been interpreted only slightly differently, and the poet's metaphoric dialectic has again resulted in new spiritual revelation.

Dickinson's cultivation, from year to year, of "old" poetic materials is not, of course, a sign of linguistic or imaginative poverty but due to her insistance on examining the symbolic possibilities of language through and through. In look for new dimensions and levels of poetic symbolization she did not explore language large but deep, and by concentrating on the diverse metaphoric aspects of one single imagial motif, she would often create symbolic patterns relevant on astonishingly many levels of her experience. Of the poems quoted above, nos. 249, 284, and 335 represent the stage of mastery she had reached by the time she first wrote to Higginson: each of them offers a symbolic structure rich and differentiated enough to allow us to speak of completely

personal poetic symbolization assimilating several aspects of her personality at a time. This, actually, was the only kind of generality her symbols at this time were reaching for: the extension of their relevance in the personal sphere of experience and self-expression.

III

" A poet's way with symbols", says Philip Wheelwright, " is by recontextualizing to give them new life", and he goes on to ask:

> In choosing a presiding image to function symbolically in a poem, shall the poet prefer a traditional symbol that requires renovation or a new symbol that has not been sullied and weakened by previous use?[11]

Above we have shown Emily Dickinson in the process of developing her private symbols out of more or less conventional imagery. The old (or trite) imagery in a new metaphoric usage, yielded, in each case, a new symbol, which can be called entirely personal. What happened when she chose to apply some universally accepted symbols ("steno-symbols", as Wheelwright calls them) to the emotive material of her fresh experience?

As the world of nature, not the Christian (Puritan) God, was the First spiritual reality to answer Dickinson's instinctive demand for divine inspiration and to arouse in her a genuine need for exulted worship, she would, half defiantly, half reverently, express her feeling for it in the terms of the Christian ritual, which she could not make herself accept:

A brief, but patient illness -
An hour to prepare,
And one below, this morning
Is where the angels are -
It was a short procession,
The Bobolink was there -
An aged Bee addressed us -
And then we knelt in prayer -
We trust that she was willing -
We ask that we may be.
Summer - Sister - Seraph!
Let us go with thee!

In the name of the Bee -
And of the Butterfly -
And of the Breeze - Amen!
(18, c. 1858)

These are the days when Birds come back -
A very few - a Bird or two -
To take a backward look.

These are the days when skies resume
The old - old sophiestries of June -
A blue and gold mistake.
...
Oh Sacrament of summer days,
Oh Last Communion in the Haze -
Permit a child to join.

Thy sacred emblems to partake -
Thy consecrated bread to take
And thine immortal wine!
(130, c. 1859)

Some - keep the Sabbath - going to church -
I - keep it - staying at Home -
With a Bobolink - for a Chorister -
And an Orchard - for a Dome -

Some - keep the Sabbath, in Surplice -
I - just wear my wings.
And instead of tolling the bell, for church -
Our little Sexton - sings.

"God" - preaches - a <u>noted</u> Clergyman -
And the sermon is never long,
So - instead of getting to Heaven - at last -
I'm - going - all along!
(324; the 1860 version)

Most Dickinsonian criticism has taken the purport of these poems at face value seeing in them only a defiant dismissal of the Puritan doctrine. A truly religious

(and language-conscious) mind like hers cannot, however, have been insensitive of the fundamental significance of such ritualistic terms as sacrament, worship, prayer, etc. Being well aware that these rituals were originally meant to denote, and give idea of, truly numinous mysteries, she wanted to renew - if only for herself - their symbolic relevance by metaphorizing through them the most meaningful manifestations of divinity she knew. Through the process of naming her own deepest spiritual experiences by symbols of the Christian ritual she intended to find the latter a living, spiritually meaningful context, which should, and would, potentiate them anew as symbols.

No doubt, also a critical (Emersonian) attitude toward the Church as an institution was revealed. The physical and spiritual amplitude of nature reflected in the metaphoric mirror of the religious rite helped realize, not only what the ritual was originally meant to be, but what empty form the dogma itself had become. The same critique was effected with the very same means when a couple of years later Dickinson employed the ritualistic symbols of the Christian Faith to name the new numinous influence upon her life:

> The time was scarce profaned, by speech -
> The symbol of a word
> Was needless, as at Sacrament,
> The Wardrobe - of our Lord -
>
> Each was to each The Sealed Church,
> Permitted to commune this - time -
> Lest we too awkward show
> At supper of the Lamb.
> (322, c. 1862)

Exhiliration - is within -
There can no Outer Wine
So royally intoxicate
As that diviner Brand

The Soul achieves - Herself -
To drink - or set away
For Visiter - Or Sacrament -
'Tis not of Holiday

To stimulate a Man
Who hath the Ample Rhine
Within his Closet - Best you can
Exhale in offering.
(383, c. 1862)

The Sweetest Heresy received
That Man and Woman know -
Each Other's Convert -
Though the Faith accomodate but Two -

The Churches are so frequent -
The Ritual - so small -
The Grace so unavoidable -
To fail - is Infidel -
(387, c. 1862)

Emersonian as is again the "heretic" idea implied here of man as his own authority and law-maker on spiritual matters, the metaphoric usage of ritualistic terms is not a matter of "semantic rejuvenation" only;[12] the holy words are here not merely to protest but also to communicate, to convey a sense of the profoundness of her feeling and so to explain her unorthodox attitudes. By using these "symbols of cultural range"[13] Dickinson could feel sure that virtually everybody within the culture understood her meaning in conferring at least this nominal divinity on her love: that it was in it, not in the heavenly supper of the Lamb, where she found the nearest equivalent of the symbolic Eucharist, and so considered it both folly and infidelity not to enjoy the sacrament in love's immanent divinity, too.

In general it seems to us that too much has been made of Dickinson's references to the Christian dogma or the

Bible to explain her "thinking". While some scholars have seen a throughgoing critique of Christianity, others only her "underlying vital faith"[14] reflected in them, we are prone to regard them, in the first hand, primarily/above all as a reach for a common ground of myth, which might offer her ample metaphoric material to clear up her own points of view and plenty of ready-made, age-old symbols, understood by anybody whenever she wanted to be understood. Her mind and thought were embedded and trained in the Biblical tradition of Puritanism, and even her reaction to it, to be at all effective, had to be based on it. Thus she seems never to be openly criticizing the tradition (whose existence is always to be taken for granted, as the basis of her spiritual orientation) but by metaphorizing it, by levelling it down to her other linguistic practice.

Dickinson's attitude to traditional Christianity, which has seemed so paradoxical to many scholars, is actually quite simple to explain. What happened to her was that she gradually exchanged the absolute truth of dogma and belief for the relative truth of myth and language, which means that she never needed flatly to renounce the former. For her her Puritan heritage simply ceased to work on the dogmatic level and became part and parcel of the linguistic equipment through which she was seeking her personal truth. On the illusory, 'virtual' level of language no absolute choice, so difficult for her, was necessary: henceforth she could both believe and doubt, affirm and renounce, keep her

child's faith or make most cruel fun of it.

We shall later discuss the dichotomy dogma - myth (which is not, of course, simply a linguistic one). Here we want just to pin-point the fact that Dickinson's attitude toward the Bible and the doctrines of Christianity was not dogmatic but mythical, and that for her the Bible was, above all, a store of myths, from which she felt free to draw any material whatever to illustrate and metaphorically interpret her own spiritual situations. The following examples will demonstrate, we hope, why she, from the first, felt the Bible "so handy":

Once more, my now bewildered Dove
Bestirs her puzzled wings
Once more her mistress, on the deep
Her troubled question flings -

Thrice to the floating casement
The Patriarch's bird returned,
Courage! My brave Columba!
There may yet be Land!
(48, c. 1858)

"They have not chosen me," he said,
"But I have chosen them!"
Brave - Broken hearted statement -
Uttered in Bethleem!

I could not have told it,
But since Jesus dared -
Sovereign! Know a Daisy
Thy dishonor shared!
(85, c. 1859)

He forgot - and I - remembered -
'Twas an everyday affair -
Long ago as Christ and Peter -
"Warmed them" at the "Temple fire".

"Thou wert with him" - quoth "the Damsel"?
"No" - said Peter, 'twas'nt me -
Jesus merely "looked" at Peter -
Could I do aught else - to Thee?
(203, c. 1860)

Just so - Christ - raps -
He - does´nt weary -
First at the Knocker -
And then - at the Bell -
Then - on the Divinest Tiptoe standing -
Might he but spy the hiding soul?

When he - retires -
Chilled - or weary -
It will be ample time for me -
Patient - upon the mat - until then -
Heart - I am knocking low
At thee!
(317, c. 1861)

In each of the above poems the poet makes use of the narrative, mythic pattern of the Biblical story to understand, and to make understood, her own spiritual position, and through this simultaneous act of self-discovery and communication the story, as a myth which is continually capable to reflect existing human reality, astonishingly gains in new vitality. The age of Dickinson was, as we have observed above, post-dogmatic, one bent on "probing existence in art and with language" (see p.18), and for her generation (in which, besides Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman and James can be included) Puritanism was a linguistic rather than a spiritual heritage. Its phraseology and symbols were no longer felt to have any real force in them but seemed, at best, (vacated as that they were of former significance) means for probing for new values and meanings. Dickinson´s depictions of herself in the image of Jesus may, of course, be referred back to Emerson´s undeification and deinstitutionalizing of him; on the other hand they show what myth his story had become for her: a sufficiently well-known case only to make her own point clear. Yet its value as a symbol, however changed, is discovered great. As a solid point

of reference in general myth it is made both to reflect and re-enforce her personal destiny.

IV

Just as we above have made a distinction between genuinely personal symbols, deduced out of imagery felt personally significant, and symbols drawn from the general usage of language but rejuvenated through fresh metaphoric exploitation, so we should distinguish between two kinds of "definitions" among Dickinson's abstractive verse. One, the deductive type of definition, has been discussed above (pp. 30-34), the other, the "pseudo-definition" (from our point of view) consists of a commonplace idea or maxim viewed and revaluated in a new metaphoric context.

Douglas Duncan speaks of Dickinson's "love of abstractions and ability to objectify an idea or argument in narrative terms".[15] This sounds just like saying that abstract, discursive thought was what Dickinson was after, and that the metaphoric context was there only for illustration. The truth is just the reverse. She never needed to "objectify" ideas through imagery as she had originally <u>experienced them as images</u>, in immediate poetic recognition.

T.S. Eliot writes of one of the seventeenth-century metaphysicals, Chapman, that in him

> there is a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling,

and of Donne:

> A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility.[16]

A true poet does not argue in abstract concepts but in images and metaphors, and the abstraction for which he is reaching is not a conceptual but a structural one. In discussing the series of Dickinson's poems centering around the presiding image of bird we have shown how she shifted from among the various metaphoric treatments of the image the one in which the symbolic "message" of the image was reflected at its most essential, most generally personal, least sentimental. This she would label as "hope" - the conceptual abstraction being rather an illustration of the mental state than vice versa! - and we call a truly poetic abstraction.[17]

When the commonplace truth "need teaches the value of what is needed" struck Dickinson as completely new, it was not, possibly, striking because of the newness of the idea, but because of the metaphoric context in which it now occured to her. It appeared to her in the guise of an image, and as an image, the paradox attracted her attention from year to year, undergoing the usual, serial treatment of her other favourite imagial motifs:

> Success is counted sweetest
> By those who ne'er succeed.
> To comprehend a nectar
> Requires sorest need.
>
> Not one of all the purple Host
> Who took the Flag today
> Can tell the definition
> So clear of Victory
>
> As he defeated - dying -
> On whose forbidden ear
> The distant strains of triumph
> Burst agonized and clear!
>
> (67, c. 1859)

Who never lost, are unprepared
A coronet to find!
Who never thirsted
Flagons, and Cooling Tamarind!

Who never climbed the weary league -
Can such a foot explore
The purple territories
On Pizarro's shore?

How many Legions overcome -
The Emperor will say?
How many Colors taken
On Revolution Day?

How many Bullets bearest
Hast Thou the Royal Scar?
Angels! Write "Promoted"
On this Soldier's brow!
(73, c. 1859)

To fight aloud, is very brave -
But gallanter, I know
Who charge within the bosom
The Cavalry of Wo -

Who win, and nations do not see -
Who fall - and none observe -
Whose dying eyes, no country
Regards with patriot love -

We trust, in plumed procession
For such, the Angels go -
Rank after Rank, with even feet -
And uniforms of Snow.
(126, c. 1859)

The Battle fought between the Soul
And No Man - is the One
Of all the Battles prevalent -
By far the Greater One -

No News of it is had abroad -
It's Bodiless Campaign
Establishes, and terminates -
Invisible - Unknown -

No History - record it -
As Legions of a Night
The Sunrise scatters - These endure -
Enact - and terminate -
(594, c. 1862)

Poem no. 67 has been greatly praised but, it seems, often for wrong reasons. For those who, in Allen Tate's words, have been deploring the fact that Emily Dickinson

"could not in the proper sense think at all", or failed to notice that "she did not reason about the world she saw; she merely saw it",[18] this particular verse must have been a very welcome piece of intellectualism. The first stanza with its direct statement of a general notion, followed by metaphoric parallelism, must be very pleasing to anyone looking for intellectual or didactic effects in poetic rhetoric. Yet it is just a surface effect, an opening note, the skeleton motif of the subsequent image, which is the <u>real</u> embodiment of the paradox occupying the poet's mind. The structure of the whole poem is simply that of a prolongued metaphor, or a "conceit", of which the maxim in the first stanza is only a part; an exposition or a commentary on it maybe, but not meant to catch or convey the sense, which is contained in the central image itself.

That the idea haunted Dickinson in the guise of just this martial image, is shown by the two other variants of it from the same year, also given above. In them we see her again looking for new metaphoric interpretations of the imagial idea till, too ornamental rhetoric gradually wearing away, its most personal message, the supremest heroism of a lonely fight, is eventually discovered. The dialectic is entirely poetic, in terms of the presiding image of deserted soldier, through the poetic analysis and development alone the poet seems able to work out and apprehend the basic issue <u>for herself</u> of the universal truth so easefully stated in its first imagial exposition.

The most meaningful symbolic aspect of the imagial motif discovered, there are two further variants developed on it:

I took my Power in my Hand -
And went against the World -
'Twas not so much as David - had -
But I - was twice as bold -

I aimed my Pebble - but Myself -
Was all the one that fell -
Was it Goliath - was too large -
Or was myself - too small?
(540, c. 1862)

Fame of Myself, to justify,
All other plaudit be
Superfluous - An Incense
Beyond Necessity -

Fame of Myself - to lack - Although
My Name be else Supreme -
This were an Honor honorless -
A futile Diadem -
(713, c. 1863)

In fact, compared with the first sequence of the series (67, 73, 126) the poetic reasoning here takes place on another abstractive level altogether. If above we have spoken of an "imagial idea", what we encounter here could be called a structural idea, the abstracted pattern of the original imagial situation, conferred over to (or rediscovered in) fresh imagial material (540). No. 713, again, is a proclamation of the state of mind reached and established through the analytic procedure; the metaphoric embodiment of a virtually new insight gained by means of poetic dialectic and tending toward new symbolic generality. As, however, our chief concern here has been to examine the symbolizing processes of Dickinson's early poetry, we have to postpone, for a time, the interesting problem of her abstractive methods, so central for the understanding

of her later poetry. Let this brief discussion, though, be an introduction to the subject.

V

Dickinson's turning away from dogma to look for her own truth in the realm of language and poetry is displayed clearest in a remarkable series of poems describing her numinous impressions of sunrise and sunset, the natural phenomena to which Dickinson always attached almost excessive metaphysical significance. From year to year she seems to have been similarly bewitched by the break and the close of the day, by the mystery of each new morning and the glory of the setting sun, and over and over again she endeavoured to depict these scenes of portentous numinosity. As the skies she was keenly inspecting every morning were traditionally the site of the heavenly kingdom, she first found it but too easy to connect her experience of mystic wonder with the expectations she had of heaven:

> That shall Aurora be -
> East of Eternity -
> One with the banner gay -
> One in the red array -
> <u>That</u> is the break of Day!
> (13, MS c. 1858)

> Like thee to dance - like thee to sing -
> People upon that mystic green -
> I ask, each new May Morn.
> I wait thy far, fantastic bells -
> Announcing me in other dells -
> Unto the different dawn!
> (24, c. 1858)

Although dawn as a poetic symbol always seems to have retained for her the metaphoric bytone it once derived from her expectations of the eternal morning (cf. poems 101,1619, p.14), she soon grew suspicious of, then openly hostile to, the Christian interpretation she had first given to her reverent emotion at the natural phenomenon:

> As Watchers hang upon the East,
> As Beggars revel at a feast
> By savory Fancy spread -
> As brooks in deserts babble sweet
> On ear too far for the delight,
> Heaven beguiles the tired.
>
> As that same watcher, when the East
> Opens the lid of Amethyst
> And lets the morning go -
> That Beggar, when an honored Guest,
> Those thirsty lips to flagons pressed,
> Heaven to us, if true.
> (121, c. 1859)

> "Heaven" is what I cannot reach!
> The Apple on the Tree -
> Provided it do hopeless hang -
> That - "Heaven" is - to me!
>
> The Color, on the Cruising Cloud -
> The interdicted Land -
> Behind the Hill - the House behind -
> There - Paradise - is found!
>
> Her teasing Purples - Afternoons -
> The credulous - decay -
> Enamored - of the Conjuror -
> That spurned us - Yesterday!
> (239, c. 1861)

It is evident that what failed was not Dickinson's faith in the "truthfulness" of her own numinous experiences of nature but her belief in the traditional interpretation of the numinous as well as in the traditional religious idiom. After having tried and rejected the traditional symbols of dogma to describe the purest manifestations she knew of the numen, she returned to her immediate sensation, whose subjective,

emotive component she now attempted to extricate by describing and analyzing its objective, perceivable features in most fanciful similes and metaphors. In this she, consciously or unconsciously, long reflected the thought of Emerson, who spoke contemptuously of men "who do not themselves clothe one thought in its natural garment, but who feed unconsciously on the language created by the primary writers of the country", whereas

> wise men pierce this rotten diction and fasten words again to visible things; so that picturesque language is at once a commanding certificate that he who employs it is a man in alliance with truth and God.[19]

Neither can the Transcendental conviction that natural things are not only emblematic in themselves (of the universal unity of all happening) but also provide man with the only true symbols in <u>language</u> of his inmost aspirations ("Nature is the vehicle of thought") have escaped Dickinson. "This immediate dependence of language upon nature, this conversion of an outward phenomenon into a type of somewhat in human life,"[20] which Emerson hailed as the natural speech of man, long affected her descriptions of nature and made her repeatedly resort to personification as the metaphoric means by which she tried to solve the mystery of the numen. Thus we can list, for instance, at least five early poems in which she sought, we might say, personal acquaintance of the setting sun in her best valentine manner:

> I never told the buried gold
> Upon the hill - that lies -
> I saw the sun - his plunder done
> Crouch low to guard his price.
>
> (11, MS c. 1858)

The Guest is gold and crimson -
An Opal guest and gray -
Of Ermine is his doublet -
His Capuchin gay -
(15, c. 1858)

The Sun kept stooping - stooping - low!
The Hills to meet him rose!
On his side, what Transaction!
On their side, what Repose!
(152, c. 1860)

She sweeps with many-colored Brooms -
And leaves the Shreds behind -
Oh Housewife in the Evening West -
Come back, and dust the Pond!
(219, c. 1861)

Blazing in Gold - and
Quenching - in Purple!
Leaping - like Leopards - in the sky -
Then - at the feet of the old Horizon -
Laying it's spotted face - to die!

Stooping as low as the kitchen window -
Touching the Roof -
And tinting the Barn -
Kissing it's Bonnet to the Meadow -
And the Juggler of Day - is gone!
(228, c. 1861)

What was she trying to achieve by this sort of serial equation which did not develop around a presiding image but around a central experience? Above we have discussed the way in which Dickinson would distil - in her "definitions" the abstract, structural sense out of the imagial wholes which she felt significant; here she seems to be dressing her urgent but still abstract feeling in various imagial patterns as if to see which might fit it best. We see "the metaphoric approach to reality" practised here as she had learnt it by now, but, curious enough, none of these metaphoric images seem capable of becoming really symbolic, as engaging as they are in themselves. Somehow they lack the personal weight which alone would validate them as progenitors of revealing symbolism. She evidently noticed

it herself, and her rather solid, one-image personifications soon dissolve into staccato impressions of the celestial scenes, real paintings in words:

A slash of Blue -
A sweep of Gray -
Some scarlet patches on the way,
Compose an Evening Sky -
A little purple - slipped between -
Some Ruby Trowsers hurried on -
A Wave of Gold -
A Bank of Day -
This just makes out the Morning Sky.
(204, c. 1860)

How the old Mountains dip with Sunset
How the Hemlocks burn -
How the Dun Brake is draped in Cinder
By the Wizard Sun -
...
Then, how the Fire ebbs like Billows -
Touching all the Grass
With a departing - Sapphire - feature -
As a Duchess passed -

How a small Dusk crawls on the Village
Till the Houses blot
And the old Flambeau, no men carry
Glimmer on the Street -
...
These are the Visions flitted Guido -
Titian - never told -
Domenichino dropped his pencil -
Paralyzed, with Gold -
(291, c. 1861)

The Day came slow - till Five o'clock -
Then sprang before the Hills
Like Hindered Rubies - or the Light
A Sudden Musket - spills -

The Purple could not keep the East -
The Sunrise shook abroad
Like Breadths of Topaz - packed a Night -
The Lady just unrolled -
...
The Orchard sparkled like Jew
How mighty 'twas - to be
A Guest in this stupendous place -
The Parlor - of the Day -
(304, c. 1862)

What was happening, had already happened to our poet? We have noted above how Dickinson's manner of presenting

dawn changed together with her changing religious attitudes: belief which first included her in the miracle turned by and by into doubt, which made her but an outside observer of the heavenly revels. A similar critical development in her attitude toward the naïve Transcendental confidence in universal correspondences symbolized and symbolizable through nature seems to be recorded in these somewhat later poems. From a participant in the sun's secrecy of "his plunder" she turns into a passive spectator of "the Juggler of Day" and "the wizard Sun", and often the celestial scenes are flatly compared to a circus, appreciated as a spectacle but again too immaterial to reach:

> I've known a Heaven, like a Tent -
> To wrap it's shining Yards -
> Pluck up it's stakes, and disappear -
> Without the sound of Boards
> Or Rip of Nail - Or Carpenter -
> But just the miles of Stare -
> That signalize a Show's Retreat -
> In North America -
> (243, c. 1861)

> Of Bronze - and Blaze -
> The North - Tonight -
> So adequate - it forms -
> So preconcerted with itself
> So distant - to alarms -
> An Unconcern so sovereign
> To Universe, or me -
> Infects my simple spirit
> With Taints of Majesty -
> ...
> My Splendors, are Menagerie -
> But their Competeless Show
> Will entertain the Centuries
> When I, am long ago,
> An Island in dishonored Grass -
> Whom none but Daisies, know.
> (290, c. 1861)

> Like Mighty Foot Lights - burned the Red
> At Bases of the Trees -
> The far Theatricals of Day
> Exhibiting - to These -

'Twas Universe - that did applaud -
While Chiefest - of the Crowd -
Enable by his Royal Dress -
Myself distinguished God -
(595, c. 1862)

By this time, we might say, Dickinson had realized that the method of metaphorizing, making poetic images of her experience of the world and life in order to question and analyze its metaphysical significance was correct, or the one best suited for her, but the method had also taught her that all the metaphysical axioms on which she had based her metaphors were wrong - or in the wrong perspective. The realms of God, nature, and man were not corresponding in the way she had expected them to be; they were not, when dialectically examined, metaphorically equivalent, i.e. capable of reflecting each other's happening. First the cosy and near heaven of child's mythic faith had been found insufficient and been substituted by nature, in whose intimate image she could still imagine to see heaven reflected; now both had disappeared to give way to the image of an insensitive universe, a mere scenary, a pompous spectacle staged by a haughty god in sole order to display his power to human puppets, moving according to a scheme too vast to be understood by them. When metaphorically tested, nature as the image of heaven had lost its symbolic potentiality; next the capacity of nature to reflect - or to be reflected in - the human experience would be found insufficient.

Perhaps, indeed, all spiritual development can be best recognized and described as the development of our

linguistic resources. Howbeit, now we have reached the point where the first phase of Dickinson's stylistic development ends. This phase we have chosen to call "naming" and argued that it consists of "applying to the objects... the most expressive concepts the poet happens to possess"(p.v). Hereto we must add at once that the process of symbolic naming in itself implies more than mere experimental application of language to objects of interest; besides learning to apply conceptual symbols to various things both outside and inside ourselves, we also learn to differentiate them from each other, differentiate between them; between the subjective and the objective realms of consciousness.

These two are by no means subsequent acts, though the above formulation seems to suggest so, for the very naming of an object - a symbolic representation of it - includes the act of differentiation. We quote Ernst Cassirer:

> In the symbolic function of consciousness - as it operates in language, in art, in myth - certain unchanging fundamental forms, some of a conceptual and some of a purely sensory nature, disengage themselves from the stream of consciousness; the flux of contents is replaced by a self-contained and enduring unity of form.
> Here, however, we are not dealing with an isolated act, but with a progressive process of determination. ... For every "reproduction" of a content embodies a new level of "reflection". By the mere fact that it no longer takes this content as something simply present, but confronts it in imagination as something past and yet not vanished, consciousness, by its changed relation to the content, gives both to itself and the content a changed ideal meaning. And this occurs more and more precisely and abundantly as the world of representations stemming from the "I" becomes differentiated. The "I" now exercises an original formative activity all the while developing a deeper understanding.
> The limits of the "subjective" and "objective" worlds become for the first time really clear.[21]

Of course, it was not language alone that taught Emily

Dickinson the separateness of man and his experience from the rest of the universe; there was also that affliction of the heart which turned her natural ecstasy morbid. Yet it was language that confirmed the separation for her, and at times it is difficult indeed to decide which led the way: whether it was her maturing emotional and intellectual life which was reflected in, and developed her poetic dialectic, or her poetic experimentations which made her realize and revalue her changed position in an alien universe. Probably these two worked together, feeding on one another, but we cannot help suggesting that without her poetry Emily Dickihson would possibly never have experienced her spiritual separation from both nature and heaven thus literally. When put in words and laid on paper the cherished scenes and psychic images of girlhood were developed in a way whose logic seemed both true and frightening. Things first experienced in spiritual likeness proved, when named as each other, quite different from each other, and the namer, once an empathic part of the totality of a living universe, was fatally separated from the named, since now the passive object of her perception. Dickinson's linguistic development did not just accompany her intellectual and emotional maturation but rather steered it, and without her poetic reflection she would never have realized and carried out her fate so resolutely.

3. Eyes Put Out

Before the year 1861, which roughly marks the end of her experimentation period, Emily Dickinson largely, if not mainly, derived her inspiration from nature. This fact is but poorly displayed in most modern selections of her poetry, whose compilers, naturally enough, have always preferred her later, intellectually and technically more advanced verse. Her poems on natural subjects, however, comprise approximately 44 % of the total output of the years 1850-60 (see Appendix), and although much of this verse (in a greater degree, perhaps, than any other type of her early poetry) can simply be called "exercises", its importance, both for her stylistic development and for the discovery of her most relevant symbology, cannot be overlooked.

Her instinctive love for nature enhanced by the influence of the Transcendentalists, the young Dickinson tended to see and interpret all human happening in metaphors derived from nature and vice versa; this empathic mutuality of feeling, not to say of being, resulted in almost universal humanization of the natural objects and phenomena under observation.[1] Among her two hundered and odd poems written before 1861 there are some 90 poems on

natural subjects, and of these just about one half clearly personify the natural things in question (see App.). We pick up a few typical examples of these early effusions (also see nos. 11 , 15 ,152 , 219, 228,pp.49-50).

The morns are meeker than they were -
The nuts are getting brown -
The berry's cheek is plumper -
The Rose is out of town.

The Maple wears a gayer scarf -
The field a scarlet gown -
Lest I sh'd be old fashioned
I'll put a trinket on.
(12, c. 1858)

She slept beneath a tree -
Remembered but by me.
I touched her Cradle mute -
She recognized the foot -
Put on her carmine suit
And see!
(25, c. 1858)

I robbed the Woods -
The trusting Woods.
The unsuspecting Trees
Brought out their Burs and mosses
My fantasy to please.
I scanned their trinkets curious -
I grasped - I bore away -
What will the solemn Hemlock -
What will the Oak tree say?
(41, c. 1858)

Some Rainbow - coming from the Fair!
Some Vision of the World Cashmere -
I confidently see!
Or else a Peacock's purple Train
Feather by feather - on the plain
Fritters itself away!
...
The Robins stand as thick today
As flakes of snow stood yesterday -
On fence - and Roof - and Twig!
The Orchis binds her feather on
For her old lover - Don the Sun!
Revisiting the Bog!
(64, c. 1859)

While personification, based on naïve anthromorphizing sentiment, was simply a cliché in Dickinson's most trivial

verse ("sent with a flower"; cf. no. 25 above, also see App.),we have seen,and will see again, that as one of the earliest metaphoric approaches to her most important natural motifs it would produce symbols of great personal significance. On the other hand, as we have observed, the metaphorizing of nature in human image could not, eventually, but prove the analogies between the natural and the human world incomplete and short-lived:

> Tho′my destiny be Fustian -
> Her′s be damask fine -
> Tho′ she wear a silver apron -
> I, a less divine -
>
> Still, my little Gipsey being
> I would far prefer,
> Still, my little sunburnt bosom
> To her Rosier,
>
> For, when Frosts, their punctual fingers
> On her forehead lay,
> You and I, and Dr Holland,
> Bloom Eternally!
>
> (163, c. 1860)

Sure, this badinage is still more playful than earnest, but once the difference had been noted, the alienation of the two realities, natural and human, was bound to come. The difference between them appeared not simply one of duration, but also of tempo and experience; the human reality, which first had seemed to reflect, and be reflected in the natural circle of happening, would suddenly start evolving according to its own laws, unknown up to this. This sentiment, quite unfamiliar to Transcendental optimism, made Dickinson - to show her growing sense of alienation - dissynchronize rudely the organic balance of her natural images:

Make me a picture of the sun -
So I can hang it in my room -
And make believe I'm getting warm
When others call it "Day"!

Draw me a Robin - on a stem -
So I am hearing him, I'll dream,
And when the Orchards stop their tune -
Put my pretense - away -

Say if it's really - warm at noon -
Whether it's Buttercups - that "skim" -
Or Butterflies - that "bloom"?
Then - skip - the frost - upon the lea -
And skip the Russet - on the tree -
Let's play those - never come!
(188, c. 1860)

The poet's wish to be excused from participating in the yearly resurrection of nature - a theme so much cherished formerly but no longer meaningful to her - soon turned into a very repulsion of its coming. The following poem, with MS from early 1862, shows the crisis which Dickinson was undergoing again reflected in her troubled relation to the very things of nature in whose image she had been used to hail her sense of union with them[2]:

I dreaded that first Robin so,
But He is mastered, now -
I'm some accustomed to Him grown,
He hurts a little, though -
...
I dared not meet the Daffodils -
For fear their Yellow Gown
Would pierce me with a fashion
So foreign to my own -
...
I could not bear the Bees should come,
I wished they'd stay away
In those dim countries where they go,
What word had they, for me?

They're here, though; not a creature failed -
No Blossom stayed away
In gentle deference to me -
The Queen of Calvary -
(348)

The experience which eventually made Emily Dickinson realize the uniqueness of human existence and differentiate

her own being from the general run of universal happening was her passion for another human being, and her discovery of human will as a law superior to all natural laws. What actually happened between her and the Reverend Charles Wadsworth is not known. It has been only surmised that she met him first in Philadelphia, where she and her sister were stopping for a fortnight after their visit to Washington in April 1854; that she[4] wrote to him some time after this meeting asking for presbyterial advice; that he visited her in Amherst once, possibly twice, before he was called to the charge of the Calvary Church in San Francisco in December 1861; and that they exchanged letters till his death on April 1st, 1882. As all their correspondence, except for a few drafts of her letters to him, has been long ago destroyed, it is useless now to conjecture anything factual about this love affair (even to call it an "affair", in the usual sense of the word, is gross exaggeration); yet its vital importance for Dickinson's poetry cannot be denied or overlooked, as it evidently was the very event which estranged her from the puerile ecstasies of nature worship.[3] The psychological causes of this estrangement (the material effects of which were soon reflected in the decreasing number of poems on natural subjects; see App.) were later reasoned out by the poet herself as follows:

> Before I got my eye put out
> I liked as well to see -
> As other Creatures, that have Eyes
> And know no other way -
>
> But were it told to me - Today -
> That I might have the sky
> For mine - I tell you that my Heart
> Would split, for size of me -

The Meadows - mine -
The Mountains - mine -
All Forests - Stintless Stars -
As much of Noon as I could take
Between my finite eyes -

The Motions of the Dipping Birds -
The Morning's Amber Road -
For mine - to look at when I liked -
The News would strike me dead -

So safer - guess - with just my soul
Upon the Window pane -
Where other Creatures put their eyes -
Incautious - of the Sun -
(327, c. 1862)

Had I not seen the Sun
I could have borne the shade
But Light a newer Wilderness
My Wilderness has made -
(1233, c. 1872)

I thought that nature was enough
Till Human nature came
But that the other did absorb
As Parallax a Flame -

Of Human nature just aware
There added the Divine
Brief struggle for capacity
The power to contain

Is always as the contents
But give a Giant room
And you will lodge a Giant
And not a smaller man
(1286, c. 1873)

Unless we know the enjoyment Dickinson had always derived from nature and the great value that she was still to attach to it, no. 327 remains enigmatic to us. She is not, of course, finding her own, still superior capacity to perceive nature inferior to that of other people, on the contrary; what she is comparing here is her present attitude of mind to her former condition of natural delight, now impossible to regain.

Why impossible? Let us quote a passage from still another poem, in which she metaphorizes the sense of

elation awakening to love had given her:[4]

I walked - as wings - my body bore -
The feet - I former used -
Unnecessary - now to me -
As boots - would be - to Birds -

I put my pleasure all abroad -
I dealt a word of Gold
To every Creature - that I met -
And Dowered - all the World -

When - suddenly - my Riches shrank -
A Goblin - drank my Dew -
My Palaces - dropped tenantless -
Myself - was beggared - too

I clutched at sounds -
I groped at shapes -
I touched the tops of Films -
I felt the Wilderness roll back
Along my Golden lines -
(430, c. 1862)

We venture to suggest that the intent of all these poems is the same, to convey metaphorically the poet's drastic experience of love as the fulfilment, in time, of nature, the latter being capable only to prophesy and reflect the former but no more to compensate for it once love is lost. What nature had formerly meant to the poet, is nothing in comparison with what it might have been, as a complement and glorification of love, and in the light of this what-might-have-been, that which is only hurts (348) or can no more be properly valued (327, 430, 1233).

No. 1286, again, adds another, reflective dimension to the picture, so much more difficult to paraphrase as it is more advanced in metaphoric dialectics. Just as human love surpasses (by containment) our love of nature, so our human nature outdoes the capacities of general nature in that it can accommodate not only love but loss of love as well; can adjust itself to the loss, even understand the spiritual gain of this adjustment, this growth to the

acceptance of loss, as the ultimate, perhaps only possession of what is lost.

"Gain through loss" seems to be the "poetic idea" (or structural sense) to be found at the core of almost all of Dickinson's most important experience of life. Whether loss is discovered as the principle of growth into one's highest personal stature (also cf. the series 67 - 73 - 126 - 540 - 594 - 713, pp. 43-44) or as a universal principle governing all our acts of estimation and appreciation[5], this discovery brings Dickinson back into line with the old Puritan thinkers and sets her in obvious contrast with the Transcendentals.[6] Natural man obeying natural laws feels in harmony both with his environment and God understood as the maker of natural laws, but his truest human nature he does not find in nature but in his separation from it; in the difference there is between the natural laws and the spiritual laws governing human life. In the very renunciation of the love which had promised the consummation of her natural being Dickinson thought to discover the supreme principle of her spiritual being; what was lost in the former sphere of her being, was recovered in the latter as a "Second Gain" (522), as the recognition of the absolute meaning and value of what was lost:

> Best Gains - must have the Losses' Test -
> To constitute them - Gains -
> (684, April 1863)

The old Christian cliché of "renouncing the world to gain heaven" has, of course, but very marginal significance for this kind of metaphysical insight into the nature of things; we would rather say that Dickinson renounced the world in order to gain <u>the world</u>. It seems that for her,

whether she was conscious of it or not, the discovery of the value and meaning of a thing was more important than the valued thing itself, and as for measuring value and meaning of an object one needs both objective measure and distance, separation from and dispossession of the object were the price of the discovery. Full cognition of either sensual or spiritual things can be effected only in their absence, through the vacuum they create (the equilibrium of senses or mind being not only incommunicable but, above all, incognizable in any human terms of desire and volition, on the gradations of which, in fact, all our vocabulary for emotive meaning is based), and Emily Dickinson was well aware, from the beginning, that what pained her most was the source, too, of her profoundest spiritual intuition (cf. no. 770, p. 8):

Ah, Necromancy Sweet!
Ah, Wizard erudite!
Teach me the skill,

That I instil the pain
Surgeons assuage in vain,
Nor Herb of all the plain
Can heal!
(177, c. 1860)

Delight becomes pictorial -
When viewed through Pain -
More fair - because impossible
Than any gain -
(571, c. 1862)

The hallowing of Pain
Like hallowing of Heaven,
Obtains at a corporeal cost -
The Summit is not given

To Him who strives severe
At Bottom of the Hill -
But He who has acheived the Top -
All - is the price of All -
(772, c. 1863)

If the discovery of a worth takes place only through pain from its loss, the confirmation of this discovery is through poetic language, which will now grasp in the pain an adequate image of the lost. According to this dialectical principle, the factual and the poetic possession (apprehension) of reality eventually become polar opposites, each annihilating the other, and in a sense our poet was choosing, from the beginning, between these two ways of relating herself to the world. It is true that first she sought for a poetic image of her experience only to conquer the pain (or awe, see p. 8 ff) it gave her, but as soon as she had learnt to transform the painful factuality of the beloved, too transient things into the soothing, symbolic virtuality of their poetic representations, the annihilation of factuality through poetry became for her an epistemological principle as well. Being a poet, she understood, who instils value and meaning out of phenomenal reality, means <u>perpetuation of pain</u>: endless separation from that reality, refusal, incapacity even to enjoy the world through one's natural senses - and yet it was only this "putting out (natural) eyes" that made things loom so numinous and covetable in the eyes of the mind, "hallowed" them and made them, in a word, objects of the metaphysical interest of an artist:[7]

I would not paint - a picture -
I'd rather be the One
It's bright impossibility
To dwell - delicious - on -
And wonder how the fingers feel
Whose rare - celestial - stir -
Evokes so sweet a Torment -
Such sumptuous - Despair -
...

Nor would I be a Poet -
It's finer - own the Ear -
Enamored - impotent - content -
The License to revere,
A privilege so aweful
What would the Dower be,
Had I the Art to stun myself
With Bolts of Melody!
(505, early 1862)

From now on art, not nature, was the realm to which Dickinson felt to belong, and her attitude toward the latter, as has been noted, was no longer as toward an element identical with herself but (almost) as toward any other alien essence she would observe and analyze poetically. Heaven, the unattainable realm of divine will and laws, was also superseded (or swallowed up) by the virtual world of poetry. In it man, the artist, could be god and find his own temporal heaven, in the image of which, perhaps, the eternal heaven of God might be reflected, but which was sufficient for his needs:

I reckon - when I count at all -
First - Poets - Then the Sun -
Then Summer - Then the Heaven of God -
And then - the List is done -

But, looking back - the First so seems
To Comprehend the Whole -
The Others look a needless Show -
So I write - Poets - All -

Their Summer - lasts a Solid Year -
They can afford a Sun
The East - would deem extravagant -
And it the Further Heaven -

Be Beautiful as they prepare
For Those who worship Them -
It is too difficult a Grace -
To justify the Dream -
(569, c. 1862)

II

It seems evident that whatever Dickinson's feelings for Charles Wadsworth were, he either checked their manifestations immediately or even prevented her from ever giving them a direct outlet. Any protestations of love and devotion in her poems, says Whicher,

> do not, however, oblige us to assume that she was of supreme importance in his [life] , though that assumption was not unnaturally made by members of her family and by others who were close to her. ... He was not the kind of man to tolerate faithlessness of spirit in himself, nor is there the least hint to indicate that he was other than deeply attached to the beautiful and gracious woman who was his wife. ... He never spared himself, and died at sixty-eight utterly spent in the Lord's service.[8]

Whicher also suggests that it was Wadsworth who through his "darkly fervid teaching" made her mind again sensitive to certain dogmatic aspects of Puritan theology (such as immortality and heavenly recompense promised to "those who missed life's bouquet"), even finds in her poems on these topics stylistic similarity to his expression.[9] Yet it is to be doubted whether Wadsworth, despite all the presbytrial aid he would offer her in the general way, ever grasped the core of Dickinson's existential anguish and the important place her love for him was by and by gaining in her private theology. For us, who have in her poems a progressive testimony of her spiritual struggle, it is easier to see that for Dickinson love was always <u>the justification of her being</u>, the material sign and symbol of grace - nay, grace itself materialized - which alone would save her life from spiritual exhaustion. Her struggle for the justification of her "impossible" love, which again would justify her life,

became her greatest theological (or existential) problem, a true equivalent of Presbyterian struggle for grace (the "impossibility" of this, or any, desire again proving for her rather an epistemological, or aesthetic, problem than a theological one).

In Calvinistic theology the concept of grace (redemption) was indissolubly connected with that of predestination, grace being granted only to those who were particularly "elected" for it. Well trained in the Puritan religious terminology and system of thought, Dickinson removed parts of it into her own metaphysics, often metaphorizing her own quest for love in the very words the Puritans used to express their want of grace:

I spilt the dew -
But took the morn -
I chose this single star
From out the wide night's numbers -
Sue - forevermore!
(14, c. 1858)

"They have not chosen me," he said,
"But I have chosen them!"
Brave - Broken hearted statement -
Uttered in Bethleem!

I could not have told it,
But since Jesus dared -
Sovereign! Know a Daisy
Thy dishonor shared!
(85, c. 1859)

Dying! Dying in the night!
Wont somebody bring the light
So I can see which way to go
Into the everlasting snow?

And "Jesus"! Where is Jesus gone?
They say that Jesus - always came -
Perhaps he doesn't know the House -
This way, Jesus, Let him pass!

Somebody run to the great gate
And see if Dollie's coming! Wait!
I hear her feet upon the stair!
Death wont hurt - now Dollie's here!
(158, c. 1860)

Why - do they shut Me out of Heaven?
Did I sing - too loud?
But - I can say a little "Minor"
Timid as a Bird!

Would'nt the Angels try me -
Just - once - more -
Just - see - if I troubled them -
But dont - shut the door!

Oh, if I - were the Gentleman
In the "White Robe" -
And they - were the little Hand - that knocked -
Could - I - forbid?
(248, c. 1861)

Just so - Christ - raps -
He - does'nt weary -
First at the Knocker -
And then - at the Bell.
Then - on the Divinest Tiptoe - standing -
Might he but spy the hiding soul?

When he - retires -
Chilled - or weary -
It will be ample time for me -
Patient - upon the steps - until then -
Heart - I am knocking low
At thee:
(317, the 1861 variant)

The Soul selects her own Society -
Then - shuts the Door -
On her divine Majority -
Obtrude no more -

Unmoved - she notes the Chariots - pausing -
At her low Gate -
Unmoved - an Emperor be kneeling
Upon her Mat -

I've known her - from an ample nation -
Choose One -
Then - close the Valves of her attention -
Like Stone -
(303, c. 1862)

In these early poems we recognize Dickinson's sense of her own "gracelessness" expressed either directly in religious vocabulary (158,248) or indirectly, through the image of herself as Jesus, in vain offering to others the gift of grace (love) which they deny her (14, 85, 317). Seeing in Jesus not her Saviour but her own likeness - a lover

wooing a reluctant beloved - then helped the poet reverse the whole principle of predestination (303): in the idea of "irresistible grace", granted entirely irrespective of the will of its object, she discovered the mechanism, not only of the unaccountable heaven, but of her own love as well, which in its fullness no longer thought it a "dishonor" to be rejected - or reject - but chose freely according to its own inclination.

Thus the impact of the Puritan doctrine of predestination on Dickinson was the very reverse to what it was originally meant to be, as in reflecting poetically on it she would discover her greatest existential truth: the power of human will to mould the most unpromising human fate upon its own pattern. If God's will, as it seemed, could reverse the natural order of things (by denying her her most natural needs), hers would, too, and choose the very thing which was felt unnatural: dedication to a cause already lost. Trained to paradoxes, her Puritan mind was, moreover, quick to apprehend the divine law operating in rejection: love for a finite object is never but finite, while - the actual object removed - love seeking to fill up, "contain" a vacuum swells out for infinity, thus making the best display of its "capacity":[10]

> So well that I can live without -
> I love thee - then How well is that?
> As well as Jesus?
> Prove it me
> That He - loved Men -
> As I - love thee -
> (456, c. 1862)

III

Although it seems that Dickinson's love for Charles Wadsworth was the critical point on which were focused almost all the aspects of her relation to the Christian dogma, it is useless, here or elsewhere in her poetry, to look for any systematic attitude toward it. The extent of her dependence on Puritan thought cannot be objectively measured either, for whatever use she made of certain contemporary models of the self and the spiritual laws governing its existence, she would always transfer her conceptual loans over to her own poetic system, incorporated in which they are no longer directly comparable with the dogmatic system from which they have been borrowed. Her references to "grace", or "election", or any other item of the Christian doctrine, are always metaphoric (cf. pp.35-42), their 'tenor' being found in her own private experience which they helped her analyze; for her the acceptance of an ideal pattern did not, necessarily, mean the unequivocal acceptance of the ideal content.

In a previous chapter we have spoken of Dickinson's self-chosen seclusion from society as " a delayed substitute of the conversion which had proved impossible at Mount Holyoke"(p.6). In that connection the very term ("conversion") was a metaphor, but here we want briefly to discuss the metaphoric quality of the act itself, to show the way in which Emily Dickinson usually adapted to her life the

general "truths" of theology.

The mechanism of conversion was, actually, too well known to her to let her but imitate it, especially as she was, consciously or unconsciously, reacting to it. Religious conversion, as we know, is usually preceded by a shorter or longer period of preparation, during which the subject is pestered by a sense of guilt, wrongness, or of general insuffiency/ic/ of being. "Sin" as a theological conception evidently being an incomprehensible, even highly objectionable one to Dickinson, who rather subscibed/r/ to the Transcendental creed of man's innate goodness,[11] her mind - reminicent/s/ of her early days at Mount Holyoke - was troubled by the general futility of her being, her lack of "grace":

> I think just how my shape will rise -
> When I shall be"forgiven" -
> Till Hair - and Eyes - and timid Head -
> Are out of sight - in Heaven -
>
> I think just how my lips will weigh -
> With shapeless - quivering - prayer -
> That you so late - "Consider" me -
> The "Sparrow" of your Care -
>
> I mind me that of Anguish - sent -
> Some drifts were moved away -
> Before my simple bosom - broke -
> And why not this - if they?
>
> And so I con that thing - "forgiven" -
> Until - delirious - borne -
> By my long bright - and longer - trust -
> I drop my Heart - unshriven!
>
> (237, c. 1861)

We have seen Dickinson's sense of her "gracelessness", of the insufficiency of her being, reflected in various ways in her poetic imagery (esp.cf. poems 158, 248, 317, pp. 68-69); as the feeling grew stronger and stronger,

the desire, so far devoid of any adequate object, virtually had to be objectified, tension released, an answer given - and it was, unexpectedly as grace always works. Whicher has suggested, seemingly by evidence of certain of Dickinson's poems (e.g. 322, 430, 663), that besides his historic call in February or March 1860, Wadsworth paid her another visit in late summer 1861. We do not feel in authority to decide this question, but knowing her spiritual tension at the time, we may well suppose that whenever Wadsworth came, his coming was - either immediately or soon afterwards - understood as the sign of grace so long expected:[12]

> Except that Heaven had come so near -
> So seemed to choose my Door -
> The Distance would not haunt me so -
> I had not hoped - before -
>
> But just to hear the Grace depart -
> I never thought to see -
> Afflicts me with a Double loss -
> 'Tis lost - And lost to me -
> (472, c. 1862)

It may be that until now Dickinson had never thought of this distant man as a possible lover; at least the draft of a letter from 1858 (L II 187) probably intended to him suggests none of the ardour of the two other surviving drafts from late 1861 and early 1862 (L II 233, 248). The impress of suddenness which she gives to all the poetic descriptions of her recognition of love may result from her first ecstatic meeting with Wadsworth, ecstasy even then being rather the outcome of her previous tension than of any already professed feeling for the unexpected visitor. The fatal importance of the meeting, so conscientiously emphasized in all her numerous depictions of the scene,

seems to derive from the metaphysically tinged anguish she had suffered and now - for a moment at least - felt delivered from:

> It would never be Common - more - I said -
> Difference - had begun -
> Many a bitterness - had been -
> But that old sort - was done -
>
> Or - if it sometime - showed - as 'twill -
> Upon the Downiest - Morn -
> Such bliss - had I - for all the years -
> 'Twould give an Easier - pain -
> (430;for later stanzas,see p.62)

For Dickinson, the discovery of her love for Charles Wadsworth was evidently an ecstatic revelation, decisive of all her later orientation in life. Marghanita Laski has described the effects of this sort of ecstasy as follows:

> But in revelation ecstasies, as I have defined them, there is no previous awareness of value in the triggers, no previous questions consciously asked. Although we might guess that the revelation comes when the ecstatic is in some way ready for it and to that extent represents a point of arrival, so far as the ecstatic is consciously aware, an entirely new focus of value has been brought into his life by contact with the trigger to his ecstasy.[13]

According to Mrs. Laski, "A revelation ecstasy may often be the first step in the process of mutation that can end in an experience,often an ecstatic experience, properly called conversion", and even if she is cautious enough to remind us that "revelation ecstasies are points of departure; a point of arrival may never be reached", we shall see that for Emily Dickinson her revelation was vital for the eventual discovery, in William James's words, of her "new center of personal energy"[14]; the main characteristic of a genuine conversion. To make our point clear, we still quote Mrs. Laski's definition of the latter phenomenon:

> I shall then take conversion to refer to a lasting and substantial mental reorganization, spontaneously achieved and accepted as beneficial. By lasting I mean usually of permanent, always of considerable duration. By substantial I mean relating to those beliefs that the person concerned holds to be the most important part of his mental life, which entails, in effect, that most though not necessarily all conversions will be concerned with religious belief. And by spontaneously achieved I mean to exclude such 'conversions' as ... are changes in belief deliberately and enforcedly brought about or imposed by the will of some person or persons other than the one whose belief is to be changed; all mass conversions are therefore excluded.[15]

The fact is, above all, to be noted of which Mrs. Laski reminds us, that even though Dickinson's mental crisis and reorientation followed the familiar behaviour pattern of a person under religious doubts and scruples, her "conversion" need not be understood as religious; in many respects it rather resembled what William James calls "counter-conversion", falling away from religion.[16] Yet it, unquestionably, fully complied with the characteristics listed in the above definition. There is no doubt, for instance, that her love for Wadsworth meant to her " a lasting and substantial reorganization", especially as her "white election" was of her free choice and of life-long duration, and as a belated reaction to the mass conversions of her youth, it certainly was "spontaneous". After noting this, we are confronted by two questions (both of which have been implicitly answered in the previous discussion), namely, 1) What sort of "belief" or intuition, then, was she converted into? and 2) Why, if away from religion, did her conversion follow so closely the Christian formula, to the extent of "renouncing" the world?

First of all we are to note that the Christian formula

had been imposed on Dickinson from her youth, to which was added the influence of Wadsworth himself, an orthodox Trinitarian minister, to love whom was almost the same as to love the God for whom he was representative. Rebelling against a fixed manner of behaviour that society demands of us does not exclude the wish to conform to it, in one way or another, and in her seclusion Dickinson had her chance for both, for protest as well as for (belated) compliance. Secondly, the Christian conversion offered her a meaningful analogy as a poet, as a person who prefers metaphysical cognizance of things and poetic gratification to the gratification of senses or ambition. Anyone who wants to explore the emotional depths of his being, must needs pay an extraordinary price for it; just as true Christians repudiate the world in order to gain heaven, so has a poet to deny himself all consummation of his desires not to lose a whit of the intensity of his numinous passion.

Dickinson's "white election" was, in the last analysis, a conversion to be a poet, a self-sacrificing act not unlike that of Christian martyrs or recluses,[7] and even if the spiritual benefit she derived from poetry was somewhat different from the gratification which they experience in their sense of unity with God, she, too, was coveting a supernatural vision which natural eyes cannot give:[17]

> Renunciation - is a piercing Virtue -
> The letting go
> A Presence - for an Expectation -
> Not now -
> The putting out of Eyes -
> Just Sunrise -
> Lest Day -
> Day's Great Progenitor -
> Outvie
> (No stanza break)

Renunciation - is the Choosing
Against itself -
Itself to justify
Unto itself -
When larger function -
Make that appear -
Smaller - than Covered Vision - Here -
(745, c. 1863)

Dickinson's "conversion" was, obviously, only the last link in a long chain of spiritual discoveries resulting in the eventual discovery of her true self, and it was not, as noted, brought about in an instant. In the next chapter we shall, as it were, go back to the beginning and examine the whole process from a somewhat different angle, from that of her developing personality, which will, let us hope, also expose some new aspects of her development as a poet. The reader is asked kindly to excuse the inevitable repetition of certain central data of the poet's history.

4. The Role and the Myth

A poet's metaphoric habit of language, while seemingly just a special variant of the naming habit, is of unique origin and importance for him; based on his sense of analogy and similarity in the nature of things, it is closely associated to and expressive of his metaphysical cravings. There is also a further difference between the processes of simple naming and metaphoric description. While naming of an object of interest, especially if carried out through a conventional appellation with a generally accepted denotation, is merely an act of mental recognition and of securing the thing, creative, poetic naming of an object through a metaphoric image implies an attitude and a choice, a personal preference to a certain way of seeing and representing the thing. Now and then metaphoric naming even implies a coercive act of will, being then virtually an attempt to change the prevalent situation as if through verbal magic.[1]

The language of a poet can thus be understood as a succession of symbolic choices prompted by the deepest urges of his personality, and the totality of his poetry as born out of his strife for a right to comprehend, assimilate and depict reality in his own terms - in those of his personality and will. Thus, too, a constant tension between reality and

personality can be seen reflected in the imagery and symbology of every single poem.

The dynamic tension of poetic language as manifestation of a mind grappling with reality has made Cleanth Brooks compare the inner organization of a poem to the dynamic nature of drama; he even maintains that "the structure of a poem resembles that of a play". For him the dialectic of a poem consists of the tuning together of its inner conflicts, or, as he puts it,

> The characteristic unity of a poem... lies in the unification of attitudes into a hierarchy subordinated to a total and governing attitude. In the unified poem, the poet has 'come to terms', with his experience. ... The unity is achieved by a dramatic process, not a logical; it represents an equilibrium of forces, not a formula. It is 'proved' as a dramatic conclusion is proved; by its ability to resolve the conflicts which have been accepted as the <u>données</u> of the drama.[2]

Even if we did not consider it possible that every poem be able "to resolve the conflicts" within its attitudes, Brooks' view of the inner dynamics of a poem seems substantially correct. The main point for us is to note that a poem <u>poses</u> the poet's emotive attitudes - his potential reactions - in the form of images and metaphors, the aesthetic equilibrium of which seems to promise at least <u>a possibility</u> of "the unification of attitudes into a hierarchy subordinated to a total and governing attitude". We are content to speak of a "possibility" only, as it seems to us that the "total and governing attitude" of a poem, however carefully and dramatically the latter may pose the poet's attitudes, can be one of very despair or doubt, and the poet's 'coming to terms' with his experience is mostly a truce rather than the final pact of peace. The following poem of Dickinson may illustrate

our view:

I reason, Earth is short -
And Anguish - absolute -
And many hurt,
But, what of that?

I reason, we could die -
The best Vitality
Cannot excel Decay,
But, what of that?

I reason, that in Heaven -
Somehow, it will be even -
Some new Equation, given -
But, what of that?
(301)

Each stanza of the poem launches a proposition (or rather creates an image of the poet in a propositional situation), which is immediately followed, not by an argument, but by a challenge for an argument. The dialectic of the poem thus consists of mere exhibition of the poet's defiant attitude toward all the other attitudes proposed and, the refrain sealing the dead end of the "argument", leads to no proper conclusion, to no resolve of the "dramatic" conflicts. On the other hand, as modern drama has taught us, a play need not necessarily be based on the solve-the-intrigue pattern to be dramatic. Outfolding and development on stage of a human situation so intrinsically problematic as to offer no seeming solution has proved successful, especially in the works of the so-called Theatre of the Absurd, and as a similar metaphysical question (rather than as an attempt for an answer) Dickinson's poem may well be called dramatic.

Going back to our argument about the "aesthetic" balance created between the images and metaphors representing the poet's attitude(s) within a poem, we try to qualify the term. As an addendum to Brooks' thesis, we have used it to under-

line the purely illusory, tentative quality of the argumentative process within a poem. In logic, or in any mathematical science, where every term has a definite, conventionally fixed extension and intention, even the number of false syllogisms is limited, while in poetry its very "premises", the symbolic images launched as metaphors, are liable to continual transformation, especially when played against each other, and seem thus most unreliable carriers of meanings. On the other hand, we argue, it is just this illusory quality of poetic argumentation which allows for repeated reshapings of the symbolic material and for radically new insights into the nature of things; being the only possible objectification of man's emotive, characteristic attitudes, metaphoric (poetic) apprehension of the world is one of the most important factors in the process of man's spiritual adjustment to it.

By this we do not mean that poetry is indispensable for us only as a sort of mental gymnastics leading to a precarious balance, or "equilibrium", of our emotional life. That would reduce the function of poetry back into that of any emotional self-expression. As the metaphors used by the poet are his personal choices (his preferences as to "how to put it") and so the symbolic equivalents of his inarticulate, innate tendencies to react, the working out of all these metaphors into a symbolic system (symbology) seems, "aesthetic" as this organization may be, to offer a (more or less) permanent model for his spiritual adjustment; a sort of emotionally satisfactory interpretation of himself or his position in life, in which even his eventual destiny may be seen implied.

That a poet's symbology be subject to constant transformation and reshaping is only natural. All his symbols, expressive though they are of his primest personality, are borrowed from the external world and never cease referring back to it. Through them the outward reality keeps pressing on him, modifying and developing their totality, till on the final level of poetic symbolization the influences of the outward and the inward reality combine in the formation of poetic myth. Thus we can in ideal cases, also speak of a poet's private mythology, as the final unification of his personal symbology under the pressure of the external world.

Here it might be useful to refer ourselves to what Professor Ward Pafford says of poetic myth "as the final member of the metaphorical hierarchy" and of metaphorical representation in general. "All serious literary thinking", he argues,

> concerning the essential character of poetry recognizes metaphorical representation as poetry's distinctive function. This representation is invariably dualistic in formation, and monistic in implicit intention. It seeks to incorporate data and ideas. Sign, image, symbol, and myth, respectively, are members of the metaphorical hierarchy in the name of which poems are made. The sign has no more than incidental interest or value as such, points exclusively to the dimension of abstract reason, and performs in poetry a low if necessary mechanical task. It betrays falsely metaphorical thought. The image possesses an interest of its own aside from its relation to the data of experience, for it resembles as closely as possible the appearances and sensory values of these data. The spirit of poetic imitation has begun to work here as it has not in the formulation of signs. The symbol has all the appearance of the image, but is of primary interest in its role as an incipient and suggestive guide toward a supermundane order. The myth, finally, performs the work of both image and symbol together and goes beyond them as it constructs with some elaboration the order suggested by symbol and at the same time makes use of a complex of images to retain its close kinship with experience at the sensuous level. It may be ultimately indistinguishable from poetry.[3]

The above definition, although it does not endeavour to elaborate the metaphoric process through which symbols are

generally born (and which we have tried to elucidate in our second chapter), is remarkable as it fixes, in however broad generalizations, the relation of myth to reality. The somewhat gnomic mention of metaphorical representation being "dualistic in formation, and monistic in implicit intention" is clarified in another context:

> The essential thing about poetry is that it points in contrived and symbolic way in two directions simultaneously: toward an ideal order available only through the imagination and toward the stuff of material experience.[4]

This "dual effort struggling to become a single one, two-faced like Janus," accounts, according to Professor Pafford, for the widely different views propounded of the nature of poetry (some seeing it merely as vile and inferior imitation of nature, others as "a unique order of reality having ultimate value", "a pure creation"),[5] while the prime importance of poetic myth lies just in this duality, in its capacity to mediate between man's material and spiritual experience.

But is not that the function of all myth? What need is there to differentiate this special variant to be born and met with in poetry alone? Let us examine the over-all definition Leroy E. Loemker gives of myth:

> Myth is a primary but complex art form, "the father of poetry," whose genesis is religious and which is therefore clothed in the sense of the numinous. A myth is a story which offers answers - sometimes intellectual answers (as in the case of aetiological myths), but answers athrob with the sense of the sacred - to the ultimate questions of the group - questions which are matters of life, not merely of understanding.[6]

The definition is complete, covering the whole ground of myth and myth-making; there is only one defect in it. Myth no longer exists in this completeness of Urmythos but has deteriorated, roughly speaking, into dogma, tale (fiction),

or popular belief (each, respectively, still carrying on one of the three main functions of Urmythos: religious, poetic, and social).

Of these deteriorated forms of myth, curiously enough, poetic myth seems the least deteriorated. Although it can hardly be said to offer people "answers athrob with the sense of the sacred", it does, more frequently than religious dogma, give illumination in"matters of life, not merely of understanding". This it also does on a level into which public dogma or popular belief cannot penetrate: the level of individual experience, on which the need of primal, integrative myth is greatest.[7]

In the maker of poetic myth, whether poet proper or writer of fiction, we also choose to see the last remnant of the priest(ess) of Urmythos; the very person whose whole life is gradually ritualized into poetry to build, in front of our eyes, an interpretation and model of the world, for us to assume or reject. His or her private mythology may, of course, combine bits and pieces of popular myths, even dogmas, digested; on this individual level of mythicizing, however, they also are "rejuvenated", become understandable, acceptable to us.

We have spoken much of Emily Dickinson's rejection of religious dogma, which she could make palatable for herself only on the mythic level. We have observed her "conversion to be a poet", which, no doubt, also expressed her total preference of myth to dogma, of poetic myth to religious dogma, the former always embodying for her even the numinous aspects of Urmythos in a far greater degree than the latter. In the

following discussion (as a continuation of Chapter Two, in which we have followed the establishment of her private symbology) we shall concentrate on the formation and importance of poetic mythology from her own, maker's point of view, as the only possible means of her spiritual adjustment. The core of her mythology was, of course, her love for Charles Wadsworth, and in this myth of love she would discover not only a confirmation of her personality, her spiritual "role" and permanent point of view, but her supreme poetic motif, too, in which she would "clothe" her most fundamental experience of life "in the sense of the numinous".

II

In the introduction to his recent selection of Dickinson's poems T.H. Johnson writes:

> ... as a poet she adopts a variety of masks. There was the mask of little-girlhood, which gave her freedom to make such social commentary as "I like to see it lap the Miles". Her signature "Your Scholar" in her letters to Higginson followed a creative maturity which she knew he did not fathom. The mask hid the tragic vision in such patent mockery as "How happy is the little Stone" (no. 1510), and it gave her deeply religious nature the appearance of unorthodoxy. It was adopted in her whim of dressing in white and remaining physically out of sight of visitors. ... It appears consummately in such poems as "Title divine - is mine" (no. 1072), and "Mine - by the Right of the White Election" (no. 528), which seem intended to express both an earthly-heavenly marriage, and the agony of one who inevitably accepts the fact that a much desired human tie must be renounced"...[8]

Johnson seems to imply that most of Dickinson's poetic masks were meant as much to hide as to reveal her actual attitudes, which, considering her hypersensitive need of privacy, is quite

probable. For us, however, who have chosen to see the metaphysical function of Dickinson's early poetry in what it revealed for the poet of her own human nature and destiny, the main interest of these symbolic masks - or "roles", as seems more correct to call them here, - lies in the manner in which they succeeded and complemented each other till a superior pattern emerged, i.e., her myth of life was established

Of course, quite a few of Dickinson's very early "roles" were just empathic observations of nature, in which she seems to have regarded herself merely as a natural part of God's created world and, as such, capable of recognition in its terms:

> A sepal, petal, and a thorn
> Upon a common summer's morn -
> A flask of Dew - A Bee or two -
> A Breeze - a caper in the trees -
> And I'm a Rose!
>
> (19, c. 1858)

> Papa above!
> Regard a Mouse
> O'erpowered by the Cat!
> Reserve within thy kingdom
> A "Mansion" for the Rat!
>
> Snug in seraphic Cupboards
> To nibble all the day,
> While unsuspecting Cycles
> Wheel solemnly away!
>
> (61, c. 1859)

> Some, too fragile for winter winds
> The thoughtful grave encloses -
> Tenderly tucking them in from frost
> Before their feet are cold.
>
> ...
>
> This covert have all the children
> Early aged, and often cold,
> Sparrows, unnoticed by the Father -
> Lambs for whom time had not a fold.
>
> (141, c. 1859)

While most observations like these were simply metaphors insired by the passing mood of the moment, there were others,

in which the metaphoric material seemed symbolically promising enough for the posture to be maintained and developed; we may also observe that many of the early imagial motifs chosen for serial development were highly dramatic, especially suitable for self-dramatization through the various roles that they could offer (cf. pp. 25-35 ; for the bird motif, also see above no. 141). Accordingly she insisted, over a good many years, on identifying herself in a meek daisy on the lawn, and however affected and Victorian this kind of posturing may seem to us, there was urgent motivation behind it. In her late twenties Emily Dickinson was still performing the social role of a little girl in her father's house, and even if this was partly of her own choice, it anticipated the homely, unpretentious role of an old maid in service of sickly, ageing parents and a married brother. To this prospect she was to adjust herself, and a poetic mask like that of God's little girl (cf. no. 70 in Johnson) or of His flower seems, indeed, to have been motivated by her wish to conform to the demands of her environment. Threatened by religious scruples she may also have wanted to reinforce, through these humble roles, her mental balance already at stake, and the most pathetic thing, indeed, is to note how much later Dickinson, by now in quest of a new, far bolder identity, still at moments of anguish clung to this pseudonym of her lost self. All in all, Daisy at the feet of her Maker was evidently a mental pose which she, for a considerable time, felt satisfactory in several respects, and even if we may seem to discern an occasional touch of irony in this self-portrayal, the general tone of the following

series is that of contentment with the heavenly reward promised to the meek:[9]

Better as the Daisy
From the Summer hill
Vanish unrecorded
Save by tearful rill -

Save by loving sunrise
Looking for her face.
Save by feet unnumbered
Pausing at the place.
(72, c. 1859)

The Daisy follows soft the Sun -
And when his golden walk is done -
Sits shily at his feet -
He - waking - finds the flower there -
Wherefore - Marauder - art thou here?
Because, Sir, love is sweet!

We are the Flower - Thou the Sun!
Forgive us, if as days decline -
We nearer steal to Thee!
Enamoured of the parting West -
The peace - the flight - the Amethyst -
Night's possibility!
(106, c. 1859)

Mute thy Coronation -
Meek my Vive le roi, -
Fold a tiny courtier
In thine Ermine, Sir,
There to rest revering
Till the pageant by,
I can murmur broken,
Master, It was I -
(151, c. 1860)

Except to Heaven, she is nought.
Except for Angels - lone.
Except to some wide-wandering Bee
A flower superfluous blown.

...

The smallest Houswife in the grass,
Yet take her from the Lawn
And somebody has lost the face
That made Existence - Home!
(154, c. 1860)

As if some little Arctic flower
Upon the polar hem -
Went wandering down the Latitudes
Until it puzzled came
(No stanza break)

To continents of summer -
To firmaments of sun -
To strange, bright crowds of flowers -
And birds, of foreign tongue!
I say, As if this little flower
To Eden, wandered in -
What then? Why nothing,
Only, your inference therefrom!
(180, c. 1860)

In the last of the above poems, one might think, Eden need not necessarily be the kingdom of heaven but a far more worldly happiness the poet felt she could still, to the surprise of everybody else, find; similar references to a "late" joy now anticipated or despaired of under various "natural" masks can be found in abundance. Some of them are unintentionally comic, others superb in their pictorial sensuality; all of them together prove, despite protestations to the contrary, that Daisy was rebelling:

I'm the little "Heart's Ease"!
I dont care for pouting skies!
If the Butterfly delay
Can I, therefore, stay away?

If the Coward Bumble Bee
In his chimney corner stay,
I must resoluter be!
Who'll apologize for me?

Dear, Old fashioned, little flower!
Eden is old fashioned, too!
Birds are antiquated fellows!
Heaven does not change her blue.
Nor will I, the little Heart's Ease -
Ever be induced to do!
(176, c. 1860)

Come slowly - Eden!
Lips unused to Thee -
Bashful - sip thy Jessamines -
As the fainting Bee -

Reaching late his flower,
Round her chamber hums -
Counts his nectars -
Enters - and is lost in Balms.
(211, c. 1860)

I shall keep singing!
Birds will pass me
On their way to Yellower Climes -
Each - with a Robin's expectation -
I - with my Redbreast -
And my Rhymes -

Late - when I take my place in summer -
But - I shall bring a fuller tune -
Vespers - are sweeter than Matins - Signor -
Morning - only the seed of Noon -
(250, c. 1861)

The variety of Dickinson's early roles, as well as her critical attitude toward some of them, shows that she almost consciously availed herself of certain symbolic aspects of each. While their virtuality enabled her to change them at will, these roles also gave her a sense of safety and continuity, which made her, as observed, sometimes stick to them even when they were no longer felt satisfactory. In these cases, really, her expressive roles tended to turn into hiding masks, as was the case with her later disciplineship to Higginson and, evidently, with her "official" relationship to the Reverend Charles Wadsworth. As to the latter instance, it was obviously in the role of Daisy sitting humbly at the throne of her heavenly Master that Emily Dickinson had written to Wadsworth asking for spiritual advice; she still called herself Daisy when she a few years later (about 1861) told Wadsworth (in the draft for a supposed letter to him) about the misgivings which had made her do so and of the transformation which had taken place in her since then:

God made me - Master - I did'nt be - myself. I dont know how it was done. He built the heart in me - Bye and bye it outgrew me - and like the little mother - with the big child - I got tired holding him. I heard of a thing called "Redemption" - which rested men and women. You remember I asked you for it - you gave me something else. I forgot the Redemption /in the Redeemed - I did'nt tell you for a long time, but I knew you had altered me - I/ and was tired - no more -
(L II 233)

This extract (of which Dickinson herself crossed out the part in brackets) tells us - if we have not learnt it from her poems - that the roles so far either allotted her or created by herself had been long before this felt insufficient. From it we also discern that she was preparing a new role both for herself and for Wadsworth (who by now had usurped the throne of the Master): that of a spouse. Up to now her own natural shyness, encouraged by cultural and parental influence, had made her continue,even in her poetry, the overripe role of "little girl-hood",[10] now her true self, both as a woman and a poet, had outgrown it, and she was desperately reaching for a new conception of herself. Just as Higginson, later, was unvoluntarily to yield the aid he was asked for, so Wadsworth, knowing or unknowing, became the core of the unifying myth of her life.

Actually, the emotional and intellectual tensions inside her were such as to allow for no other equilibrium than poetic. At this noon of her life, as was natural, she felt, while shumning the "common" ecstasies of religion, in desperate need of an experience or idea which would determine the course of her material and spiritual life for good. She was hungering after love, after a person who might satisfy her almost religious need for mutual devotion; on the other hand she was becoming more and more aware of her calling as a poet, which seemed to promise a gratification even higher than the appeasement of any material desire. Her continual frustration in both these matters,[11] to which there was added the growing dependence of Edward Dickinson and his sickly wife

on their children (as well as Emily Dickinson's own extreme sensibility and fear of strangers), prevented her from seeking for more congenial company outside home and resulted in a depressing sense of anguish that resembled a religious crisis:

> I have a King, who does not speak -
> So - wondering - thro' the hours meek
> I trudge the day away -
> Half glad when it is night, and sleep,
> If, haply, thro' a dream to peep
> In parlors, shut by day.
>
> And if I do - when morning comes -
> It is as if a hundred drums
> Did round my pillow roll,
> And shouts fill all my Childish sky,
> And Bells keep saying 'Victory'
> From steeples in my soul!
>
> And if I dont - the little Bird
> Within the Orchard, is not heard ,
> And I omit to pray
> 'Father, thy will be done' today
> For my will goes the other way,
> And it were perjury!
>
> (103, c. 1859)

Although certain particular issues, such as God's seeming insensibility to human suffering and His muteness, are being, if only vaguely, developed here, the main problem, the cause of the poet's greatest anguish, seems to be the <u>namelessness</u> of her trouble. Her lack of love, spiritual tutelage and faith cannot as yet be protested against and analyzed in an individual case, in the form of a representative human fate, and the charge remains ineffective. Her self is still, to use another Jamesian term, "divided", and she can find only <u>partial</u> symbols to provide insight into her spiritual confusion.

A true myth, on the contrary, is the total exteriorization of man's inner <u>problématique</u>, and Dickinson's mythic love for Charles Wadsworth was an ideal case as it could take on all

the aspects of her spiritual tension, and enabled her, for the first time, to identify herself and examine her individual human predicament in a metaphysically adequate manner. We do not maintain, of course, that her election of Wadsworth as the absent king of her spiritual realm was a happy solution from every point of view of her personality - as a fleshy human being she must have suffered more than her share of the pangs of disappointed love[12] - but what we will suggest is that this myth of herself as his legitimate, if temporarily disclaimed bride could impose a system upon her inner dynamics that would make the forces struggling inside her not explode destructively but supply, within this symbolic system, inexhaustible energy for her poetic activity to the end of her life. For Dickinson, her unrequitted love for Charles Wadsworth became the symbol - we could say, the archsymbol - relevant to all her frustrated experience - as a woman, believer and poet - and around him she spinned the interpretation of both her temporal and eternal destiny, which so far had lacked this central piece.

III

When Emily Dickinson wrote to Colonel Higginson (April 1862) that she "made no verse - but one or two - until this winter -" (L II 261), she did not probably feel she was lying. What she had felt and written until now, seemed but a preparation for what was being done now. Everything she had, at

inspired moments, felt true about her life and fate, had now materialized in her love for Wadsworth, and so, even if he did not originate her poetry, it was he who made it meaningful and united her own being as its maker; gave her, so to speak, not the subject of her story but the right symbols to tell it.

Indeed, if we have observed above the readiness with which the symbolic focus within a certain group of Dickinson's images is being shifted from one metaphor to another, now we may note the centre of all her symbology being suddenly - as if by a movement of a conjurer's wand - removed on a new nominator. Whether the former practice was inducive of this event cannot be but suggested here; howbeit, the new centre, the symbolic image of the beloved, since now attracted all other imagery around it like a magnetic pole. Douglas Duncan has also noted this effect and comments on it as follows:

> The poems of 1861-62 have a special intensity because at that period, as new experience vitalised her imagination and set her thoughts in turmoil, the main tributary streams of her metaphor, relating to nature, love, and religion, flow together and jostle each other, as it were, in a turbulent and swiftly-running channel.[13]

Duncan does not provide any examples, but his omission is easily made up. Besides referring the reader back to the pages in which we discussed the progressive development of Dickinson's early sea imagery (pp. 25-29), we give here two very first examples of her "nuptial verse", in which we can see the almost furious colliding together of all the symbolic 'vehicles', through which she has probed her experiences of the numinous, as they now find their common 'tenor' in her passionate love. Altogether pushing aside, for instance,

her earlier symbolic allusions to religion, Dickinson now interprets the numinosity of the sun symbolic of human love - and the latter the morning she has expected - and makes the beloved, instead of God, sovereign of her universe:

> The Sun - Just touched the Morning -
> The Morning - Happy thing -
> Supposed that He had come to dwell -
> And Life would all be Spring!
>
> She felt herself supremer -
> A Raised - Etherial Thing!
> Henceforth - for Her - What Holiday!
> Meanwhile - Her wheeling King -
> Trailed - slow - along the Orchards -
> His haughty - spangled Hems -
> Leaving a new necessity!
> The want of Diadems!
>
> The Morning - fluttered - staggered -
> Felt feebly - for Her Crown -
> Her unannointed forehead -
> Henceforth - Her only One!
> (232)
>
> If He dissolve - then - there is nothing - more -
> Eclipse - at Midnight -
> It was dark - before -
>
> Sunset - at Easter -
> Blindness - on the Dawn -
> Faint Star of Bethlehem -
> Gone down!
>
> Would but some God - inform Him -
> Or it be too late!
> Say - that the pulse just lisps -
> The Chariots wait -
>
> Say - that a little life - for His -
> Is leaking - red -
> His little Spaniel - tell Him!
> Will He heed?
> (236)

It is not, of course, the pathetic italics but the boldness of her metaphoric equations that reveal the force with which the new feeling first overturned Dickinson's (already shattering) spiritual balance; no symbols exploited hereto seem sufficient to describe it. The ecstasy which she has felt

at nature seems not at all analogous to this passion, and the best she can do is to make a symbolic offering of all its partial joys to express her desire for love's total devotion

> What would I give to see his face?
> I'd give - I'd give my life - of course -
> But that is not enough!
> Stop just a minute - let me think!
> I'd give my biggest Bobolink!
> That makes two - Him - and Life!
> You know who "June" is -
> I'd give her -
> Roses a day from Zenzibar -
> And Lily tubes - like Wells -
> Bees - by the furlong -
> Straits of Blue
> Navies of Butterflies - sailed thro' -
> And dappled Cowslip Dells -
>
> ...
>
> Now - have I bought it -
> "Shylock"? Say!
> Sign me the Bond!
> "I vow to pay
> To Her - who pledges this -
> One hour - of her Sovereign's face"!
> Extatic Contract!
> Niggard Grace!
> My Kingdom's worth of Bliss!
>
> (247, c. 1861)

As sure as she is above of the absolute correctness of her preference of the thing she is bargaining for, as absolute seems to have been her belief in the divine quality of her love. If God - that abstraction - can be known in His creations only, is not love for one of them, especially as he is pledged to God as His representative on earth, equivalent of the love we are feel for Him?

> God is a distant - stately Lover -
> Woos, as He states us - by His Son -
> Verily, a Vicarious Courtship -
> "Miles", and "Priscilla", were such an One -
>
> But, lest the Soul - like fair "Priscilla"
> Choose the Envoy - and spurn the Groom -
> Vouches, with hyperbolic archness -
> "Miles", and "John Alden" were Synonyme -
>
> (357, c. 1862)

It may be noted that although Dickinson often likened herself to Christ (see pp.68-70), she never referred to Wadsworth as Jesus; Christ, for her, was clearly another instant of the general law of redeeming suffering, which she had discovered to apply to her own life. Yet the idea of mediator, or medium, is never far from her depictions of Wadsworth as the magnetic centre of her myth and the justification of her being, and the numinous character of their relation is over and over again emphasized by direct or indirect references to the Christian mythology:[14]

> He put the Belt around my life -
> I heard the Buckle snap -
> And turned away, imperial,
> My Lifetime folding up -
> Deliberate, as a Duke would do
> A Kingdom's Title Deed -
> Henceforth, a Dedicated sort -
> A Member of the Cloud.
> (273, c. 1861)

> The face I carry with me - last -
> When I go out of Time -
> To take my Rank - by - in the West -
> That face - will just be thine -
>
> I'll hand it to the Angel -
> That - Sir - was my Degree -
> In Kingdoms - you have heard the Raised -
> Refer to - possibly.
> (336, early 1862)

It is clear by now, we think, that Dickinson myth of love as means of self-identification is based on the archetype of sacrifice (of which another variant myth is the story of Christ); the ritual through which her bond of love would be consecrated is the sacrifice, first of nature (247), then of the worldly consummation of love itself (cf. above, p. 70). The archetype is well-known enough, and in the end Dickinson need not refer to the Bible to make her mythic implications understood:

Mine - by the Right of the White Election!
Mine - by the Royal Seal!
Mine - by the Sign in the Scarlet prison -
Bars - cannot conceal!

Mine - here - in Vision - and in Veto!
Mine - by the Grave's Repeal -
Titled - Confirmed -
Delirious Charter!
Mine - long as Ages steal!
(528, c. 1862)

To summarize briefly, Dickinson's myth of love seems doubly indispensable for her. As if in one central, symbolic metaphor she could in it realize whatever of life and herself she had till now hypothized - or realized only in part - and for the time to come it gave her a role in which she could feel the full weight of her human predicament and play out all its consequences in her poetry. Secondly, in it she found full expression for her religious feeling and sensed the unifying elation of total devotion so long sought for. It is more than probable that Emily Dickinson, whose appreciation of the numinous was instinctive and absolute, should not have experienced the same thrill of awesome mystery at the pledge of normal marriage as she did when giving herself away in this "heavenly" marriage; this act, which was consecrated solely by her own steadfast will and in no material contract, seemed, after the first storm of passion had receded, to incorporate her being in a way in which no other ritual or sacrament could:[15]

My Reward for Being, was This.
My premium - My Bliss -
An Admiralty, less -
A Sceptre - penniless -
And Realms - just Dross -

When Thrones accost my Hands -
With "Me, Miss, Me" -
I'll unroll Thee -
Dominions dowerless - beside this Grace -
Election - Vote -
The Ballots of Eternity, will show just that.
(343, early 1862)

The Day that I was crowned
Was like the other Days -
Until the Coronation came -
And then - 'twas Otherwise -

As Carbon in the Coal
And Carbon in the Gem
Are One - and yet the former
Were dull for Diadem -

I rose, and all was plain -
But when the Day declined
Myself and It, in Majesty
Were equally - adorned -

The Grace that I - was chose -
To Me - surpassed the Crown
That was the Witness for the Grace -
'Twas even that 'twas Mine -
(356, c. 1862)

A wife - at Daybreak I shall be -
Sunrise - hast thou a flag for me?
At midnight - I am yet a maid -
How short it takes to make a Bride!
Then - Midnight - I have passed from thee
Unto the East - and Victory -
Midnight - Good night - I hear them call -
The Angels bustle in the hall -
Softly - my Future climbs the stair -
I fumble at my Childhood's prayer -
So soon to be a Child - no more -
Eternity - I'm coming - sir -
Master - I've seen the face before -
(461, c. 1862)

Especially in this, very composed kind of "nuptial" verse Dickinson's triumphant feeling of achievement and growth through the role which she has assumed is beautifully displayed. We also note that the two latter poems are, in fact, rituals of initiation, in which her entering to womanhood (maturity) is performed symbolically, in words, as if to reinforce her new pose, and it is just this symbolic gain in spiritual stature that gives the poet an exultation clearly verging on the numinous. While the humiliating anguish and pain which she had to undergo in order to redeem her love found other, more sombre symbols, crown and grace were symbols

for the triumph of her mighty love which knew no impediments.

IV

After having discussed, at this excessive length, the intrinsic importance of Dickinson's poetic myth for her spiritual adjustment, there is still one question to be settled. Provided that she herself was the sole creator of her myth of life, what, exactly, was its relation to her "real" life, and how far was she able to distinguish between these two?

Being a Puritan by discipline and an artist by conscious choice, Dickinson herself was well aware of the distinction between her material and her spiritual, poetic reality. As an answer to Higginson, who seems to have reproached her once again for her 'reckless' abandonment of rules of decent writing, she wrote:

> When I state myself, as the Representative of the Verse - it does not mean - me - but a supposed person. (L II, 268)

Nor is there any evidence that, despite her dressing in white and shunning strangers who came to visit the family, she ever refused the role she had in the house:

> Emily never became a recluse to the extent of losing her sense of humour or ceasing to bake the family's bread, and the outsider's view of her later life as a spectral sybil hovering in the hall needs to be modified by her niece's recollections of her vivacity and busy-ness within the family circle.[16]

Of her being well aware that art has (in Northrop Frye's words) "a relation to reality which is neither direct nor negative, but potential",[17] there is also the testimony of those

of Dickinson's poems in which she reflects on her myth as poetry and on herself "as the Representative of the Verse" (also cf., esp. last stanza of, no. 569, p. 66):

Her sweet Weight on my Heart a Night
Had scarcely deigned to lie -
When, stirring, for Belief's delight
My Bride had slipped away -

If 'twas a Dream - made solid - just
The Heaven to confirm -
Or if Myself were dreamed of Her -
The power to presume -

With Him remain - who unto Me -
Gave - even as to All -
A Fiction superseding Faith -
By so much - as 'twas real -
(518, c. 1862)

The Vision - pondered long -
So plausible becomes
That I esteem the fiction - real -
The Real - fictious seems -

How bountiful the Dream -
What plenty - it would be -
Had all my Life but been Mistake
Just rectified - in Thee
(646, c. 1862)

I dwell in Possibility -
A fairer House than Prose -
More numerous of Windows -
Superior - for Doors -
(657, c. 1862)

No Romance sold unto
Could so enthrall a Man
As the perusal of
His Individual One -
'Tis Fiction's - to dilute to Plausibility
Our Novel - When 'tis small enough
To Credit - 'Tis'nt true!
(669, c. 1863)

Even these few - comparatively early - examples show that for our poet, the boundaries of reality and fiction were clear, and that she knew well when she was living each. Yet there is no doubt as to which she preferred. Even if she was to suppose herself the maker of her "dream" (518), she hailed the world of poetry as that of illimitable "possibility" (657) and saw that

only "romance" (fiction, myth) can show man his story of life and his personality in the right perspective and in their authenticity (657). It may sound a commonplace to say that, for Dickinson, it was impossible to mix up fiction and reality as the former was so very superior to the latter, and yet that was what she obviously felt. When she wished her life had "but been Mistake" (646), she knew that it could be only a wish; there is no single feature of reality that need not be rectified in poetry.

As Dickinson, however deeply she was occupied in probing the mysteries of her inner reality through the symbols she had created thereof, never lost touch with her bourgeois life and personality (the latter mode of existence being, in a sense, not a hindrance but the very prerequisite for the former), we have sometimes wondered whether she did not, as a poet, succeed in what Sartre saw Baudelaire failed: "in the final possession of the Self by the Self".[18] In her myth she could grasp a symbolic conception of herself, not only through the recorded pangs of a disappointed heart but, above all, through her sacrificial act of "election" and in the ritual of her devotion; formed as it was on the level of symbolic representation, this conception possessed an objectivity of its subjective "truth" which was far superior to all psychological self-information.[19]

At first, it is true, the illusion of being two persons was very painful; the potentialities of the psyche had been turned by Dickinson's powerful imagination into symbolic virtualities that made her feel dizzy, suffer from the same sense of

alienation from her own self that at a time affected her relation to nature:

> If your Nerve, deny you -
> Go above your Nerve -
> He can lean against the Grave,
> If he fear to swerve -
>
> That's a steady posture -
> Never any bend
> Held of those Brass arms -
> Best Giant made -
>
> If your Soul seesaw -
> Lift the Flesh door -
> The Poltroon wants Oxygen -
> Nothing more -
> (292, c. 1861)

> I felt my life with both my hands
> To see if it was there -
> I held my spirit to the Glass,
> To prove it possibler -
>
> I turned my Being round and round
> And paused at every pound
> To ask the Owner's name -
> For doubt, that I should know the Sound -
> (351, early 1862)

> The first Day's Night had come -
> And grateful that a thing
> So terrible - had been endured -
> I told my Soul to sing -
>
> ...
>
> My Brain - begun to laugh -
> I mumbled - like a fool -
> And tho' 'tis Years ago - that Day -
> My Brain keeps giggling still.
>
> And Something's odd - within -
> That person that I was -
> And this One - do not feel the same -
> Could it be Madness - this?
> (410, c. 1862)

We note the awful irony with which Dickinson, from the beginning, could deride her own spiritual weakness at suffering (292) as well as the horror with which she regarded her newly doomed - or redeemed - self in its naked strangeness (351, 410). It is to be remembered that although this re-birth - or the

birth of a new, superior self - was before long hailed by Dickinson as highly beneficial,[20] the experience itself remained numinously dichotomic to the end (cf. no. 1286, p. 61). As the last (and only possible) dramatization of the conflicting forces directing her inner attitudes, her myth of love, no doubt, united her being in a new synthesis (cf. p.98 above) but left the conflicts themselves unsolved, even fixed them in a way that made her, ever since, view life through the dichotomies of her own experience (cf. p. 65). While the symbolic enactment of her myth in poetry radically changed the quality of her metaphoric language, the divorce in myth of the sensual and the reflective (spiritual) self, the reality and the virtuality of happening, seems to have been the basis of Dickinson's later tendency to observe and interpret everything dualistically, as always related to some dichotomic other thing or background. In the end, this tendency became a stylistic trait, too, affecting her rhetoric in the form of frequent quibbling and punning. Thus the dichotomic way or presentation, together with her general fondness of elliptic expression, eventually resulted in a very "difficult" kind of verse, as the last phase of her stylistic development.

5. The Physics and Metaphysics of Metaphor

Emily Dickinson's conception of herself as a poet obviously dates from the time when she first felt keenly the deficiences of the Puritan dogma in getting in touch with the truly numinous; to assert herself as one, she developed a passionate attachment for nature, her first inspiration and numinous embodiment of poetic truth. Above we have discussed both this phase of her development and the ensuing estrangement from nature, the latter having been considered as much an inevitable result of her reflective (poetic) activity as of her psychic and intellectual maturation (pp. 54-55). In the last two chapters the chief concern seems to have been to account for the spiritual implications of her development as a poet; returning now to examine her evolving poetic techniques, we are confronted by a far more difficult task, that of revealing the stylistic whats and wherefores of her progressive dialectic.

In look for an adequate model to describe the change in Dickinson's poetic methods we have gone all the way back to William Worringer, who in his famous dissertation (1906) on the human instincts of empathy and abstraction, such as they are exhibited in human art, considered them as the two

poles of artistic volition, exclusive of each other as the cause of artistic creation but not necessarily of different origin. Quoting first Lipps' theory of projective empathy (Einfühlung) as the source of artistic volition Worringer then disagreeingly argued:

> The need for empathy can be looked upon as a presupposition of artistic volition only where this artistic volition inclines toward the truths of organic life, that is toward naturalism in the higher sense. The sensation of happiness that is released in us by the reproduction of organically beautiful vitality, ... is a gratification of that inner need for self-activation in which Lipps sees the presupposition of the process of empathy. In the forms of the work of art we enjoy ourselves. Aesthetic enjoyment is objectified self-enjoyment. The value of a line, of a form consists for us in the value of the life that it holds for us. It holds its beauty only through our own vital feeling, which, in some mysterious manner, we project into it.
>
> Recollection of the lifeless form of a pyramid ... tells us at once that here the need for empathy, which for obvious reasons always tends toward the organic, cannot possibly have determined artistic volition. Indeed, the idea forces itself upon us that here we have an impulse directly opposed to the empathy impulse, which seeks to suppress precisely that in which the need for empathy finds its satisfaction.
>
> This counter-pole to the need for empathy appears us to be the urge to abstraction. ...
>
> Now what are the psychic presuppositions for the urge to abstraction? ... Whereas the precondition for the urge to empathy is a happy pantheistic relationship of confidence between man and the phenomena of the external world, the urge to abstraction is the outcome of a great inner unrest inspired in man by the phenomena of the outer world; in a religious respect it corresponds to a strongly transcendental tinge to all notions. We might describe this state as an immense spiritual dread of space.[1]

To Worringer, the urge for abstraction seemed the more original, even the more primitive of these two kinds of artistic impulse:

> The less mankind has succeeded, by virtue of its spiritual cognition, in entering into a relation of friendly confidence with the appearance of the outer world, the more forceful is the dynamic that leads to the striving after this highest abstract beauty.[2]

Although it now seems self-evident to us that the emphatic and abstractive approaches to reality are by no means successive

but alternative modes of artistic volition, dependent on various cultural factors, Worringer's definitions of both seem still worth examining, as does his account of the common denominator of the seeming duality they create:

> This dualism of aesthetic experience, as characterised by the aforementioned two poles, is ... not a final one. These two poles are only gradations of a common need, which is revealed to us as the deepest and ultimate essence of all aesthetic experience: this is the need for self-alienation.
> In the urge to abstraction the intensity of the self-alienative impulse is incomparably greater and more consistent. Here it is not characterised, as in the need for empathy, by an urge to alienate oneself from individual being, but as an urge to seek deliverance from the fortuitousness of humanity as a whole, from the seeming arbitrariness of organic existence in general, in the contemplation of something necessary and irrefragable. Life as such is felt to be a disturbance of aesthetic enjoyment.[3]

Worringer's theory of the bipolarity of man's artistic tendencies seems interesting, even applicable to our case, in which, indeed, both empathic and abstractive attitude toward reality seem to be effective; the hypothetical impulse of self-alienation as the basic motive of artistic volition, however, may need some scrutinizing and refining. Arts, sure, arise and get their special qualities from the relations of the experiencing Self with the experienced reality outside it, but these relations are by no means based on one and the same, more or less strongly felt desire for the transcendence of the Self, but are determined by far more complex developments and alterations in the consciousness of the Self. As we have noted above, the young Dickinson empathized with nature to the extent that she found in it her earliest myths of herself; here, instead of self-alienation, we would speak of the impulse of <u>self-objectification</u>, or <u>individuation</u>, by means of the natural world, in whose objects she saw herself symbolically

reflected. And when she later, under the full weight of her individual being now symbolically differentiated and isolated from the rest of the universe, felt bitterly her alienation from the objective reality, it was not possibly for self-alienation, for an escape from the Self only, that she sought to transcend herself in order to grasp and understand the alien. On the contrary, her adoption of abstractive methods of art was effected in order to fight her back into a meaningful relation with the universe on her new level of individuation. For her, poetry was still the only possible act of cognition, and her desire to abstract, by means of it, the ultimate truth out of "the seeming arbitrariness of organic existence in general" a universal extension of her former desire for self-identification. Abstraction, in this sense, is not a denial of the empathizing self but a further development of its metaphorically empathic abilities.

At this point we actually have a refinement of Worringer's model to offer. In his immense and detailed study of the forms and origins of man's verbal imagery (metaphorischen Formen) Hermann Pongs, at the same time impressed by Worringer's model and disdainful of its theoretical over-simplicity ("Worringer alles was durch 'Einfühlung' erschliessbar") has substituted the whole term <u>empathy</u> (Einfühlung) by two other terms <u>Beseelung</u> and <u>Erfühlung</u>, which to an extent retain the above-discussed polarity of artistic impulse but reject the idea of the eventual exclusiveness of these two types of metaphorizing. To orientate oneself empathically in the world outside himself, man has two ways to choose,

> die "Beseelung", die in Überströmen der eigenen schöpferischen Seele die Welt sich rings um anverwandelt in eigner Einheit, und entgegenrichtet ein Fühlvermögen, das wir vorausgreifend "Erfühlung" nennen, als die Kraft, sich Anderes fühlend zu erschliessen, unter Hintanstellung und Absehung vom Ich. Wirklich hat sich in beiden Richtungen die Sprache als Schöpfung bewegt; zwischen Beseelung und Erfühlung, finden sich alle Möglichkeiten des figürlichen Gefühlsausdrucks ausgespannt: wie die Gleichnisform in umgekehrter Ordnung zwischen dem objektiven und subjektiven Pol.[4]

According to Pongs, Beseelung, the antropomorphizing tendency of man in his relations to the natural world, originally arises from the 'overflow' (Überstrom) of his own personality and will, eventually, result in the formation of myth, in which he finds his own being reflected. This holds good also in individual cases of poetic sensibility, in which the pantheistic imagination finally embraces the whole universe in its own image. For Emily Dickinson, however, the myths of nature were disqualified by her myth of love, which defined her being as fully separate from nature (and from heaven, especially as depicted in the likeness of nature); hence Beseelung, either as psychological or metaphorical attitude, would no longer be plausible. As there was seemingly no correspondence between herself and the outside world as such, as the outside no longer could be moulded in the human image, there was only one way open for the searching mind: to stretch and modify its own sensibility till it could reach and pierce the alien. This is the principle of Pongs' Erfühlung:

> Sehr viel unmittelbarer aber im Grund der Seele verwurzelt ist das Fühlvermögen der Sympathie, das Mitfühlvermögen, das mitfühlend teil hat am Andern, das sich die Welt des Andern fühlend aufschliesst, sich selber im Haben des Andern weitet. Wenn Scheler dies Mitfühlen darstellt als einen schöpferischen Akt, voraussetzend ein Selbst, das schöpferisch fühlen kann, auch wo es von sich absieht, indem es das Andere fühlt, so erfasst er dies Mitfühlen als ein Durchbrechen der engen Grenzen des Ichfühlens ganz ebenso, wie es als die Grundstruktur des Beseelens sich sprachfigürlich darstellen liess.[5]

Individuation is a procedure of the human psyche which takes

place irrespective of whether it can be consciously (symbolically) realised or not. Being a poet, Emily Dickinson could objectify her individuation in the form of a poetic myth, even reflect upon it, and thus her metaphysical point of view almost automatically shifted from the subjective to the objective pole. This shift was naturally reflected in the changing type of her metaphor (in Pongs' category): Beseelung, once the poetic principle of her "overflowing", identity-seeking self, gave gradually way to Erfühlung, the object-seeking principle of metaphorizing. The objects of this new objective metaphorizing were (besides the myth of her life, in which she would continually reflect on herself as on any other object of interest) 1) the phenomenal world, differentiated from which her own being for a time had seemed the very opposite of, and 2) the world to come, eternity, into which the gates of a child's mythologizing faith no longer promised access. As the only metaphoric clues for reaching out for the latter reality seemed to be found in her own myth, in the more and more abstractive poetic analysis of this objectification of her inmost experience of life, Dickinson's reflections upon her human fate here and in after-life largely fall together and cluster around the same imagial or symbolic motifs, which can be discussed in the same context. To illustrate her general tendency to objectivity and increasing abstractness of expression we shall, however, first examine her descriptions of nature, in which she tried, by means of Erfühlung, "empathizingly participate in the other". Thus, we believe, the contrast between her new techniques and her early poetry, so much occupied with nature, will also be seen at its clearest.

II

After first "enjoying" herself - or the sense of discovering herself - in the organic forms of nature Emily Dickinson by and by discovered the latter, if not "arbitrary" (in Worringer's wording), at least completely separate from herself, unidentical with her own humanity, and became, for the first time, aware of their object-ness, of their phenomenality, which could no longer be described in the image of her personal hopes and expectations. We have already pointed out, for instance, that her descriptions of the sun, rising or setting, in which she first tried to express her thrill of metaphysical awe by means of anthropomorphizing or mythic metaphors, gradually lost this "Beseelung" quality till in the end the poet felt a mere spectator of distant heavenly revels (see pp. 47-53):

> Whole Gulfs - of Red, and Fleets - of Red -
> And Crews - of solid Blood -
> Did place about the West - Tonight -
> As 'twere specific Ground -
>
> And They - appointed Creatures -
> In Authorized Arrays -
> Due - promptly - as a Drama -
> That bows - and disappears -
> (658, c. 1862)

As shown in the above example, she also experimented with a technique unknown up to this, one we called "verbal painting", continued over a stretch of years and evidently called forth by her desire to perceive and apprehend the numinous objects as objects, not as mere projections of herself (cf. poems 243, 290, 291, 595, pp. 51-53).

Indeed, at times it seems as if she, however habituated her

mind was in metaphor, had tried to return to the pure sense data of her experience, her visual impressions, and to grasp in their "objective" images the numinosity which troubled her; even if the "objectivity" of a subjective image was as illusory as that of any mythic metaphor, it had one advantage over the latter: it would capture the totality of one's momentary perception. Inspired, evidently, by this desire to avoid former replete mythicizing are the following, very detached descriptions of animals, delicious in their cool objectivity:

A Bird came down the Walk -
He did not know I saw -
He bit an Angleworm in halves
And ate the fellow, raw,

And then he drank a Dew
From a convenient Grass -
And then hopped sidewise to the wall
To let a Beetle pass -

He glanced with rapid eyes
That hurried all around -
They looked like frightened Beads, I thought -
He stirred his Velvet Head -

Like one in danger, Cautious,
I offered him a Crumb
And he unrolled his feathers
And rowed him softer home -

Than Oars divide the Ocean,
Too silver for a seam -
Or Butterflies, off Banks of Noon
Leap, plashless as they swim.
(328)

She sights a Bird - she chuckles-
She flattens - then she crawls -
She runs without the look of feet -
Her eyes increase to Balls -

Her Jaws stir - twitching - hungry -
Her Teeth can hardly stand -
She leaps, but Robin leaped the first -
Ah, Pussy, of the Sand,

The Hopes so juicy ripening -
You almost bathed your Tongue -
When Bliss disclosed a hundred Toes -
And fled with every one -
(507)

The Spider holds a Silver Ball
In unperceived Hands -
And dancing softly to Himself
His Yarn of Pearl - unwinds -

He plies from Nought to Nought -
In unsubstantial Trade -
Supplants our Tapestries with His -
In half the period -

An Hour to rear supreme
His Continents of Light -
Then dangle from the Housewife's Broom -
His Boundaries - forgot -
(605)

You'll know Her - by her Foot -
The smallest Gamboge Hand
With Fingers - where the Toes should be -
Would more affront the Sand -

Than this Quaint Creature's Boot -
Adjusted by a Stem -
Without a Button - I c'd vouch -
Unto a Velvet Limb -

You'll know Her - by Her Vest -
Tight fitting - Orange - Brown -
Inside a Jacket duller -
She wore when she was born -

Her Cap is small - and snug -
Constructed for the Winds -
She'd pass Barehead - short way off -
But as She Closer stands -

So finer 'tis than Wool -
You cannot feel the Seam -
Nor is it Clasped unto of Band -
Nor held upon - of Brim -
(634, all c. 1862)

To say, however, that even these "objective" poems embody only the poet's neutral observation of natural things would be untrue. For Dickinson, our metaphysical poet, poetic image was never an end in itself, but interesting mainly for the implicit symbolic "truth" it would present for her to abstract. We have seen above enough of the progressive abstraction of Dickinson's early imagery (via metaphoric treatment of sensory or imaginative material) to know that it took place in order

to find central symbols for the objectification of her own inmost experience, for a cognition of existence which was entirely subjective. Here, again, we find the beginnings of another kind of abstractive process, tending toward purely objective cognition of things. Natural objects seem no longer to imply for the poet the discovery of some aspect of subjective truth but to embody a phenomenal truth of their own, the quality and conditions of which she is to reveal. Numinous phenomena whose numinosity she has earlier interpreted only in terms of her own sense of awe, can also be seen as pregnant with universal meaning, quite independent of her own existence, and the poet's task seems to be to investigate the meaning of this universal meaning, too, in objective, abstractive metaphors.

Actually, every one of the above, very carefully limited descriptions of very particular objects break into metaphoric universality either at one point or throughout the description. In the first section of our discussion we have dealt with the "structural analysis" to which young Dickinson subjected all her imagery till a symbolic pattern emerged; this she then would name by an abstract noun or by an abstractive metaphor (see pp. 30-34). Here we meet the same principle of metaphoric definition in nos. 328 and 507: it is the final impressional Gestalt, the "meaning", so to speak, of the vanishing scene which is named metaphorically. Description is used to build a structure, which is then abstracted in quick metaphors.

In nos. 605 and 634 it is no longer the perceived Gestalt as a whole but the very carefully observed details of the

imagial structure which are defined metaphorically. If up to now Dickinson has used metaphors as descriptive details, it has happened under the control of her general impression, but here the details almost seem to exist in their own right, especially in no. 605, where they are unreasonably distorted to universal proportions ("from Nought to Nought", "His Continents of Light"). Such bold, deliberate distortion, "such deviations from the real",[6] are characteristic of Dickinson's later rhetoric and show that as an "Erfühldichter" she was more than ever confident of her vision and trusting her tool, language, more than ever, however "objectively" she tended to direct both. As Pongs observes, this confidence of empathizing depiction is due to a peculiar extension and maturation of a poet's personality and his gifts of Erfühlung;[7] as to Dickinson, it is a paradoxical notion that her maturation as a poet seemingly enhanced those improvisational, deliberately distortive qualities of her poetry that exasperated Higginson and her other mentors. Her personality, also as a poet, firmly anchored in her myth she felt in a position to observe and record freely what she saw, and if her metaphors seemed fanciful, it was only because truth was too manifold to be caught otherwise than in metaphoric simulation of its variety:

> Tell all the Truth but tell it slant -
> Success in Circuit lies
> Too bright for our infirm Delight
> The Truth's superb surprise
> As Lightning to the Children eased
> With explanation kind
> The Truth must dazzle gradually
> Or every man be blind -
>
> (1129, c. 1868)

Now we may also note that whereas Dickinson in her early poetry found the mysteries of nature - as well as her own

ignorance of them - very teasing indeed (cf. pp. 2-4), in her later verse we discern but little impatience with the impenetrable phenomenality of the world; in fact it seems that her "purified" impressions were felt sufficient in themselves. It was the Gestalt, the remaining pattern of her perception that incorporated the truth - nay, was the truth - about a phenomenon, and even if she could not interpret this pattern any further, she was able to deduce it also for others to see, as the closest possible approximation of its absolute, numinous phenomenality:

The Angle of a Landscape -
That every time I wake -
Between my Curtain and the Wall
Upon an ample Crack -

Like a Venetian - waiting -
Accosts my open eye -
Is just a Bough of Apples -
Held slanting, in the Sky -

The Pattern of a Chimney -
The Forehead of a Hill -
Sometimes - a Vane's forefinger -
But that's - Occasional -

The Seasons - shift - my Picture -
Upon my Emerald Bough,
I wake - to find no - Emeralds -
Then - Diamonds - which the Snow

From Polar Caskets - fetched me -
The Chimney - and the Hill -
And just the Steeple's finger -
These - never stir at all -
(375, c. 1862)

Four Trees - upon a solitary Acre -
Without Design
Or Order, or Apparent Action -
Maintain -

The Sun - upon a Morning meets them -
The Wind -
No nearer Neighbor - have they -
But God -
(cont'd)

The Acre gives them - Place -
They - Him - Attention of Pauser by -
Of Shadow, or of Squirrel, haply -
Or Boy -

What Deed is Their's unto the General Nature -
What Plan
They severally - retard - or further -
Unknown -

(742, c. 1863)

In the first example we especially note the striking contrast between the metaphors derived from the human body, and the geometric setting in which they are given; the peculiar effect of the method is that of watching something gradually freeze, or petrify (like accumulating ~~members~~ memories indeed), before our eyes. The second example, again, is Dickinson's reflection on phenomenality, such as she has learnt to expose it by now. A poet's way with phenomena, she seems to say, is by recording, and abstraction thereof, to reveal their essential structure or "plan" (be it, even, a design "without design"); this is his only way to possess and know, master and manipulate, the phenomenal things so baffling in their natural diversity.

III

According to Pongs, metaphoric intuition through Erfühlung is of two types: the 'mystic' (mystische) and the 'magic' (magische).[8] Reviewing Pongs' typology, Austin Warren and René Wellek note on the common nature of these metaphors:

> The mystical metaphor and the magic are both de-animizing: they run counter to man's projection of himself into the non-human world; they summon up the 'other' - the impersonal world of things, monumental art, physical law.

On the other hand, in the mystic metaphor

> Inorganic elements are symbolically treated, not as mere concepts or conceptual analogies but as representations which are also presentations,

while

> The magical metaphor lacks this translucency. It is Medusa's mask which turns the living into stone.[9]

As representatives in English poetry of the magical attitude, which is characterized by "the belief in the power of things" and a "desire to petrify the living", Wellek and Warren name Dickinson and Yeats, who "variously reach for this de-animizing, this anti-mystic metaphor". To this we must add, however, as we have already declared, that it was the mature Dickinson, not the young poet, who felt in need of poetic magic; in her youth her intuition rather tended to be of the mythic (mythische) kind, "which projects personality upon the outer world of things, which animizes and animates nature". To note, anyway, her later 'magical' frame of mind is very important, and to illustrate its manifestations in her poetry, we shall take some further examples of her treatment of natural subjects.

Let us first take a poem on snow-storm, of which there exist four separate versions, from the years 1862 (2), 1864, and 1883 (the first two and the last two being practically identical):[10]

> It sifts from Leaden Sieves -
> It powders all the Wood.
> It fills with Alabaster Wool
> The Wrinkles of the Road -
>
> It makes an Even Face
> Of Mountain, and of Plain -
> Unbroken Forehead from the East
> Unto the East again -

It reaches to the Fence -
It wraps it Rail by Rail
Till it is lost in Fleeces -
It deals Celestial Vail -

To Stump, and Stack - and Stem -
A Summer's empty Room -
Acres of Joints, where Harvests were,
Recordless, but for them -

It Ruffles Wrists of Posts
As Ankles of a Queen -
Then stills it's Artisans - like Ghosts -
Denying they have been -
(311; 1862, second version)

It sifts from Leaden sieves
It powders all the Wood
It fills with Alabaster Wool
The wrinkles of the Road.
It scatters like the Birds
Condenses like a Flock
Like Juggler's Flowers situates
Upon a Baseless Arc -
It traverses - yet halts -
Disperses, while it stays
Then curls itself in Capricorn
Denying that it was -
(1864 variant)

In the variant from 1862 we still see the poet's anthropomorphizing imagination at work. The natural phenomenon (snow-whirl) is personified throughout, to which are added several other human features in the landscape (l.4, ll.5-8, ll.17-18), and the pleasing cosiness of the scene is closed with a noun metaphor that refers it again to human artistry. In the 1864 variant, however, magic has superceded art. The poet no longer participates, she just observes another magician perform, and although it may seem a pity that nearly all of the delightful personifications of the former version have been destroyed in the process, she can now so deftly abstract the same natural phenomenon in verbs only suggestive of animizing metaphors that we at once admit the alterations justified. The swiftness of the transformations of snowy nature is, this

time, what enchants the poet, and it is poetically effected by means of rapidly successive verbs denoting volitive movement ("scatters", "condenses", "traverses", "disperses", "curls") without mentioning, except in the first two cases, its possible likeness to the animal world. Thus organic movement is seen in the process of turning into mechanic motion (rather than the other way round, as the first perception was undoubtedly in the terms of the organic); a tendency characteristic of much of Dickinson's later observation of the phenomenal world.

At this time her linguistic experiments include, on the one hand, descriptions of organic and animal nature in which the natural forms of life are captured and congealed in abstract, geometric or spatial, patterns (cf. nos. 375, 742, 798, 1084 above); this magical technique of unorganizing the organic, which is the very negative of her former habit of constant animation and personification, seems to reflect her detachment and alienation from natural life. On the other hand it seems (as we shall also observe about her poems on death) as if Dickinson had consciously dwelt on the metaphorical as well as metaphysical frontier of the organic and the inorganic, the natural and the supernatural, to solve the riddle of her dualistic experience of life, and had, from time to time, also resorted to her earlier mythical magic of organizing the inorganic, animizing the inanimate:

> I like to see it lap the Miles -
> And lick the Valleys up -
> And stop to feed itself at Tanks -
> And then - prodigious step
>
> Around a Pile of Mountains -
> And supercilious peer
> In Shanties - by the sides of Roads -
> And then a Quarry pare

(cont'd)

To fit it's sides
And crawl between
Complaining all the while
In horrid - hooting stanza -
Then chase itself down Hill -

And neigh like Boanerges -
Then - prompter than a Star
Stop - docile and omnipotent
At it's own stable door -
(585, c. 1862)

At a closer inspection, however, this famous, largely admired, sometimes abused, unendlessly analyzed poem is not an imitation of organic movement to give us the poet's impression of a train but a highly sophisticated rendering of its own, uneasy imitation of nature, the hidden irony - so enigmatic to many critics - consisting just of this double make-belief that makes the whole affair seem almost repulsively unnatural. Extra irony is gained by the first-person predicate, which should probably be understood reversely and which binds together and speeds up all the infinitives describing the progress of the triumphant engine; the technique is very much the same as in the later version of no. 311, and the end of the swift movement in both is a dead-end: the observer is left with an uncanny feeling of unreality, of witnessing something that only seemed to, did not actually exist.

Critique on human vanity in technological achievement? Maybe; possibly also on our neglect of the truly numinous aspects of nature and its powers in face of the easy sensational. A critical pose of the same kind is effected, for instance, in no. 630 ("The Lightning playeth - all the while -"), in which the poet mocks at the instinctive fear that electricity arouses in man in nature and the placid indifference with which he observes it being employed for telegraphy, or in no. 700

("You've seen Balloons set - Hav'nt you?"):

> The Gilded Creature strains - and spins -
> Trips frantic in a Tree -
> Tears open her imperial Veins -
> And tumbles in the sea -
>
> The Crowd - retire with an Oath -
> The Dust in Streets - go down -
> And Clerks in Counting Rooms
> Observe - "'Twas only a Balloon" -
> (c. 1863)

Again the poet's long-lived knack of animating the inanimate works ironically, in mockery of the poor attempts of man to imitate nature. The cross-light which the seemingly innocent poem throws on phenomena shows that the poet has by now acquired her full faculties as a verbal artist; to reveal the true nature and relations of phenomena, as she sees them, she is ready to manipulate objects adherent to them at will, to turn them upside down, inside out, in order to make them symbolic of her own vision. Dickinson, the magician, knows now the power of her word.[11]

IV

Suggesting that the mature Dickinson had exchanged the mythical, self-seeking metaphor of her youth for the magical, truth-searching metaphor of an alienated soul, we have attempted to show above that in natural description her "poetic magic" was simply a method of manipulating the phenomenal world through its very physicality, trusting that the spiritual aspects of an objective perception would be revealed in the perceptional pattern itself, without the intervention of an

interpretative subject. How, then, would the strategy of magical language and metaphor emerge and evolve in the subjective world of emotion?

A primitive magician believes to exert power over the things whose image or name he possesses; this is the simplest kind of symbolic magic (still discernible, though, in our wish to name, or learn the name of everything we meet with). Another, more developed kind of symbolic magic is practised in rituals and incantations, in which effigies or verbal symbols are used in order to change an existing order of things, and of this practice seem to derive the modern rhetoric usages of magical language.[12]

Actually, there are two types of magical rhetoric, prayer and verbal magic proper. The logic difference of these two modes of magic seems just one of degree; both are causative, there being only an increase in coerciveness when the transition from prayer to magical metaphor is accomplished. As Kenneth Burke observes, the transition is a very short one indeed:

> If magic says, "Let there be such and such," religion says, "Please do such and such." The decree of magic, the petition of prayer.[13]

Thus we have already seen the magic metaphor employed in Dickinson's early verse, in those cases in which she prays to God or some other divine power for protection, relief from pain, etc., usually in the role of His little girl:

> I hope the Father in the skies
> Will lift his little girl -
> Old fashioned - naughty - everything -
> Over the stile of "Pearl".
> (70)

> And "Jesus"! Where is Jesus gone?
> They say that Jesus - always came -
> Perhaps he does'nt know the House -
> This way, Jesus, Let him pass!
> (158)

Tho' I get home how late - how late -
So I get home - 'twill compensate -
Better will be the Extasy
That they have done expecting me -
When Night - descending - dumb - and dark -
They hear my unexpected knock -
Transporting must the moment be -
Brewed from decades of Agony!
(207)

As noted above, both prayer and verbal magic as implements of rhetoric are originally based on a wish to change the prevailing situation, even make exist what does not yet exist. It might seem that the coerciveness of a magical metaphor is dependent on the force that is put behind the wish, but that is not true. Even if in the above examples we think to discern three different gradations (70 - 207 - 158) of the forcefulness of the wish, it has nothing to do with the actual poetic effect of each poem; on the contrary, a too great emotive charge seems to break down the effect, as we may well have noticed of Dickinson's first magical incantations of frustrated love (nos. 232, 236, pp.95-96). Once, however, the truly magical stage of metaphoric image has been reached, both its motivation and function seem curiously to change, the element of naïve faith having altogether disappeared and been substituted by a sophisticated, disillusioned volition, which creates the image of the object or situation coveted not because of, but despite the implausibility of the wish behind it.

Herein, we think, lies the main difference between the two modes of magical language. As a rhetoric device, prayer is still comparatively crude as it only suggests, makes the wish potential, while magic affirms, proves, and makes the potential <u>virtual</u> (again to use the famous Langerian term), if not real. By an exertion of language, magical metaphor <u>passes the line between wish and achievement</u>, moves the poetic act from

potentiality to virtuality, makes available in the realm of poetry what of reality is found lacking but spiritually indispensable.

Again it seems difficult to decide how far this switch-over from naïve magic to sophisticated magic is a psychological and how far a linguistic phenomenon. Above we have spoken of the progressive motivation behind it, which could, of course, be understood simply as the psychic motivation of the poet, but, as far as we can see, it is also possible to interpret and study the process as a characteristic, inevitable progress of her poetic dialectics. In any case, the question is not, necessarily, one of increasing emotional need; on the contrary, prayer generally seems to imply far more emotional force than magic, more, anyway, than it can explicitly state, while magic derives most of its magicality from its capacity to capture and manipulate emotion through effective metaphors.

Actually, prayer is the more "magical" of the two, as it believes in a magic outside the person who is praying, a magic which can perform what is prayed for. Compared with it, verbal magic proper is far more rational, as it believes in no supernatural power but in the capacities of its tool and vehicle, language, to render the otherwise incomprehensible structure of reality comprehensible and thus manageable for man. By metaphorizing its problematic features, magical language may create a relevant model of reality and enable a symbolic analysis of its structure, meaning, and basic propositions. There is no denial of the fact that behind magical metaphor, as its motivation, is a factual, existent need of something, but it is no longer symbolically effected merely for the expression

or the wished-for fulfilment of this need, but for the cognition of what is needed, which is, surely, a kind of possession of the actual thing, not in reality but through symbol, yielding the experience not of possession but of the meaning of the thing coveted.

The transition from expressive to causative imagery and metaphor is most discernible in those of Dickinson's poems in which she seeks to construct that which "might have been", as her myth, otherwise incomplete, has to be given its virtual dimension of a spouse's devotion:

> Forever at His side to walk -
> The smaller of the two!
> Brain of His Brain -
> Blood of His Blood -
> Two lives - One Being - now -
>
> Forever of His fate to taste -
> If grief - the largest part -
> If joy - to put my piece away
> For that beloved Heart -
> (246, c. 1861)
>
> Although I put away his life -
> An Ornament too grand
> For Forehead low as mine, to wear,
> This might have been the Hand
>
> That sowed the flower, he preferred -
> Or smoothed a homely pain,
> Or pushed the pebble from his path -
> Or played his chosen tune -
>
> ...
>
> Your Servant, Sir, will weary -
> The Surgeon, will not come -
> The World, will have it's own - to do -
> The Dust, will vex your Fame -
>
> The Cold will force your tightest door
> Some February Day,
> But say my apron bring the sticks
> To make your Cottage gay -
> (366, c. 1862)

As we can see, this sort of verbal magic has, after all, very little to do with day-dreaming or other compensatory activities

of imagination; it is not the satisfaction of her desires she is trying to gain but the justification of them and of her new status in the realm of myth. A housewife's little chores which she enumerates and vows to have fulfilled are an important part of the magic, for they bring in the element of ritual, and the objects which she proposes to employ therein, are also magical, symbols of her rite.[14]

The ritualistic use of objects is an important feature of magical language. Of this we have already given an example above, with the poem in which Dickinson says she wants to buy "one hour" of her lover's face by sacrificing all the natural delights she has ever enjoyed (no. 247, p.96). Another example, among several others, might be no. 427 ("I'll clutch - and clutch-"), in which she makes her lover an object of infinite value to boast of her possession of it:

> I'll string you - in fine Necklace -
> Tiaras - make - of some -
> Wear you on Hem -
> Loop up a Countess - with you -
> Make - a Diadem - and mend my old One -
> Count - Hoard - then lose -
> And doubt that you are mine -
> To have the joy of feeling it - again -
>
> I'll show you at the Court -
> Bear you - for Ornament
> Where Women breathe -
> That every sigh - may lift you
> Just as high - as I -
>
> (427, c. 1862)

Somewhat ludicrous as an outburst like this may sound, on other occasions the method of magical enumeration of objects can be very effective, as in our next example, in which their function is synecdochic: they are evoked, as its witnesses, to create an absent presence.

I envy Seas, whereon He rides -
I envy Spokes of Wheels
Of Chariots, that Him convey -
I envy Crooked Hills

That gaze upon His journey -
How easy All can see
What is forbidden utterly
As Heaven - unto me!

I envy Nests of Sparrows -
That dot His distant Eaves -
The wealthy Fly, upon His Pane -
The happy - happy Leaves -

That just abroad His Window
Have Summer's leave to play -
The Ear Rings of Pizarro
Could not obtain for me -
(498, c. 1862)

If earlier, for Dickinson, all phenomenal happening had been only a sign of some spiritual reality, now she had - to describe it at all - to find her experience (whether of nature, love or despair) a metaphoric dress as materially concrete as possible. Natural objects, which formerly had seemed <u>natural symbols</u> of her metaphysical divinations, were now made unvoluntary tools of her poetic magic; instead of being intuitively discovered symbolic, they were ruthlessly manipulated, even forced. In the following poem time - or her imaginary experience of it - is admirably disposed of in swift, compact metaphors which again remind of a ritual; a kind of number magic (of which we hope later to give further examples) is practised here to cut shorter the way to the beloved:

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

If I could see you in a year,
I'd wind the months in balls -
And put them each in separate Drawers,
For fear the numbers fuse -
(cont'd)

If only Centuries, delayed,
I'd count them on my Hand,
Subtracting, till my fingers dropped
Into Van Dieman's Land.

If certain, when this life was out -
That your's and mine, should be
I'd toss it yonder, like a Rind,
And take Eternity -

(511, early 1862)

Very "concrete" verbal magic is also availed of in the following incantations of desperate love, which make one recall Poe's sorceress, Ligeia, who would, by sheer force of her will, defeat all impediments of materia to break back into life through the otherwise impenetrable wall of death:

They put Us far apart -
As separate as Sea
And Her unsown Peninsula -
We signified "These see" -

They took away our Eyes -
They thwarted Us with Guns -
"I see thee" each responded straight
Through Telegraphic Signs -

With Dungeons - They devised -
But through their thickest skill -
And their opaquest Adamant -
Our Souls saw - just as well -

(474, c. 1862)

I had not minded - Walls -
Were Universe - one Rock -
And far I heard his silver Call
The other side the Block -

I'd tunnel - till my Groove
Pushed sudden thro' to his -
Then my face take her Recompense -
The looking in his Eyes -

But 'tis a single Hair -
A filament - a law -
A Cobweb - wove in Adamant -
A Battlement - of Straw -

A limit like the Vail
Unto the Lady's face -
But every Mesh - a Citadel -
And Dragons - in the Crease -

(398, c. 1862)

Here, to display the poet's magical powers of presentation, material obstacles are symbolically created only to be symbolically destroyed in a ritual of devotion. In no. 398, though, we also meet with a reverse view of her magic, which is also a critique of magical language in general: the poet, who has attempted in her poetry to catch up the discrepancy there is between poetic imagination and life, virtuality and reality, now turns to the discrepancy itself trying to define its mystery metaphorically. The last stanza of no. 511 embodies the same impulse, too:

> But, now, uncertain of the length
> Of this, that is between,
> It goads me, like the Goblin Bee -
> That will not state - it's sting.

We have noted above the dizziness that growth into a new spiritual stature gave to the poet (p.102 ff); here the same sensation is caused by oscillation between her two worlds of reality and virtuality, which could not possibly be made to fuse. As we also observed, Dickinson was, however, well aware of the limits of her power of virtualization and never let herself be carried away by her imagination. In the virtual world of poetry one may see oneself in virtual relations to other virtual beings and things: within this virtual system these relations are "true" - truer than anything within the unsystematic world of our everyday existence - but they do not, necessarily, apply outside it. Thus the uses of magical metapho must /needs be very sophisticated, fully conscious of the non-natural, irreal quality of the world which is created thereby. Whatever features of reality are borrowed to build up the world of magic art, they are distorted and disproportioned to fit in with the poet's wilful vision.

One of the most macabre exhibits of Dickinson's power and powerlessness as a verbal magician is the following verse, in which the lover's dead body is made the fetish she is coveting; Ligeia, for whom death occurs only to be conquered, seems no match for this witchcraft that is willing to play with corpses to justify a passionate human will:

> If I may have it, when it's dead,
> I'll be contented - so -
> If just as soon as Breath is out
> It shall belong to me -
>
> Until they lock it in the Grave,
> 'Tis Bliss I cannot weigh -
> For tho' they lock Thee in the Grave,
> Myself - can own the key -
>
> Think of it Lover! I and Thee
> Permitted - face to face to be -
> After a Life - and Death - we'll say -
> For Death was That -
> And This - is Thee -
>
> ...
>
> Forgive me, if the Grave come slow -
> For Coveting to look at Thee -
> Forgive me, if to stroke thy frost
> Outvisions Paradise!
>
> (577, c. 1862)

Even though the latter parts of the poem (not quoted) are rather bespoiled by a clicheic evocation of the lovers' ecstatic meeting to be, the suppressed horror of the initial proposition is enough to reveal the central metaphysical problem of the poet at this time, the problem also being a challenge for the magical powers of her imagination; it is the interdiction (as well as promise) of love, 'never in this life', that her mind - like an obstinate fly round a pie under cover - is circling. If the lover is not to be possessed or even seen alive, let him die, the sooner the better; let death be the means to rid us of all the temporal obstacles and hindrances

of our truest divinations.

It is the most striking paradox of Dickinson's life and poetr that while renouncing in her most intimate, sensuous verse the Puritan doctrine of the transcendence of the divine law and the impossibility of human bliss on earth, she was, before long, to prove and accept both - again in her poetry, through its metaphoric equivalent of her vision. Her magical metaphors would objectify, help her master and understand but not satisfy her longing, and the gap there existed between that which could and that which could not be known remained for ever impossible to cover.

The acceptance of the impossible led to other "magical" techniques than the simply evocative or the ritualistic, but before passing on to them, we want still to discuss a certain group of Dickinson's poems which center around the problematic image of death and again seem to explore the ultimate limits of poetic imagination and its tool, metaphoric language. As death, eventually, had become to seem the symbolic focus of all her ignorance and unfulfilled longing, the hindrance as well as the eventual consummation of all her desires, she wanted to probe its mystery by means of her newly learned technique of ritual; if not - by letting her imagination sink deeper and deeper among the magical images of the dying and dead - she could not induce the actual state of otherness that she coveted, she would, again, symbolically perform the rite and grasp death: make it a powerful magic symbol, the most powerful, perhaps, that she had ever possessed.

V

Although her truly drastic experimentations with the motif belong to her mature period, it is easy to recognize that from her earliest years death appealed to Dickinson as the absolute state of otherness, and that at the back of her necrophilic interest in corpses, death-beds and graveyards was a genuine curiosity about the kind of existence that followed after death. We give some examples of her early approach to the subject:

There's something quieter than sleep
Within this inner room!
It wears a spring upon it's breast -
And will not tell it's name.

Some touch it, and some kiss it -
Some chafe it's idle hand -
It has a simple gravity
I do not understand!
(45, late 1858)

A throe upon the features -
A hurry in the breath -
An extasy of parting
Denominated "Death" -

An anguish at the mention
Which when to patience grown,
I've known permission given
To rejoin it's own.
(71, c. 1859)

As by the dead we love to sit,
Become so wondrous dear -
As for the lost we grapple
Tho' all the rest are here -

In broken mathematics
We estimate our prize
Vast - in it's fading ratio
To our penurious eyes!
(88, March 1859)

What Inn is this
Where for the night
Peculiar Traveller comes?
Who is the Landlord?
Where the maids?

(No stanza break)

Behold, what curious rooms!
No ruddy fires on the hearth -
No brimming Tankards flow -
Necromancer! Landlord!
Who are these below?
(115, c. 1859)

We note the pronoun "it" (also elsewhere) used of the dead body, the feeling of an outsider in the mourner, left only the "fading ratio" of his loss to bind him to the deceased, and the dizzy discontinuity of the familiar forms of life in death, which is all one can know of it. Human puzzlement at the mystery of death is admirably conveyed, but the poet has to stop at her awe; she feels she has not got the necromantic magic to pierce further into its numinosity.

On the other hand, it was not obviously only the numinous but also the dramatic aspects of death that attracted the young poet, and like any other of her imagial motifs, she would develop it along several metaphoric lines till, in the end, she could use it to dramatize her own existential situation. Thus we have, on the symbolic level, references to death as the only democratic act of our lives (nos. 98, 171 in Johnson), as the truest revelation of love's worth (see nos. 71, 88 above), and as the state of eternity which nullifies all temporal happening (e.g. no. 216). It was not, however, until all her expectations of life had been removed, so to speak, beyond death that it became the symbol of all of her life's riddles and made her covet and ritualistically evoke it through truly magical metaphors.

One of the earliest cases in which Dickinson applies the image of death (or dead body) to her own mental state is the following poem, which we may well compare, for instance, to no.

45 above, and in which she seems, still half playfully, to toy with the idea of seeing herself in the place of all those deceased she has ever commemorated in her verse:

> How many times these low feet staggered -
> Only the soldered mouth can tell -
> Try - can you stir the awful rivet -
> Try - can you lift the hasps of steel!
>
> Stroke the cool forehead - hot so often -
> Lift - if you care - the listless hair -
> Handle the adamantine fingers
> Never a thimble - more - shall wear -
>
> Buzz the dull flies - on the chamber window -
> Brave - shines the sun through the freckled pane -
> Fearless - the cobweb swings from the ceiling -
> Indolent Housewife - in Daisies - lain!
> (187, c. 1860)

It is possible to see here only a rebellious expression of the occasional fatigue and hopelessness a New England girl (of thirty) must feel at the unendless routine of her daily chores,[1] but next year the same outlet is used by the most freezing kind of despair which leaves no room for play:

> 'Tis so appalling - it exhilarates -
> So over Horror, it half Captivates -
> The Soul stares after it, secure -
> To know the worst, leaves no dread more -
> ...
> Looking at Death, is Dying -
> Just let go the Breath -
> And not the pillow at your Cheek
> So Slumbereth -
>
> Others, Can wrestle -
> Your's, is done -
> And so of Wo, bleak dreaded - come, -
> It sets the Fright at liberty -
> And Terror's free -
> Gay, Ghastly, Holiday!
> (281, c. 1861)
>
> I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,
> And Mourners to and fro
> Kept treading - treading - till it seemed
> That Sense was breaking through -

(cont'd)

And when they all were seated,
A sevice, like a Drum -
Kept beating - beating - till I thought
My Mind was going numb -

And then I heard them lift a Box
And creak across my Soul
With those same Boots of Lead, again,
Then Space - began to toll,

As all the Heavens were a Bell,
And Being, but an Ear,
And I, and Silence, some strange Race
Wrecked, solitary, here -
(280, c. 1861)

The poems obviously refer to the time of crisis when the poet tried to adjust herself to the idea that the newly discovered love had to be given up as lost; as Dickinson already had her imagial motif of death well developed, it offered her, as soon as the first surge of emotion had receded, a ready formula to express the ensuing sense of deadening despair, which seemed to absorb all her life. While no. 281 obviously still describes the last elations of her morbid ecstasy, in no. 280 (probably from very late 1861, although Johnson does not make a special mention of it) we see the magic of ritualistic enumeration of things at its best, admirably applied to the psychic state of a soul to be initiated in absolute murder of its hopes.

The funeral service, which Dickinson had had opportunity to observe time and time again, is in no. 280 the ritualistic framework within which she built the metaphoric equivalent of her afflicted state of mind. On another occasion she availed herself of the image of a death-bed visitor to "convince" herself of her dead condition (no. 588, early 1862), but the most powerful rites of death she performed alone, in rigorous observance of the manner in which she had seen all dying and dead ever behave:

I heard a Fly buzz - when I died -
The Stillness in the Room
Was like the Stillness in the Air -
Between the Heaves of Storm -

The Eyes around - had wrung them dry -
And Breaths were gathering firm
For that last Onset - when the King
He witnessed - in the Room -

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

With Blue - uncertain stumbling Buzz -
Between the light - and me -
And then the Windows failed - and then
I could not see to see -
(465, c. 1862)

It was not Death, for I stood up,
And all the Dead, lie down -
It was not Night, for all the Bells
Put out their Tongues, for Noon.

It was not Frost, for on my Flesh
I felt Siroccos - crawl -
Nor Fire - for just my Marble feet
Could keep a Chancel, cool -

And yet, it tasted, like them all,
The Figures I have seen
Set orderly, for Burial,
Reminded me, of mine -

As if my life were shaven,
And fitted to a frame,
And could not breathe without a key,
And 'twas like Midnight, some -

When everything that ticked - has stopped -
And Space stares all around -
Or Grisly frosts - first Autumn morns,
Repeal the Beating Ground -

But, most, like Chaos - Stopless - cool -
Without a Chance, or Spar -
Or even a Report of Land -
To justify - Despair.
(510, early 1862)

Both of the poems avail of the formula of dying but in a markedly different vein, the difference being due not only to subsiding emotive tension but also to an increase in linguistic

sophistication. In no. 510, which seems the earlier of the two, we still think to discern some of the original frenzy of her wish to die, and of her (not merely unpleasant) horror at the idea (cf. no. 281 above); yet the freezing, congealing kind of her despair finds, especially in its marvellous fourth stanza, a fit metaphoric equivalent in the image of a body entombed. We note, however, that the poet mostly uses similes, stating that it only "tasted like" death, while in no. 465 she bluntly tells us that she "died", not felt it in her mind. Death, the metaphor of her yielding to despair has now, however shortly after the recovery, become a symbol, the second great symbol of her crisis and new life (see p. 99 above).

As to horror, it is difficult to tell whether no. 465 elicits any less of it in the reader than either 280 or 510. The poet's cool concentration on immediate detail limits the scope of our view within the suffocating dying-room, and the fly, which finally administers the soul to the other world, is a real magic fly, the symbolic focus of the dying one's dizzy and disintergrating consciousness. It also ironically underlines the triviality of the whole affair and mocks at the narrow limits of human consciousness; this, seems the poet to be saying, is what we can experience at death, only the suffocation and distress, none of the majesty, which is afterwards.

In Dickinson's late poetry, death is an effective magical metaphor and symbol, not a thematic excuse for self-indulgent reminiscences of by-gone sorrows. Of her own, so to say, personal acquaintance of it she has given several other, more

or less ritualistic accounts,[16] but to show its symbolic importance in her spiritual development, we have chosen a group of three longer poems, in which she, by means of a narrative sequence, seems to indicate that her point of referenc has, symbolically, been removed from this life to the next, to eternity. In all of them, life is looked upon as if from beyond death, as something far back; similarity with those of the "nuptial" poems which also view "girl's life" as one definitely past is obvious (cf. nos. 356, 461, p.99), although these poems, of course, exhibit a darker view of her existential situation. Because of their length, we quote the poems only in extracts:

'Twas just this time, last year, I died.
I know I heard the Corn,
When I was carried by the Farms -
It had the Tassels on -

I thought how yellow it would look -
When Richard went to mill -
And then, I wanted to get out,
But something held my will.

I thought just how Red - Apples wedged
The Stubble's joints between -
And Carts went stooping round the fields
To take the Pumpkins in -

...
But this sort, grieved myself,
And so, I thought the other way,
How just this time, some perfect year -
Themself, should come to me -
(445, c. 1862)

I'm sorry for the Dead - Today -
It's such congenial times
Old Neighbors have at fences -
It's time o' year for Hay.

And Broad - Sunburned Acquaintance
Discourse between the Toil -
And laugh, a homely species
That makes the Fences smile -

...
(cont'd)

A Wonder if the Sepulchre
Dont feel a lonesome way -
When Men - and Boys - and Carts - and June,
Go down the Fields to "Hay" -
(529, c. 1862)

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

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

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

...

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

Since then - 'tis Centuries - and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses Heads
Were toward Eternity -
(712, c. 1863)

The two first of the above poems seem, on the one hand, to reflect the same nostalgic sentiment as, for instance, nos. 327 ("I thought that Nature was enough", see pp. 60-61) and 348 ("I dreaded that first Robin so", p. 59), in which the poet complains her lost capacity to enjoy nature in particular and life in general; on the other hand, they observe life so detachedly, from such a distant perspective as to make it seem even more picturesque, more enjoyable than it really is. Contemplation on life as lost, from the point of view of death, gives one a new relish in life.[17] No. 712, again, puts the case differently. A direct allegory, it relates the poet's history of alienation in simple, unequivocal terms: death,

who once symbolically took possession of her, has made her a dweller of tomb, who has no expectations till Doomsday, no obligations put on time, all on eternity.

Her sense of already living beyond death, in eternal, infinite time, Dickinson has also clearly expressed in one of her nuptial poems, which seems to link together her principal motifs of love and death in a highly meaningful manner (cf.e.g. nos. 273, 336, p.97):

I live with Him - I see His face -
I go no more away
For Visiter - or Sundown -
Death's single privacy

The Only One - forestalling Mine -
And that - by Right that He
Presents a Claim invisible -
No Wedlock - granted Me -

I live with Him - I hear His Voice -
I stand alive - Today -
To witness to the Certainty
Of Immortality -

Taught Me - by Time - the lower Way -
Conviction - Every day -
That Life like This - is stopless -
Be Judgement - what it may -
(463, c. 1862)

Love symbolically pledged beyond death, death symbolically suffered have made the poet inhabitant, no longer of this, but of the life to be, and from this absolute point of view, it is only natural to regard all temporal action, movement and happening as unsubstantial, as a matter of indifference that can be handled at option. On this sentiment is based both her bolder and bolder exploitation of (magical) metaphor and her ever increasing tendency to abstraction; the virtualization and patterning of her experience of the world was enabled and justified by her belonging, if not yet <u>in esse</u>, at

least symbolically in posse, to another category of beings than the rest of men". "A Member of the Cloud" (273, p.97), she needed to obey no other exaction than that of her own vision.

VI

We have more than once argued that it was the advancing symbolic differentiation of Dickinson's experience of the world that again affected the kind of language she was using; from simple naming of things and phenomena in "natural" metaphors she grew into a recognition of their basic dissimilarity (pp. 54-55), which recognition, again, transmuted her (basically) mythic way of viewing the world into a magic volition to master its diversity by means of her language (cf. p.108). In the process the naïve, spontaneous verbal magic of her early poetry, whose psychic motivation had been only to overcome the obstacles on the way to equilibrium, was replaced by a very sophisticated, self-conscious kind of magical language, whose principal aim it was to regain a satisfactory, unitary view into her own multifarious, too differentiated perception of the world. In a sense, the end of all her magical practices of language was a new synthesis of her disintergrating universe (cf. pp.109-110).

Here we may call to mind what Philip Wheelwright says of the two functions of metaphoric activity, which are "the outreaching and the combining",and which he separates in his two

types of metaphor, epiphor and diaphor,

> the one standing for the outreach and extension of meaning through comparison, the other for the creation of new meaning by juxtaposition and synthesis.

While, according to Wheelwright, epiphor (i.e., metaphor in the usual, Aristotelian sense) "presupposes a vehicular image or notion that can readily be understood when indicated by a suitable word or phrase", in diaphor

> the "movement" (phora) is "through" (dia) certain particulars of experience (actual or imagined) in a fresh way, producing new meaning by juxtaposition alone.[18]

In its bold equations and its tendency to synthetic combinations Dickinson's later uses of magical metaphor can be called diaphoric as well. If, for instance, we compare (as we have done) her poems on natural motifs from different periods (see e.g. pp. 111-117), we notice that in later ones the natural incident or detail is frequently described by means of a metaphoric vehicle from a very different sphere of being (cf. p.115), not in acquiescence of their mutual, natural similarity but rather in defiance of their dissimilarity; as if in a desperate effort to draw these (in themselves) very remote spheres of experience closer together.

Wheelwright admits that really good examples of pure diaphor, "the sheer presentation of diverse particulars in a newly designed arrangement", are impossible to find, as it "does its best work in combination" (i.e., with epiphor).[19] This is only natural if we regard the diaphoric, synthetic presentation of the world as an extension and further development of the practice of representing it in epiphoric, analytic imagery. As soon as a poet possesses a number of well-developed clusters of symbolic imagery, which tend to interfuse in a private

symbology, the poet is encouraged to employ his images in bolder and bolder metaphoric combinations, finally in juxtaposition even, to produce new effects of presentation and meaning. Besides the highly diaphoric description of the spider (p. 113), we sample the following poems in the choice of whose imagery we might even suspect the poet's intentional wish to surprise the reader:

Within my Garden, rides a Bird
Upon a single Wheel -
Whose spokes a dizzy Music make
As 'twere a travelling Mill -

He never stops, but slackens
Above the Ripest Rose -
Partakes without alighting
And praises as he goes,

Till every spice is tasted -
And then his Fairy Gig
Reels in remoter atmospheres -
And I rejoin my Dog,
(500, early 1862)

He parts Himself - like Leaves -
And then - He closes up -
Then stands upon the Bonnet
Of any Buttercup -

And then He runs against
And oversets a Rose -
And then does Nothing -
Then away upon a Jib - He goes -

And dangles like a Mote
Suspended in the Noon -
Uncertain - to return Below -
Or settle in the Moon -
(517, c. 1862)

A travelling mill making dizzy music - what a seemingly incongruous but subtle metaphor for a bird on its bough! We have noted above Dickinson's mature skill to catch and abstract motion (see pp. 118-121), and here we have two other examples of her skill at imagial and rhythmic timing to make her scenes

move at the wanted speed. If, in Wheelwright's words, "the role of epiphor is to hint significance, the role of diaphor is to create presence",[20] both the poems are mainly diaphoric in their use of imagery throughout, for the poet's aim at the time seems to have been only to describe and abstract phenomenality at its most essential. As we have noted (pp. 115-117), the poet by now accepts the phenomenality of natural things as a meaning in itself; because the aim of her metaphorizing is to reach for the metaphysical universality of things only by describing their momentary seemingness, she will, to convey the totality of her impression, employ all the range of her experience, in bold comparison or subtle juxtaposition, to give just the right tone to her - and our - delighted surprise at the vanishing scenes of nature.

In no. 500, besides the first breathtaking diaphor, we also remark the verbal suspense in the second stanza that does not really "slacken" till the beginning of the third, in which the real object of the bird's supposed interest emerges and releases him; the suspense is really so tense that the last two neutrally reflective stanzas (not quoted here) are really necessary to balance the effect of the three first.

In no. 517 the movement is even - if a butterfly's flutter is ever even - till the third stanza, in which it, again, is "suspended", and suspended it remains, to give impetus to the poet's reflections in the last two stanzas:

> What come of Him - at Night -
> The priviledge to say
> Be limited by Ignorance -
> What come of Him - That Day -
>
> The Frost - possess the World -
> In Cabinets - be shown -
> A Sepulchre of quaintest Floss -
> An Abbey - a Cocoon -

It is quite informative to compare the end of this poem to that of no. 173 (from 1860), of which it seems a kind of variant. No. 173 describes exultantly the miracle of a caterpillar turning, in time, into a butterfly, and closes with the following, breathless exclamation:

> By Men, yclept Caterpillar!
> By me! But who am I,
> To tell the pretty secret
> Of the Butterfly!

The earlier poem draws a clear parallel between the modes of being of the observer and the observed, sympathetically anthropomorphizing the latter, but not so in no. 517: a butterfly's miracle is in itself, not in its possible likeness to human beings. If "sepulchre" or "abbey" seem to refer to the human sphere of experience, the reference is diaphoric rather than epiphoric, to surprise the reader into recognition of the butterfly's, not of the human condition. In the human sphere of experience, again, we have most appalling diaphoric equations to the constructs of 'dead' matter, not to show any similarity in it to us, but in our experience of deadness to it. In addition to all the diaphoric scenes of dying or death we have sampled above (see pp. 135-137), we give a few others of Dickinson's diaphoric attempts to catch her experience of despair in all its metaphysical horror:

> A Clock stopped -
> Not the Mantel's -
> Geneva's farthest skill
> Cant put the puppet bowing -
> That just now dangled still -
>
> An awe came on the Trinket!
> The Figures hunched, with pain -
> Then quivered out of Decimals -
> Into Dagreeless Noon -

(cont'd)

It will not stir for Doctor's -
This Pendulum of snow -
The Shopman importunes it -
While cool - concernless No -

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

(287, c. 1861)

I leaned upon the Awe -
I lingered with Before -
The Second like an Ocean rolled
And broke against my ear -

I laughed a crumbling Laugh
That I could fear a Door
Who Consternation compassed
And never winced before.

(609, 1872 redaction of 1862 version)

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

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

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

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

(512, c. 1862)

"A Clock stopped", no doubt, refers epiphorically to time that also seemed to stop at the recognition of loss, but as a presentational description of horror it is mainly diaphoric with all its mechanic, non-human imagery. "The Second like an Ocean rolled" or "I laughed a crumbling Laugh" (609) are excellent examples of real surprise diaphors, as is the whole stanza

three of no. 512, especially ll. 13-14, while the last (quoted) stanza of the poem epiphorically refers not only to the beloved bee but to earlier exercises on the motif (e.g. nos. 211, 213, 214 in Johnson), which gives it a pungent diaphoric undertones.

Diaphoric usage of imagery is typical of all Emily Dickinson's later poetry, especially in the sense that her vehicular transferences from perception and inner experience to be described become increasingly into more and more abstract spheres of expressive language. Her peculiar fondness of highly abstractive jargon seems part and parcel of her other abstractive tendencies, most notably of her characteristic, serial and structural analysis of imagial Gestalts, but has, naturally, nothing to do with discoursively advancing generalizations of scholarly thought. The following chapter will discuss both the structural and linguistic abstraction of Dickinson's poetry under the common epithet of "Ellipsis"; as the elliptic element is to be found in it from the very beginning of her poetic career, it has been important to discuss, at this length, the factors that have made it the prime feature of her late verse.

6. Ellipsis, Sound and Sense

Dickinson's adoption of the English psalmody metres as the rhythmic basis of her poetic experimentations had obviously several, more or less instinctive motifs. One of them - the largely devotional quality of her early verse - has already been touched above (pp. 5-7; also cf. pp. 36-38), and although we could argue, like Paul Fussell Jr. or Charles R. Anderson,[1] that psalmody cadences often lend an undertone of irony to her probings of inner truth, it is mostly irony of disbelief striving for belief and despairing its own condition; when finally performing the ritual of true devotion, her hymnal practices certainly tend to effects other than irony:[2]

> I shall know why - when Time is over -
> And I have ceased to wonder why -
> Christ will explain each separate anguish
> In the fair schoolroom of the sky -
>
> He will tell me what "Peter" promised -
> And I - for wonder at his woe -
> I shall forget the drop of Anguish
> That scalds me now - that scalds me now!
> (193, c. 1860)

> I should have been too glad, I see -
> Too lifted - for the scant degree
> Of Life's penurious Round -
> My little Circuit would have shamed
> This new Circumference - have blamed -
> The homelier time behind.
> ...

Earth would have been too much - I see -
And Heaven - not enough for me -
I should have had the Joy
Without the Fear - to justify -
The Palm - without the Calvary -
So Savior - Crucify -
(313, c. 1862)

Baptized, before, without the choice,
But this time, consciously, of Grace -
Unto supremest name -
Called to my Full - The Crescent dropped -
Existence's whole Arc, filled up,
With one small Diadem.
(508, early 1862)

While hymnology was the verse tradition most familiar (and most readily available)[3] to her, behind the hymnal rythms there was another, far older tradition, that of popular balladry.[4] As Anderson observes, Dickinson,"though rarely adopting the ballad's narrative structure",

> took advantage of some of its qualities: the strong colloquial idioms, the roughened meters and proximate rhymes, and especially the swift climatic movement that overleaped sequences in its passion for conciseness. She eschewed the imitative 'literary ballad,' so attractive to poets during the past hundred years, but the spirit of early balladry is often present as an effective referent in her poems.[5]

Recalling, for example, Dickinson's mythicized encounters with her beloved (see e.g. no. 322, p. 37) or her magical meetings with death (nos.455, 529, 712, pp. 139-140), all depicted in traditional ballad quatrains, we would rather not say that she resorts to the tradition "rarely" but <u>for certain purposes</u>: just as she avails herself of hymnal cadences for devotional (or mock-devotional) purposes, so narrative, one of the traditional dimensions of her chosen metric pattern, is indulged in only when a descriptive act of "circumference" is needed to objectify a symbolic situation.

It seems a curious fact indeed that the purely "formal"

conventions of poetic language, like metre and line or stanza arrangement, should stand in a definite relation to the poet's prevailing attitude or the purport of his poetic activity. It is not seemingly enough to say, like Paul Fussell, that

> there is something in four-line stanzaic organization (or in the principle of alternative rhyming) that projects a deep and permanent appeal to human nature;[6]

in the case of Emily Dickinson this "something" should, and can, be defined more explicitly.

Professor Anderson speaks of "the swift climatic[c/] movement" and "passion for conciseness" typical of the ballad, but these epithets can be, it seems, attached to the quatrain arrangement in general. The iambic or trochaic quatrain with its alternative rhymes is the shortest possible <u>dialectical</u> unit of verse, that is, the concisest formula for developing a poetic idea. It was this quality (also inherent but not the most prominent in the ballad stanza) which particularly appealed to Dickinson.

Let us illustrate our argument with some couplets, triplets and quatrains which the young poet wrote as independent maxims:

> We lose - because we win -
> Gamblers - recollecting which
> Toss their dice again!
> (21, c.1858)

> Surgeons must be very careful
> When they take the knife!
> Underneath their fine incisions
> Stirs the Culprint - <u>Life</u>!
> (108, c.1859)

> Least Rivers - docile to some sea.
> My Caspian - thee.
> (212, c.1860)

An Hour is a Sea
Between a few, and me -
With them would Harbor be -
(825, c.1864)

A random choice of a similar set of examples from her later poetry would be like this:

Winter under cultivation
Is as arable as Spring
(1707, undatable)

Take all away -
The only thing worth larceny
Is left - the Immortality -
(1365, March 1876)

Opinion is a flitting thing,
But Truth, outlasts the Sun -
If then we cannot own them both -
Possess the oldest one -
(1455, c. 1879)

God is indeed a jealous God -
He cannot bear to see
That we had rather not with Him
But with each other play.
(1719, undatable)

Despite the objections some people may have to excessive symmetry in poetic form,[7] the superiority of quatrain in comparison with shorter - and longer - stanza arrangements seems to lie in the fact that within the briefest possible line space it allows for a recurrent movement that both flings a statement or question and returns it: exposes, in a word, the poetic attitude with the greatest economy. As the shortest dialectical unit of poetry, the quatrain easily gains prominency over the couplet, whose "dialectics" consists, at most, of coupling two congruent (or incongruous) images or ideas, without any properly dramatic tension in their exposition; for creating that, one needs more room, sure, but also more metrical variation: even a longer poetic sequence made of couplets seems unnecessarily short-winded.[8]

The economy of the quatrain is that of illustrative

repetition or opposition. While the composer of triplets must see everything equalized under the principle of three successive rhymes,[9] in a quatrain the symmetrical form can be effectively used for a point-to-point comparison of the poetic statement and its counter-statement. Moreover, the single quatrain can be expanded into a poem of two, three, or even four quatrains of similar dialectical qualities; especially in the bipartite and tripartite quatrain structure the juxtaposition of conflicting elements (imagial or ideal) is highly effective as the "argument" can be carried on from one stanza to another, at the required length,[10] for illustration, opposition, or outcome of the original statement (cf. no. 301, p.80).

Before we start to examine the peculiar characteristics of the quatrain form as used by Dickinson, we may ask whether the young poet, for ever so inclined to drop and occasional maxim, had any popular model, more dialectical than hymnody or balladry, for her reflective practices.

Professor Anderson has, passingly, hinted at " a third sub-literary use of this quatrain stanza that may have had implications for her, the Mother Goose Rhymes";[11] the hint is worth while considering. First of all, nursery rhymes seem to be characterized by the same conciseness and tendency for elliptic style as Dickinson's verse, and if it was not the popular ballad that taught her the art of "strong colloquial idioms" or "proximate rhymes" (so irritating to the refined ear), it may as well have been children's rhymes of the following kind:[12]

For every evil under the sun
There is remedy or there is none;
If there is one, seek till you find it;
If there be none, never mind it.

If wishes were horses,
Beggars would ride;
If turnips were watches,
I'd bear one by my side.

If "ifs" and "ands"
Were pots and pans
There'd be no need for tinkers'hands.

Proverbial rhymes like the ones above, with their peculiar mixture of common sense and nonsense may well have added to the young poet's appreciation of punning and sarcastic humour; her eye and ear for the absurd detail in the social intercourse, too, often catches the very same tones as certain Mother Goose observations:[13]

This little man lived all alone,
And he was a man of sorrow;
For, if the weather was fair today,
He was sure it would rain tomorrow.

"What is the news of the day,
Good neighbour, I pray?"
"They say the balloon
Is gone up to the moon."

While Dickinson's peculiar fondness of punning and quibbling certainly had its nearest equal in the popular riddle,[14] some nursery rhymes may have offered her models for humorously sympathetic natural observation; it also seems an alluring idea to account for the almost excessive tendency for personification in her early poetry by referring it to the playful animal and floral figures of nursery rhymes:[15]

The north wind doth blow,
And we shall have snow,
And what will the robin do then,
    Poor thing?

He'll sit in the barn
And keep himself warm,
And hide his head under his wing,
    Poor thing!

At early morn the spiders spin,
And by and by the flies drop in;
And when they call, the spiders say,
"Take off your things and stay all day.
Where have you been all the day?"

Daffy-down-dilly has come up to town
In a yellow petticoat and a green gown.

It is true that nursery rhymes seldom tell a story (or if they do, it tends to be one with a very abrupt ending), neither is their elliptic, punning idiom especially suited to express lofty or rapturous sentiments. Fortunately, though, there were those two other quatrain traditions, with their own rhetoric devices, for narrative and devotional purposes, and together all three would provide a sensitive traditionalist (which Dickinson was) a powerful poetic arsenal to be developed and refined. It would be absurd to deplore Dickinson's choice of the relatively "poor" quatrain form as the basic pattern of her verse as for all her purposes it seems to have been the very best.[16] As a young poet, she would find through it expression for the religious scruples of her Puritan mind as well as a voice for her ritual incantations of a devotee; as she grew older and more sophisticated, she would rediscover in the quatrain other, equally congenial dimensions of expression: the elliptic pithiness of a nursery rhyme rhetoric and syntax.

II

As we contended above, the most important "dialectical" quality of the quatrain stanza seems to be its symmetrical structure, which allows, with its two sets of parallel lines,

for effective comparison of diverse poetic materials. As parallelism, indeed, appears to be the rhetoric device most often cultivated by all the traditions behind the stanza form which Dickinson preferred, we have thought it informative to examine her progressive exploitation of parallel structures; in a nutshell, they seem to show her development into the full mastery of all the rhetoric possibilities of the quatrain form.

First she seems to use parallelism, as balladry and hymnody mostly do, for decoration and emphasis only. If we examine the very first items of the Johnson edition of her verse (e.g. nos. 2,4,5,6,7,8,9; the reader may also study the series of early poems given pp. 26-27), we note that parallelism in them is mostly mere repetition, for cumulative emphasis of the initial poetic statement and with very little advancing movement (no.11 being the most notable exception).[17] A similarly archaic - or should we say primitive? - tone is effected in no. 23(see p.31) by the anaphoric use of the same introductory line for each stanza; the poem is, true, a mock-ballad, just as nos.18 and 130 (p.36) are mock-hymns, but as instances of parallelism, all are still comparatively crude.

Dickinson's early reflective poems, however, offer more promising examples of her endeavour to use parallelism to create dynamic balance within her quatrains. In them, repetition may imply hidden opposition of the paired statements or it is used to reinforce a paradoxical statement; we note, though, that the symmetrically parallel lines (with their connecting rhymes) are even too obviously

availed of in the juxtaposition. The first two lines tend to create a pattern, which is then imposed, rather mechanically, on the rest of the poem so that the parallelism used seems climatic rather than really antithetic:[18]

> One sister have I in the house,
> And one, a hedge away.
> There's only one recorded,
> But both belong to me.
> (14)

> For each extatic instant
> We must an anguish pay
> In keen and quivering ratio
> To the extasy.
>
> For each beloved hour
> Sharp pittances of years -
> Bitter contested farthings -
> And Coffers heaped with tears.
> (125)

> To learn the Transport by the Pain -
> As Blind Men learn the sun!
> To die of thirst - suspecting
> That Brooks in Meadows run!
>
> To stay the homesick - homesick feet
> Upon a foreign shore -
> Haunted by native lands, the while -
> And blue - beloved air!
> (167)

The series of "paradoxical" poems beginning with no.67 ("Success is counted sweetest"), which we have quoted and discussed above (pp.43-47), is an excellent example of the manner in which Dickinson learned to master and vary juxtapositional structures to perfection. Apart from the gradual interiorization of the poetic idea itself through successive imagial handlings, we note development in purely formal dialectics, too. While nos.67 and 73 only metaphorically expand, in later stanzas, the ideal pattern given in the first, parallelism in no. 126 already launches the argument on; even the second stanza, through its "emphatic" repetition

("Who win, ... Who fall") develops it till the rewarding end in the last, with mock-psalmodic rows of angels moving to repetitious, organ-like cadences.

To be exact, just as we have discovered three functions to which Dickinson put her quatrain form, viz. devotional, narrative and elliptic, so could we see three corresponding employments for parallelism in her developing poetic dialectics. Cumulative repetition, reminiscent of hymnody, she used for devotional verse, as well as for her later ritualistic poetry (cf. the discussion of her "magical enumerations", pp.127-132). Climactic parallelism was reserved either for narrative, ballad-like poetry (cf. pp. 139-141) or for highly dramatic description (e.g. nos. 280,465, 510, pp.135-137); often her usage of either is not really so much repetative as progressive, generative of swift movement (cf. no. 430, p.62). Dickinson's highest achievement as a master of quatrain dialectics is, however, antithesis, the juxtaposition of most conflicting poetic elements in the briefest of eternal[x] form but with the strictest of inner economy; of this skill we may chose[o] as an example the last of the series so often referred to: no.713(p.46).

In it, the second stanza develops the same antithetic notion as the first but through inversion; we notice that although we cannot point out, except for the first lines, a point-to-point parallelism in the treatment of each, the bipartite structure is availed of for juxtaposition most economically. Instead of introducing the whole paradox in the first stanza (or in its first two lines) and then developing it metaphorically in the next, the poet here

divides it between two quatrains; by this single feat of inventiveness it is introduced and reinforced simultaneously, the two stanzas working like two halves of a circle beginning and closing up at the same point.

This kind of bipartite arrangement of antithetic materials is, of course, only one example of Dickinson's mature practices of parallelism. As we earlier observed (p.104), they were not even properly developed until the involvement of her inner dynamics within a "fate", her poetic myth, had been accomplished, and she felt in need of a truly "dichotomic way of presentation". Then she would show similar skill in handling one, two or three quatrains for her antithetic revelations (although the bipartite structure was evidently felt the best for the purpose).[19] If we re-examine, for instance, nos. 1286 and 1233 (p.61), it will be easily noted that parallelism, no longer the least mechanical, is in the former subtly progressive through its juxtapositions, which also introduce the effects in the poet of a paradoxical experience; in the latter, the cause and effect are cleverly coupled by the paralleled composition of the quatrain. In general it seems that "the conventional scheme of parallelism", which (to quote a critic)"often has to do most of the work... for the beginning poet", gradually turns, as antithesis, into her most personal way of exposition; that in her mature poetry it is "never crudely obvious", is the least that can be said of it; to us it appears as varied as the phenomena she chose to meditate upon by means of the device.[20]

III

Dickinson's practices of rhyme have been much discussed; never have they been dealt with in connection of the rhetoric patterns she favoured. Two recent studies of her prosody have offered plausible explanations for her peculiar cultivation of near rhymes, the most probable being that the quatrain form itself, with its monotonous syllabic pattern, made her avoid hackneyed rythms by frequent omission of full rhyme.[21] Another, even more obvious explanation has, however, been generally overlooked: the reinforcement of the rhetoric (i.e. parallel or antithetic) structure through equalities in the corresponding sound pattern, which practice, naturally, must be balanced by fewer exact rhymes.[22]

Although the dozens and dozens of Dickinson's poems already quoted during this study might provide us excellent examples of, let's say, cumulative or climatic parallelism reinforced by assonant or consonant sound effects along lines,[23] we will rather take a few new examples from her later, most elliptic verse to show the function of sound similarities in binding together and harmonizing the juxtapositions - so terse, even harsh in themselves - within the scanty space of a quatrain. Let us start with two, thematically rather dissimilar examples of the double quatrain:

Ample make this Bed
Make this Bed with Awe
In it wait till Judgement break
Exellent and Fair

Be it's Mattrass straight
Be it's Pillow round
Let no Sunrise' Yellow noise
Interrupt this Ground
(829, c. 1864)

That she forgot me was the least
I felt it second pain
That I was worthy to forget
Was most I thought upon

Faithful was all that I could boast
But constancy became
To her, by her innominate
A something like a shame.
(1683, undatable)

We note, first of all, that Dickinson effects a full rhyme only for the last stanza of each poem; secondly, it is easy to see that there is very little concentration of meaning in the rhyme words, which do not, accordingly, give an extract of the total meaning of the poem (as they should, had it been the poet's concern to make <u>them</u> the chief agent of poetic coherence).[24] Instead, we note a very strong similarity between the sounds of all meaningful[g/] words within lines, the chiastic exposition of the poetic idea, of course, determining the position of the words thus drawn together into a neat net of harmonious sounds.

Parallelism, either repetative or antithetic, which appears in the first stanzas is reinforced by the following sound patterns, which certainly contain the most meaningful words of the lines:

ample - this bed

bed - with awe

forgot - least - pain

forget - most - upon

The consonance effected here is most subtle, mainly based on what Kenneth Burke calls "cognates";[25] we observe, moreover that <u>most</u> in the last line of the first stanza of no.1683

is echoed back by boast in the second, and that line 3 of no.829 is "rhymed" interiorly at caesura (wait-break) as well as with the end word of next line (straight). After noting that Judgement (1.3) in no.829 "rhymes" with Excellent (1.4) we well understand why the proper rhyme is suspended; full rhyme would be excessive, sheer waste of rhetoric emphasis. In the second stanzas, though, in which parallelism is less conspicuous (non-structural), the poet gives an exact rhyme for each; it also neatly closes up the argument which, after the dramatic exposition in the first, is only expanded in the second quatrain.

Too much interlinear assonance and consonance tends, of course, to tedious mellifluousness even worse than hackneyd rhythmic beat reinforced by too exact rhyming. In general, Dickinson seems happily to escape both these dangers. Instead of making her parallel structures too mechanically close-knit through an elaborate accompaniment of euphonious sound effects, she learned to make both her parallelism (antithesis) and the reinforcing sound pattern less and less conspicuous. Of this development we can give the following examples:

> Once more, my now bewildered Dove
> Bestirs her puzzled wings
> Once more her mistress, on the deep
> Her troubled question flings -
>
> Thrice to the floating casement
> The Patriarch's bird returned,
> Courage! My brave Columba!
> There may yet be Land!
> (48, c.1858)

> I never lost as much as twice,
> And that was in the sod.
> Twice have I stood a beggar
> Before the door of God!

Angels - twice decending
Reimbursed my store -
Burglar! Banker - Father!
I am poor once more!
(49, c.1858)

My life closed twice before its close;
It yet remains to see
If immortality unveil
A third event to me,

So huge, so hopeless to conceive
As these that twice befel.
Parting is all we know of heaven,
And all we need of hell.
(1732, undatable)

Suggestive counting (number magic) so frequent in folklore has here been exploited at three different dates; the dramatic emphasis it gives to the situation described varies, though, from case to case depending on the subtlety of its appearance. In the first of our examples the numeral adverb is always introduced anaphorically, which makes the whole device appear unnecessarily archaic and clumsy; in the second, numeric repetition cleverly escapes monotony by varying its position from the end to the beginning, then to the middle of successive lines. In no.1732 its presence is almost hidden, but ever the more effective; in fact it is the axis around which the whole dialectic of the poem is moving.

As repetition is the rhetoric device carrying on the poetic argument, we note again that there is no special preponderance of meaning accumulated in the rhyme words; rhyme is regular enough in all three poems, but very little conspicuous. Instead we can notice the many subtle ways in which the poet phonetically binds together all important words within lines. In no.48 we find several "cognates", mysteriously euphonious pairs of words or word combinations (Dove - deep; bewildered - wings; bestirs (her) - her mistress; Courage - Columba, etc.);[26] in no.48 whole series of interlinea

"rhymes" (sod - stood - God; Before - door - store - poor(once)more; beggar - Banker). As to no.1732, it is difficult to conceive a closer agreement between the ideal meaning and the corresponding sound pattern of a poetic statement than is presented by its first line. The most meaningful words in it make up a nice chain of both assonant and consonant sounds (life - twice - close), which is bound up by less important but equally euphonious words (closed, before); we may especially note the effective use of the double stop before caesura (closed twice), which reinforces, better than the argument itself, the deadly eventuality of those two events. As an alternative for unveil (l.3) the poet suggested the verb disclose, then rejected it; as the former is phonetically connected with remains and immortality, it was a far more relevant choice, especially as the latter would have broken, by phonetic reference, the hermetic magicality of the first line.

To speak of magic in this connection, too, seems sensible enough. If the function of Dickinson's ritualistic poetry was to reinforce a mental pose (p. 99), this very elliptic, repetative kind of verse served to retain it; it was a charm or spell which enabled her mind to concentrate upon reflection and apprehension of itself.[27] It was just as imitation of the reflective, centripetal movement of the mind that parallelism (climatic or antithetic) seems to have been so pleasing to our ageing poet, especially when it tried to embrace, in its euphonic circles, the great dichotomies of her life. Equivocation, in these cases, was no longer a matter of new meaning implied or exposed by means of symbolic imagery but a matter of old mystery circumscribed closer and closer

through the magical practices of sound.

Thus the ideal or imagial material introduced in a poem needed not be new; what counted was its restricted, phonetically suggestive form of a charm. We shall take another example of Dickinson's late magical chants, one which could be called the very last of her nuptial poems:

> I have no Life but this -
> To lead it here -
> Nor any Death - but lest
> Dispelled from there -
>
> Nor tie to Earths to come -
> Nor Action new -
> Except through this extent -
> The Realm of you.
> (1398, c.1877)

The phonetic links which the poet provides for her two most important words Life and Death are ingenious: lead (whose spelling suggests a "vowel-rhyme" for the latter) embodies the initial consonants of both, while lest, retaining l, also simulates th-sound by its stopped sibilant. Earths in the second stanza (l.5) phonetically refers back to Death (although all ties are denied), and the last two lines yield the following pattern of euphonious words to fling forth the three most central of them:

> except - through (extent)
> (the realm of) you

Are we, then, to call practices of euphony of the above kind sound-metaphors or not? As they are not present only to reinforce meaning but seem to become, in extreme cases, the chief means of suggesting it, it might be advisable to make here the same distinction as we have made above between Dickinson's "natural" and "magical" metaphors proper. "Natural" sound-metaphors would be those which tend, through onomatopoeia,

synaesthetic associations etc., to create a special, unified atmosphere for a thing to be presented, while the function of "magical" sound-metaphors is altogether non-atmospheric, non-imitative, the sound resemblance of words in the latter case being only to each other, to nothing outside their own magic circle.

Dickinson had, it is true, an innate ability to use sounds descriptively if she chose to. If we turn back to the pages (50-51) where we gave examples of her skill to "paint in words" the visual scenes she so greatly admired, we shall note that the poems are also paintings in <u>sounds</u>: to describe her dazzled impressions of sunlight, the young poet sends forth real fireworks of "bright" dentals and palatals accompanied by "quick" and "clear" front vowels.[28] Of her skill to choose just the right words to describe an acoustic impression we can offer the following, somewhat later examples:

It makes no difference abroad -
The Seasons - fit - the same -
The Mornings blossom into Noons -
And split their Pods of Flame -

Wild flowers - kindle in the Woods -
The Brooks slam - all the Day -
No Black bird bates his Banjo -
For passing Calvary -
(620, c.1862)

Of Being is a Bird
The likest to the Down
An Easy Breeze do put afloat
The General Heavens - upon -

It soars - and shifts - and whirls -
And measures with the Clouds
In easy - even - dazzling pace -
No different the Birds -

Except a Wake of Music
Accompany their feet -
As did the Down emit a Tune -
For Extasy of it
(653, c.1862)

To my quick ear the Leaves conferred -
The Bushes - they were Bells -
I could not find a Privacy
From Nature's sentinels -

In Cave if I presumed to hide
The Walls - begun to tell -
Creation seemed a mighty Crack -
To make me visible -
(891, c.1864)

Of silken Speech and Specious Shoe
A Traitor is the Bee
His service to the newest Grace
Present continually

His Suit a chance
His Troth a Term
Protracted as the Breeze
Continual Ban propoundeth He
Continual Divorce
(896, c.1864)

We observe the effective use of explosives in the first stanza of no.620 (ll.3-4) to describe the blazing glare of the morning sun, the ingenious vowel gradations after the initial labial to imitate the mewing sound of the banjo in the second (l.7), as well as the clever simulation of capricious movement in no.653 through two series of descriptive words (soars - shifts - whirls; easy - even - dazzling) whose semantic meaning and sound quality are admirably made to co-operate. In the last mentioned poem (l.11) we also note Dickinson's clever punning with "cognates": within the consonant frame d(t)-n the broad diphtong of Down as if melts (via the front vowels of "emit") into the narrow u-sound of Tune (already anticipated in Music above).

In no.896 the humming of a bee is dexterously simulated not only through sibilants (cf. the first lines of each stanza) but also through rolled and unrolled r-sounds (Traitor, Troth, Term, Protracted, propoundeth, etc.), yet even a finer example of symbolic sound effects is provided by no.891. The first line introduces the sound itself, the high, crisp rustle of

leaves, the next echoes it back, huskier, while Privacy, sentinels (ll.3-4) prolong the original vowel note, as if carrying it after the poet's retreating ears. Cave (l.5), again, gives us a spacious, somewhat hoarse diphtong sound, which is made to ring by the clear labials of the next line (Walls, tell), till Creation, with all its sound similarity to Crack (a sound-metaphor in itself), breaks these protecting walls and again exposes "me" to the original sounds of the Leaves in visible.

It is, of course, dangerous to presume that all the metaphoric sound effects discussed above were the poet's conscious choices; yet one cannot help observing that the older she grew, the more particular she became not only about the semantic but also about the phonetic quality of the words she used. Words (as we shall have opportunity to remark in another context, too) became for her almost autonomous entities, each with its own metaphoric or symbolic characteristics (sound quality being one), and in this sense the making of poems was, for the elderly poet, an experience altogether different from what it had been for the young. No longer merely looking for personal symbology through which to express her most fundamental experience of life (her point of reference, her poetic "role", having long been established), she was now mainly interested in re-pattern/n/ing the symbolic patterns she had discovered; in finding a supraindividual meaning behind the individual meaning which had once, so violently, imposed itself upon her inner dynamics.

In fact, all Dickinson's later poems cited above (pp.166-167) are "re-patterings", removals of old imagial or ideal

motifs into briefer and briefer quatrain structures with closer and closer woven phonetic textures.[29] Viewed, now, as if from afar, wrapped up in the protective form of a magic spell, the once so painful things have become soothing, or only slightly ironic, and the beautiful pattern they make on paper and for ear seems to prove their inevitable and beneficient fatality: the presence of a mysterious plan in everything. One may, therefore, suspect the spontaneity of even the "natural" sound-metaphors in Dickinson's late poetry. As we have remarked above, her later "objectivity" in natural description was "simply a method of manipulating the phenomenal world through its very physicality"(p.122), and the phonetic patterning of phenomenal representation was clearly part of this manipulation, whose end was to discover for things of nature "their essential structure or 'plan'"(p.117).

Tight juxtapositional structures seconded by equally tight phonetic patterning helped Dickinson sometimes arrive at such a synthetic view of some aspect of her life as seemed almost definitive. By this we do not mean, of course, a state of mind which considers everything solved; the absoluteness of the statement was, as said, rather that of a mystery circumscribed by effective formal patterning:

> He was my host - he was my guest,
> I never to this day
> If I invited him could tell,
> Or he invited me.
>
> So infinite our intercourse
> So intimate, indeed,
> Analysis as capsule seemed
> To keeper of the seed.
>
> (1721, undatable)

A poem like the one above has a beauty of a mathematical formula or a mandala, reflection upon whose form is as fasci-

nating as analysis of its "message" is fruitless. Parallelism is again used to build a complete circle, for all seeming antithetis is evoked only to show the sameness of this all. Especially notable is the charm-like punning with words with the prefix in-; by this trick even infinite is made to converge toward the centre of this self-sufficient poem. As equivocation is purely formal, based on repetative juxtaposition of certain words and on sound suggestion, the poem no longer metaphorically refers to anything particular outside itself; it is an abstracted pattern, a "capsule" indeed, to generalize and perpetuate what was once only a private experience.

IV

As Paul Fussel observes,

> the shorter the poem, the more perfect we expect to be its accomodation of form to its other elements. [30]

The observation might well have been Dickinson's, who all her life endeavoured to accomodate her fundamental visions to the barest of form to show their fundamentality. Frequently, not content with the form a poetic motif took in its first treatment, she would remould it anew, often several times, to find it a more relevant - and usually shorter - form which would reveal its symbolic or existential "meaning" at its purest.

That the aspiration toward more and more concise rhetoric and form was not a matter of age and diminishing vitality but of a developing poetic dialectic is proved by our tables (Appendix 2), which show that shorter stanza

combinations were always more favoured by her than longer ones. While it is true that during the "flood" years 1861-62, when her emotional life was in ferment, longer poems were, on the average, more favoured than shorter, and that the single quatrain gained prominency toward the end of her life when her strength was (also physically) failing, the over-all frequency (with a total well over 60%) throughout the years of the three shortest quatrain combinations proves that she felt them the most economical in her striving for poetic abstraction. The poet clearly felt that within the restricted line space of, let's say, the double or triple quatrain a dialectical coherence could be created which a greater length would destroy; indicative of this is the way in which she used both as gauge of the transpositions she made, especially in her later verse, of her earlier poetic motifs into more and more abstractive spheres of metaphorizing.

It is true that the formal concision of poetic expression was sometimes executed simply by leaving out a stanza or two (a practice occasionally engaged in by her editors, too); the poet had been as if producing more imagial or other rhetoric material than was strictly needed for economical development of the poetic idea and then discarded what she felt superfluous. Sometimes this kind of plastic surgery was applied to an earlier draft to make it presentable at a needy moment (e.g. no.1067, spring 1866, which derives from a semifinal draft from 1862); more often the operation seems to have been done quite soon after the first conception of the poem. Of the latter case we can sample the following two variants, the first

of which is a semifinal copy, the second a redaction of it from the same year (1866):

I
The Crickets sang
And set the Sun
And Workmen finished one by one
Their Seams the Day upon -

The Bee had perished from the Scene
And distant as an Order done
And douptful as Report upon
The Multitudes of Noon -

The low Grass loaded with the Dew
The Twilight leaned as Strangers do
With Hat in Hand, polite and new
To stay as if, or go -

A Vastness, as a Neighbor, came -
A Wisdom, without Face or Name -
A Peace, as Hemispheres at Home
And so, the Night became.

II
The Crickets sang
And set the Sun
And Workmen finished, one by one
Their Seam the Day upon.

The low Grass loaded with the Dew,
The Twilight stood as Strangers do -
With Hat in Hand, polite and new
To stay as if, or go.

A Vastness, as a Neighbor, came -
A Wisdom without Face or Name -
A Peace, as Hemispheres at Home -
And so, the Night became.
(1104)

In his note to the poem Johnson suggests that the poet discarded the original second stanza "perhaps conscious of its vagueness";[31] to us it seems not so vague as digressive from the general dialectical course of the poem. As it is the present scene and its transformations that are being observed, the bee - already "perished" - is entirely superfluous; perhaps the poet also recognized (as we feel now) that to describe change the most economical stanza pattern is the triple quatrain, with its clear division of

opening, developing and closing parts (the bipartite structure, again, being the thing for comparison or juxtaposition).

Another example of Dickinson's use of the tripartite structure to abstract change in phenomenal observation would be the following two poems which, without being variants, clearly describe the same diurnal phenomenon, the morning song of birds, with three years' lapse between their composition:

The Birds begun at Four o'clock -
Their period for Dawn -
A Music numerous as space -
But neighboring as Noon -

I could not count their Force -
Their Voices did expend
As Brook by Brook bestows itself
To multiply the the Pond.

Their Witnesses were not -
Except occasional man -
In homely industry arrayed -
To overtake the Morn -

Nor was it for applause -
That I could ascertain -
But independant Extasy
Of Deity and Men -

By Six, the Flood had done -
No Tumult there had been
Of Dressing, or Departure -
And yet the Band was gone -

The Sun engrossed the East -
The Day controlled the World -
The Miracle that introduced
Forgotten, as fulfilled.
(783, c.1863)

At Half past Three, a single Bird
Unto a silent Sky
Propounded but a single term
Of cautious melody

At Half past Four, Experiment
Had subjugated test
And lo, Her silver Principle
Supplanted all the rest.

At Half past Seven, Element
Nor Implement, be seen, -
And Place was where the Presence was
Circumference between.
(1084, c.1866)

Although it is improbable that the poet should, before composing her new poem, have re-read her earlier one about the appearing, swelling, vanishing "miracle" of bird voices at dawn, we may well suppose that once the Gestaltung of a similar situation had taken place, she would pattern the new poem not only similarly but also differently, more selectively and abstractingly than the earlier one. We note that although both poems proceed much in the same way, from the initial impression to the eventual, reverberating impact of the phenomenon on the mind of the observer, the process in the later composition is far more assured, determined, concentrated. While the earlier poem digresses, or rather halts for two stanzas to dwell on the gratuitousness of the miracle, in the later the poet has discarded all but the essential information to render the changing scene: three carefully balanced stanzas, each swung boldly forward in time by magically suggestive reference to hour, use the image of a single bird as focus of the proceeding happening.

As important as the radically elliptic patterning of description is the quality of metaphors used. In no. 783 they are simple enough (except for a couple of diaphors in the first stanza and certain unusual verbs in the last), in no. 1084 far more difficult to grasp. If we, however, omit the third and the fourth stanza of no.783, we note that the metaphors in the second, fifth, and the sixth correspond quite closely with those in the second and third stanza of no.1084. We shall make a nearer inspection of each to find out the

difference in their quality.

While the first stanzas of each poem are independent compositions, the second stanzas, as said, clearly correspond: both create the image of a steadily increasing flow of sound. The central metaphors, "As Brook by Brook bestows itself / To multiply the Pond" and "Her silver Principle/ Supplanted all the rest" work, however, on altogether different levels. Where the former just describes, renders the impression of swelling sound in terms of visual image, the latter translates it into the language of scientific (or semi-scientific) generalities without, however, any damage to the phenomenal Gestalt. Always fond of specialized, abstractive jargon, the Dickinson of the late sixties and the seventies showed particular relish for metaphorizing not only her divinations of the psychic and metaphysical laws governing human life but also her perceptions and observations of most concrete phenomenality with highly abstractive terminology.[32] We must not forget though, that - as the last technical device of her progress to "metaphysical universality"(cf. pp.113-115 above) - every abstraction introduced in place of "concrete" thing or relation was still a metaphor, based on the poet's sense of the intrinsic intention of the abstract word and effected for ellipsis, both of form and metaphoric significance; instead of magical metaphors or diaphors we could also speak here of elliptic metaphors, whose function is radical concision of poetic rhetoric and dialectics.

This function is actually parallel with that of the charm-like phonetic re-patternings of poetic material discussed above: to imply, in so few words as possible, as much as

possible; to find words with so general connotations as to render "concrete" (visual, acoustic, etc.) imagery unnecessary and, at the same time, to refer the phenomenal or existential situation to some larger context which would give it almost universal metaphysic significance. What we have said above (p.168) of the metaphoric and symbolic emancipation of words in Dickinson's late poetry shall be repeated here: even apart from any "concrete" poetic context they will retain, for her, certain permanent characteristics which make them available as metaphoric 'vehicles'.[33]

Compared with the last stanza of no.1084, stanzas five and six of no.783 offer further examples of the difference between the evocatively magical and elliptical metaphorizing. Perhaps the most admirable of the elliptic metaphors is the juxtaposition of the past fullness and present void of the acoustic scene by means of single abstract nouns:"And Place was where the Presence was" (note the suggestive repetition of "was") offers, in one line, the same poetic information for which descriptive metaphors in no.783 need a whole stanza (5). It is preceded by a similar juxtapositional copulation of abstracts, "Element" - "Implement", conjuring up the same sense of active presence now lost as "the Flood" and "the Band" create between them in no.783 (stanza 5). As to "Circumference", it is, in its context, a metaphor by itself; the single-word equivalent of the last two lines of no.783, the memory of the sacramental rite of the morning ("the Miracle ... as fulfilled") reverberating in the poet's mind in the form of this numinous word.

It is true that unless we have some idea of the exact connotation which a word (let's say, "circumference" above) had for Dickinson, it is difficult, sometimes even impossible, to understand her elliptic metaphors, They may have the air (or sound) of implying something very profound and fundamental, but, in lack of all contextual information, we cannot know what. The purpose of the poet, in developing this type of metaphorizing, was evidently to economize, to use as few mirrors as possible to reflect forth her "slant" truth (p.115), but instead of making the reflection any more direct, her exploitation of highly generalized terms with very personal connotation as metaphoric material only mystifies the reader. In the above example (no.1084) abstraction, formal and metaphoric, is admirably executed to press home especially the numinous aspects of the birds' morning service, but as often as not Dickinson's elliptic metaphors drop flat:

> Hope is a strange invention -
> A Patent of the Heart -
> In unremitting action
> Yet never wearing out -
>
> Of this electric Adjunct
> Not anything is known
> But it's unique momentum
> Embellish all we own -
> (1392, c.1877)
>
> Endanger it, and the Demand
> Of tickets for a sigh
> Amazes the Humility
> Of Credibility -
>
> Recover it to Nature
> And that dejected Fleet
> Find Consternation's Carnival
> Divested of it's Meat
> (1658, undatable)

The poetic idea, even its dialectical evolvement, in no. 1392 is the same as of no.254 (cf.pp. 31-34): we might even

call it a translation of the latter into the jargon of mechanics. No new metaphoric dimension, though, is gained by the translation, one - most important - altogether lost: "the admirable absurdness" of hope, so movingly conveyed by the bird image of no.254. Dickinson's greatest difficulty with elliptic metaphor is that it easily slips out of hand and turns, as happens in no.1658, into rumination upon words themselves, into definitions for definition's sake; then, at best, (as a critic puts it)"we can feel the sentiment but we have lost the meaning".[34]

At times, however, elliptic metaphor develops the poetic rhetoric into really new dimensions and shows phenomena in an entirely new light, often astonishingly humorous and irrealistic; then, as the last trick of our magician, it is no less admirable than any of the previous ones:

A Spider sewed at Night
Without a Light
Upon an Arc of White.

If Ruff it was of Dame
Or Shroud of Gnome
Himself himself inform.

Of Immortality
His Strategy
Was Physiognomy.
(1138, c.1869)

A Route of Evanescence
With a revolving Wheel -
A Resonance of Emerald -
A Rush of Cochineal -
And every Blossom and the Bush
Adjusts it's tumbled Head -
The mail from Tunis, probably,
An easy Morning's Ride -
(1463, c. 1879)

Glass was the Street - in tinsel Peril
Tree and Traveller stood -
Filled was the Air with merry venture
Hearty with Boys the Road -

Shot the lithe Sleds like shod vibrations
Emphasized and gone
It is the Past's supreme italic
Makes the Present mean -
(1498, c.1880)

In no.1138, which we may well consider a later treatment of the same poetic motif as in no.605 (p.113),[35] we can see the process of poetic abstraction carried much further than six years earlier, to the point where hardly any features of the natural context survive.[36] Discussing above (pp.113-116) Dickinson's new, "objective" approach to phenomenality we especially noted the emancipation of detail in her natural description; a feature which we considered one of the signs of her adoption of magical ways of metaphorizing. As her "objective" phenomenal magic gradually turned into elliptic, abstractive magic, the metaphoric details of a created Gestalt gained a new function. Although they certainly remained emancipated, each perhaps referring to a different sphere of experience, they were, by doing so, generalizing the poetic situation as far as possible, making it an almost universally applicable principle. This kind of practice resulted, of course, in ambiguity of meaning, of which the third stanza of no.1138 is a notable example. Being, technically, a translation of the particular into the terms of the general, the last stanza makes the poem turn on an axis of irony: the optimistic absurdity of insect toil (already insinuated by no.605) is illustrated by utmost human heroism, the hope of immortality, which is again, referred to absurdity by it.

Ambiguous universality can be effected through intellectually synthetizing abstracts; it can also be sought for in the other extreme of generality: in the emotive synthesis of

synaesthetic metaphor.[37] In no.1463, an elliptic re-treatment of no.500 (p.144), we discover both types, with a good degree of phonetic patterning to reinforce the abstraction.

Above (pp.144-145)we discussed at length the admirable opening diaphor of no.500; here the same, whole-stanza metaphor is clipped down to two lines ("evanescence" alone embodying both the graceful, evasive movement and the poet's sad apprehension of its disappearence). The impression of the bubbling sound, again, is rendered by synaesthetic colour metaphors; no doubt "emerald" and "cochineal" also try to suggest the colour of the foliage, but in the first place they are not descriptions but abstractions, attempts to qualify sound as generally as possible.

Of course these are not the first or the only of Dickinson's synaesthetic metaphors. If we turn, for instance, to pages 135-137, we shall find in the poems sampled there dozens of metaphors in which the visual, acoustic and kinetic elements of language commingle to render the poet's abstract, uncanny sensation of deadly horror, and even earlier, in no.258 ("There's a certain Slant of light", c. 1861), she describes the visual scene in metaphors from the auditory and tactual spheres of experience to give us the exact quality of her supernatural awe. One could almost say that synaesthetic metaphorizing was Dickinson's very first attempt at radical abstraction of her diction, and it seems that even in her later poetry the semantic connotations of words were, for her, largely decided by their synaesthetic implications (the phonetic qualities of words like "emerald",

"cochineal" evidently also playing an important role in this decision). As to synthetic combinations like "her silver Principle"(1084), "tinsel peril" or "shod vibrations" (1498), they are hardly less ambiguous than her usage of words like "circumference","immortality" or "evanescence"; they would seem even slightly ridiculous in their "concrete" contexts unless we suspected that the poet is trying to catch, through them, the indelible impress temporal things sometimes leave on the mind; her abstract nouns and concrete adjectives together call forth our metaphysical sense of baffled ignorance at the evanescent forms of phenomenality.

We must not miss, either, Dickinson's euphonic play with sound and meaning in lines like "Shot the lithe Sleds like shod vibrations", in which the phonetic patterning(lithe - like; shot - shod) greatly helps abstract the rapid, capricious movement. Perhaps the most interesting of Dickinson's late poems are, however, the ones in which the centrifugal force of her elliptic, sweepingly universalizing metaphors is balanced by the centripetal influence of careful sound harmony. In these cases her suggestion of metaphysical meaning is most effective and the ambiguity of her equivocation least objectionable; if, indeed, "metaphysical poetry may be conceived as the produce of the tension between an imaginative centrifugal force and an integrative centripetal force",[38] the old Dickinson, at her best, attains to the ideal:

> Bees are Black, with Gilt Surcingles -
> Bucaneers of Buzz -
> Ride abroad in ostentation
> And subsist on Fuzz -
>
> Fuzz ordained - not Fuzz contingent -
> Marrows of the Hill -
> Jugs a Universe's Fracture
> Could not jar or spill -
> (1405, May 1877)

V

In the preceding discussion many important aspects of Emily Dickinson's late style (e.g. her fondness of punning) have been only touched upon or some, such as her peculiar, elliptic syntax or her elliptic use of the subjunctive, have been entirely omitted. As syntactic idiosyncracies, for instance, seem to be characteristic of her style from the beginning of her career, it would probably have proved too difficult, if not altogether unremunerative, to start examining their functions and development here. (Syntactic ellipsis obviously stands in more or less direct relation to her practices of antithesis and other parallel structures, and it might be interesting to study, on some other occasion, each as dependent of the other.[39])

Instead, we have concentrated upon two features only of her late style (features which seem more directly to bear on the development of her poetic dialectics), namely, on the role of phonetic patterning in her late verse and on her "elliptic" metaphor, both of which seem natural evolvements of her earlier tendencies. It seems to us that, in general, the worth of Dickinson's very late poetry has been underrated (if anybody ever cared to pay attention to it at all),and so we have tried, following as we have been here her general development over years in dealing with a poetic argument, to understand this verse, too; see what she wanted to achieve with it.

Of course there is the question of symbological

"petrifaction" , Dickinson's increasing dependence on private connotation in her late, violently elliptic metaphorizing (to this question we hope still to return), but, as we said above, at her very best the old Dickinson could be not only "difficult" but also genuinely profound and (not unfrequently) astonishingly playful. In all their nursery rhyme simplicity of form and their punning "superficiality" many late poems embody deep metaphysical understanding of nature and human life, and it would not be a bad simile, we think, to compare hers to the capricious, calligraphic hand of the old masters of Chinese art.

These masters used to paint the same views over and over again, and to represent each feature of the landscape - mountain, grass, foliage - they had a succinct, signal manner (which was not, of course, the best manner to represent it naturally but symbolically, or perhaps we should say, metaphysically), and in this adherence to a manner our poet would resemble them.

Dickinson's late manner was the concisest of quatrain form; it was an antithetic use of parallelism; frequently it was the suggestive, euphonic circle of a spell. What seems lost to this manner, is the dynamic presence of immediate inspiration; what is gained by it, is distance: dedication to the distinct contour.

N O T E S

N O T E S

Introduction

1. Charles R. Anderson, Emily Dickinson's Poetry: Stairway of Surprise, Preface, pp.x-xi.

2. A recent work, R.W. Franklin's The Editing of Emily Dickinson (University of Wisconsin Press, 1967) is reported to dispute the Johnson chronology in several respects. In lack, so far, of a copy of this study, we shall have to content ourselves with a quotation from The Times Literary Supplement, whose reviewer (Sept.21, 1967) comments on it as follows:

> Professor Franklin has minutely examined Emily Dickinson's manuscripts at Harvard and Amherst College and he is able to describe convincingly fpr the first time what happened to them, from the time that they came into Mrs. Todd's hands. He demonstrates by means of tables and illustrations, as well as by deduction, how the text in which we read the poet came into being and he warns us, in effect, against what we may have believed to have been unassailably established.

The present study has not, as the reader will easily notice, relied too much on the Johnson arrangement - within a year only - of the Dickinson texts but bases its arguments on the imagial and symbolic, rather than temporal, proximity of the poems. The latter would, in fact, have been impossible, the year 1862, for instance, alone accomodating as many as 366 poems in the Johnson edition.

3. The stylistic development of Dickinson's poetry has always proved a hard bite for her critics. As David T. Porter - echoing our ideas - notes (The Art of Emily Dickinson's Early Poetry, Preface, p.ix), most of them

> are more concerned with her themes than with her artistic techniques. ... [Thus] the developmental course of her poetic career remains uncharted.

Porter also gives an imposing summary (which also includes our example, Professor Anderson) of the statements of all earlier critics concerning the futility of developmental

approach to her work (pp.1-2), before starting on his chosen course of study, which, although initially based on similar notions, is radically different from ours. Besides, Mr. Porter deals with Dickinson's early poetry only, without endeavouring to "chart" her later trends of development.

4. Cf. David T. Porter, op.cit., p.xi:

I have avoided biographical interpretation of the poems, not because that approach is wholly fruitless, but because it is excessively speculative.

Although we have not avoided "biographical interpretation" (which even of the most orthodox New Critics do, in the strict sense of the word?), we trust that the reader will soon notice what we are interested in: not in the circumstances in which the poems were once born but in the emerging pattern of the poet's experience of life, going far beyond the circumstances and finding in them, so to say, only an affirmation, not an aboriginal explanation of itself. If this be speculation, it is of another kind than biographical; an endeavour to see the poet's line of development as one of inner necessity.

5. Anderson, op.cit., p.viii:

The whole duty of the critic will be to establish the canon of her highest achievement, to present the selected poems in an order that will make them most meaningful, and then to lead the reader as far into them as he can.

This is a typical project of a typical New Critic, but - in our view - who on earth is an individual scholar to impose his tastes and preferences upon the reading public in general? And, besides, can a critical work dealing with a poet's developing techniques dispense with his failures, which are often the very prerequisites of successes? Thus selectivity in our sampling of Dickinson's poems here has been in the direction of her progress as an artist (as we see it), not in that of our own aesthetic judgement.

6. Dickinson herself used the word e.g. in a letter to T.W. Higginson (LII 268; see our discussion p.10); the closest definition of her usage she gave, however, in the following poem:

Circumference thou Bride of Awe
Possessing thou shalt be
Possessed by every hallowed Knight
That dares to covet thee (1620)

The poem was sent (1884) in a letter to another artist, the sculptor Daniel Chester French (LIII 898), and the usage is unmistakable: artistic representation of things is always an act of reaching for divine truth; an awesome and demanding skill but the only one worth coveting. Dickinson ended her letter proper with the following exhortative wish:"God keep you fundamental!"

Chapter 1:

1. Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, esp. Ch.II, pp.19-21.

2. Philip Wheelwright, for instance, speaks of "presence" when he refers to the metaphysical sense of immanent numinosity behind a poet's inspiration. See Metaphor and Reality, Ch.8 ("The Sense of Reality"), esp. pp. 154-159.

3. Otto, op.cit., p.42.

4. Cf. e.g. Ernst Cssirer, Language and Myth, Ch.3 ("Language and Conception"), esp. pp.32-38.

5. For her early religious doubts and scruples, see, for instance, Thomas H. Johnson, Emily Dickinson, pp.12-15, or G.F. Whicher, This Was a Poet, Ch.IV, p.58 ff. Also cf. her letters to Abiah Root, LI 23, LI 36.

6. Cf. Johnson, op.cit., pp.70-72; The Poems of Emily Dickinson, Intr. pp.xix-xx.

7. Millicent Todd Bingham, Emily Dickinson's Home, pp.39-40.

8. See e.g. Johnson, Emily Dickinson, p.15:

> Her Holyoke experience gave her a sense of inadequacy that she never fully overcame. Often in the years that follow she playfully but self-consciously refers to her "lost" condition.

9. Todd Bingham, op.cit., p.39,

10 -11. C.G. Jung, Psychology and Religion, pp.6-7.

Few critics have, curiously enough, been able to see the

devotional, ritualistic character of Dickinson's poetry, which is, no doubt, also reflected in her choice of the current (Wattsian) hymnal metre for her usual rhythmic pattern; however, see Anderson, op.cit., pp.27-28. For a consideration of her probable study of hymnology, see Capps, Emily Dickinson's Reading, pp. 73-75, or Johnson, Emily Dickinson, pp.84-87.

12, Otto, op.cit., p.47.

13. Johnson, op.cit., pp.134-135.

14. Johnson, The Poems, Intr. p.xxxiii.

15. Ibid., p.xxxiv.

16. In Dickinson's lifetime a few of her poems (7 in all; for date and occasion, see The Poems III, Appendix 9, p. 1207) appeared in print surreptitiously edited, and Johnson has, for instance, a pitiful story to tell about the complicated editorial history of no.67 ("Success is counted sweetest"; Poems, Intr. pp.xxx-xxxiii). He has also provided no. 986 with a note on the correspondence between Dickinson and T.W. Higginson ensuing the poem's clandestine appearance in Springfield Daily Republican (1866); in the letter quoted (also see LII 316) the poet strongly expresses the disgust she feels at the editors'ruthless alterations of her original texts.

17. Emerson: A Modern Anthology, Intr. p.10.

18. On this question, the reader is referred e.g. to Whicher, (op.cit.), who discusses it in his chapter XI ("Emerson"), p. 189 ff. Also see Gelpi, Emily Dickinson, p.68 ff., p.104 ff., p.141 ff., p.153 ff., or Capps, op.cit., pp.113-119.

19. A playful reference to Wittgenstein; cf. Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, p.186 (6.5):

> Zu einer Antwort, die man nicht aussprechen kann, kann man auch die Frage nicht aussprechen.
> Das Rätsel gibt es nicht.
> Wenn sich eine Frage überhaupt stellen lässt, so kann sie auch beantwortet werden.

20. Robert E. Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature, p.54.

21. Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays, pp.20-21.

22. Joseph E. Duncan, The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry, p.76.

23 -24. Emerson, Nature, IV.Language; in A Modern Anthology, pp. 107-108.

25. Joseph E. Duncan, op.cit., p.13.

26. Ibid., pp.13-14.

27. Also cf. R.P. Blackmur, Language as a Gesture, p.34:

> As the Massachusetts theocracy failed, became, say, more humane and individualized, its profoundly dramatic nature - all that it had left - became sharper and plainer, until in the imagination of Hawthorne and Melville and Emily Dickinson it took in, or implied, pretty near the whole of human experience. Then it died. It fed the imagination; then it died; and at the same time that particular form of the New England imagination reached its small surfeit and died too.

28. Cf. Spiller, op.cit., p.132:

> Only the most complex art could be made to include the depths and variety of those things for which she demanded expression. ... Emily Dickinson sought to reconcile the finite to the infinite without relinquishing the integrity of the human soul or the validity of physical nature. In the idiom of New England theology that she had renounced, she caught and forced into expression the scepticism and doubts of the age of science which was to come.

29. By Joseph E. Duncan, in his The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry, pp.77-88.

Chapter 2:

1. Cleanth Brooks, The Well Wrought Urn, p.256.

2. For her reading, see Whicher, op.cit., Ch.XII ("Books and Reading"), p.206 ff. The most comprehensive study of the subject so far is Emily Dickinson's Reading 1836-1886, by Jack L. Capps, who gives, besides a comparative textual research of her texts for possible sources, also "An Annotated Bibliography of Emily Dickinson's Reading" based both on this research and all historical and personal information available of the poet.

3. William Howard,"Emily Dickinson's Poetic Vocabulary", PMLA, Vol.LXXII, pp.225-248.

4. C. Brooke-Rose, A Grammar of Metaphor, p.67.

5. Ibid., p.23, also cf. p.17:

In metaphor, it is possible to equate one whole phrase with another, or with a single noun, or to point back to a whole action-complex and summarise it with one metaphoric noun. ... In my study, any identification of one thing with another, any replacement of the more usual word or phrase by another, is a metaphor.

6. As to the role of metaphor in the development of discursive language toward denotative generality, see e.g. Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key, p.123 ff.

7. Wheelwright, op.cit., p.93. Also cf. Wellek & Warren, Theory of Literature, p.189:

Is there any important sense in which 'symbol' differs from 'image' and 'metaphor'? Primarily, we think, in the recurrence and persistance of the 'symbol'. An 'image' may be evoked once as a metaphor, but if it persistantly recurs, both as presentation and representation, it becomes a symbol, may even become part of a symbolic (mythic) system.

8. Johnson, The Poems I; note to no.249, p.180.

9. The importance of this symbolic interpretation of the imagial motif is shown in a somewhat later version of it (no.368), which begins as an almost regular sonnet (à la Barret Browning) but soon breaks into a violent dachtylic movement, typical of Dickinson at the time:

Our's be the tossing - wild though the sea
Rather than mooring - unknown by thee.

10. Joseph E. Duncan, op.cit., pp.78-79.

11. Wheelwright, op.cit., p.96.

12. For the term, see Anderson, op.cit., Ch.2 ("Words"), esp. pp.36-37. Besides Dickinson's Biblical phraseology, the author discusses, in a larger perspective, the general development of her poetic vocabulary.

13. For the term, see Wheelwright, op.cit., p.99 ff.

14. Todd Bingham, op.cit., p.32.

15. Douglas Duncan, op.cit., pp.43-44.

16. T.S. Eliot, Selected Prose, p.116 ff.

17. Also cf. Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form, p.228 ff.

If direct statements occur in a good poem, their directness is a means of creating a virtual experience, a non-discursive form expressing a special sort of emotion or sensibility.

18. Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays, pp.22, 25, respectively.

19-20. Emerson, Nature, IV.Language; A Modern Anthology, pp. 109, 106, 108, respectively.

21. Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, pp. 89-90.

Chapter 3:

1. Cf. Emerson on nature (sentiment seems to be echoed in many of Dickinson's early glorifications of natural beauty):

But in other hours, nature satisfies by its loveliness, and without any mixture of corporeal benefit. I see the spectacle of morning from the hilltop over against my house, from daybreak to sunrise, with emotions which an angel might share. The long slender bars of cloud float like fishes in the sea of crimson light. From the earth, as a shore, I look out into the silent sea. I seem to partake its rapid transformations; the active enchantment reaches my dust, and I dilate and conspire with the morning wind. How does nature deify us with a few and cheap elements!" (Nature, III. Beauty; Mod. Anthology, pp.26-27.)

For a similar comparison, see Capps, op.cit., pp.116-117.

2. For other poems contrasting natural delight and her present condition, see e.g. nos. 364, 403, 620, 743 in Johnson.

3. As to further information on the "affair", see e.g. Johnson, Emily Dickinson, p.79 ff. (Letters, Intr. p.xxii); Whicher, op.cit., p.104 ff.

4. Ecstasy given her by love and permeating all her experience is described, for instance, in nos. 195, 211 (see p.89), 214; esp. the last mentioned poem ("I taste a liquor never brewed-") seems beautifully to reflect her sentiment of "live as the fulfilment of nature".

5. Cf. nos. 125, 167 in Johnson.

6. As we shall have ample opportunity to show, Dickinson, while abandoning Puritan theology as a doctrine and belief, retained its vocabulary and symbols to express her deepest experience of life as well as its formulas of thought as psychological principles. Thus she perpetuated, in a new age, the spiritual heritage of her ancestors, whereas Transcendentalism gave it up, with fatal results to American culture and society. In their The Puritan Heritage: America's Roots in the Bible (p.193), Joseph Gaer and Ben Siegel sum up the criticism levelled against Transcendentalism as follows:

> Some modern commentators (among others, Allen Tate and Robert Penn Warren) view Emerson as the prime source of the secularism that dominated post-Civil War New England. Randall Stewart has declared Emerson to be "the arch-heretic of American literature, and Emersonism the greatest heresy. By no dint of sophistry can he be brought within the Christian fold. His doctrine is radically anti-Christian, and has done more than any other doctrine to undermine Christian belief in America." For many moderns, then, Emerson symbolizes the nineteenth century's intellectual shift from a God-centered to man-centered America.

Also see Gelpi, op.cit., p.146 ff., for a consideration of "specific matters of approach and technique", in regard of which, according to Gelpi, Dickinson belongs entirely to another tradition of American poets than Emerson.

7. Although Dickinson speaks of other artists, she does include herself in their number; see e.g. no.544 (c.1862):

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

8. Whicher, op.cit., p.101.

9. Ibid., pp.11-12.

10. Dickinson's"white election" can be seen as a challenge to heaven,"which alone could decide"; on the other hand it can be interpreted as a case of Calvinistic "perseverance", as her devout decision to perpetuate the effects of grace in her life. Probably she was, unconsciously, prompted by both of these motives, united in her rebellious, pre-existentialist wish to choose her own prison.

11. Cf. e.g. no.62 (c.1859):

"Sown in dishonor"!
Ah! Indeed!
May this "dishonor" be?
If I were half so fine myself
I'd notice nobody!

"Sown in corruption"!
Not so fast!
Apostle is askew!
Corinthians 1.15. narrates
A Circumstance or two!

12. Referring to Dickinson's poem beginning "There came a day at Summer's full" (no.322; two stanzas quoted p.37) Whicher argues (op.cit., p.105):

> There is much to lead us surmise that he paid Emily a second visit at that time (i.e., in the summer 1861). Her letters do not sound as though she had met him only once between 1854 and 1880, but rather as though she were calling bits of conversation from several meetings. ... It is not too much to postulate, therefore, that Wadsworth came again.

"Her letters" are those she wrote to James D. Clerk, a close friend of Wadsworth's, after the latter's death (1882); we must not forget, though, that Emily Dickinson and Charles Wadsworth had corresponded for well over twenty years and that for her, letters were "also her conversation and autobiography"(David J.M. Higgins,"Emily Dickinson's Prose"; Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays, p.177). "Bits of conversation" may well have been bits from his correspondence.

We may note that Emily Dickinson uses the word "grace" in several other poems, too, to describe her elevated feelings at the meeting; see e.g. nos.296, 343, 356, 473, 476, 508, 522, 550, 569, 571.

13. Marghanita Laski, Ecstasy, pp.156-157; next quotation, p.154.

14. William James's famous treatise, The Varieties of Religious Experience (see here Lecture VIII,"The Divided Self, and the Process of its Unification", esp. p.172 ff.) has clearly offered an illustrious example and a source of inspiration for Mrs. Laski's work; definitions in the latter being more specified and concentrated, we have, however, preferred to quote it.

15. Laski, op.cit., p.290.

16. Cf. James, op.cit., pp.180-181.

17. Here we have another "definition", summing up and uniting two earlier motifs: her immediate experience of painful loss (no.327, pp.60-61, "Befor I had my eye put out") and her intuitive acceptance of renunciation as a means to spiritual growth (see pp.43-46, 62-63). We especially note the bold, highly abstractive metaphors with which she is, by now, able to catch the essential core of her dual experience; cf. Blackmur, op.cit., pp.35-38, on the poetically abstractive quality of the poem.

Chapter 4:

1. W.M. Urban, in Language and Reality(p.358) makes a similar difference between "naming" and metaphorizing:

> For the purpose of our study it is necessary to distinguish two forms of this poetic representation. The first of these we shall describe as intuitive, the second as metaphorical (or analogical) representation. The first type is connected with the intrinsic expressiveness of words, and is therefore close to the immediate intuition of Erlebniss already discussed under the head of knowledge by acquaintance. The second type is one which is made possible by the transitive character of linguistic meaning, the transfer of words through metaphor which, as we have seen, is the most fundamental form of word transference.

And again (p.464):

> In a sense metaphor is but an extension of the intuitive character of language, as has been pointed out. Metaphor also has the vis poetica, the power of conjuring up the living reality in the way in which "literal" and abstract propositions have not. ... The vis poetica is the power to make these things "real and alive in language".

2. Cleanth Brooks, The Well Wrought Urn, pp. 204, 207, respectively.

3. In Truth, Myth, and Symbol, pp.133-134.

4 -5. Ibid., p.130.

6. Op.cit., p.122.

7. It might, indeed, be useful to distinguish between private myth, spontaneously born in individual revelation, and the myth codified for the purposes of society. Nowhere is the need for this kind of distinction more obvious than in religion, where myth has, for centuries, been available mainly as dogma. As a rationalized, confessional formula of belief, Christianity only painfully yields spiritual insight on the individual level or helps anyone adjust himself to life in a larger, metaphysical perspective; at times it almost seems as if, as a powerful myth, it were dead but for the occasional - mostly quite unorthodox - insight into its perennial relevance of a homo religiosus, who can illumine it, for a time, for other individuals, too.

8. Final Harvest, Intr. p.xiii.

9. For her other masquearades as Daisy, see e.g. nos.85 (quoted p.68), 93, 124, 137.

10. This is the very wording she used herself in a letter to James D. Clerk (Aug.1882) when she refers to the beginnings of her relationship to Wadsworth:

> In a intimacy of many years with the beloved Clergyman, I have never before spoken with one met one who knew him, and his Life was so shy and his tastes so unknown, that grief for him seems almost unshared.
> He was my Shepherd from "Little Girl"hood and I cannot conjecture a world without him, so noble was he always - so fathomless - so gentle. (LIII 766)

11. From her earliest schoolgirl's infatuations, her experience of love seemed to fall into one pattern, that of continual disappointment and repudiation; whether for Ben Newton, Sue, Kate Anthony or Wadsworth, her love was either discovered too late or remained unrequited, in a way that seemed to seal a fate. For her early friendships and loves, see e.g. Johnson, Emily Dickinson, p.72 ff.; Whicher, This Was a Poet, Ch.V and VI ("An Amethyst Remembrance","Rowing in Eden"), pp.79-112.

12. Cf. e.g. the following extract of the letter (LII 233) also quoted in the text proper:

> I am older - tonight, Master - but the love is the same - so are the moon and the crescent. If it had been God's will

that I might breathe where you breathed - and find the place - myself - at night - if I (can) never forget that I am not with you - and that sorrow and frost are nearer than I - if I wish with a might I cannot repress - that mine were the Queen's place - the love of the Plantagenet is my own apology - To come nearer than presbyteries - and nearer than the new Coat - that the Tailor made - the prank of the Heart at play on the Heart - in holy Holiday - is forbidden me -

13. Douglas Duncan, op.cit., p.87.

14. The archetypes of redeemer and sufferer are in a very complex way united in Dickinson's myth of love; we must not forget, either, that the archetypal father figure was implicitly realized, not so much in her re-established relation to God (through Wadsworth) as in the image of Wadsworth himself, who as a minister and her senior by almost 20 years, could - better than anyone else - answer her demand of a fatherly "preceptor" (also sought for in Higginson). Her father was evidently a major fact of her life, and their relation set, in a sense, the pattern for all her later expectations of a life-long devotion between male and female; such a strong desire for subordination in a highly independent personality as hers is otherwise difficult to explain. For the role of her father in Dickinson's life, see e.g. Whicher, op.cit., p.27 ff. Also cf. Anderson, op.cit., pp.10-11.

15. For other ritualistic (nuptial) verse besides the quoted, see e.g. nos. 195, 199, 246, 275, 336, 356, 366, 388, 400, 463, 470, 493, 506, 537, 549, 580.

16. Douglas Duncan, op.cit., p.16.

17. Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p.93.

18. Jean-Paul Sartre, Baudelaire, pp.25-26.

19. Sartre, following the principles of his existential psychoanalysis, sees poetic (artistic) creation as a mode of projet, and the "roles" created and assumed in art as existential choices prompted by a poet's wish to assert himself in given circumstance As our view, to an extent, seems akin to the Sartrean view of artistic volition, it may be useful to quote from his famous study of Genet, in which Satre sees that the development of the self-martyred writer, even as a person, was, above all, symbo-

logical: he could not grasp a true image of himself until he projected the imagery self into art, into poetic language, which revealed him his most essential "role", that of the author behind all roles.

De quoi parle Genet sinon de Genet lui-même. L'objet que lui reflètent les consciences d'autrui c'est donc Jean Genet. Certes, il était objet depuis longtemps: depuis que les honnêtes gens l'avaient nommé voleur; mais objet immanent, objet de derrière l'âme; il ne parvenait pas à faire coïncider sa conscience et son être objectif et s'épuisait en vains efforts pour faire de cet Ego le but de son activité, bref pour se recréer à ses propres yeux tel que les autres l'avaient fait. A présent il a comprit son erreur: il voulait se rendre tel que les autres le voyaient quand il fallait obliger les autres à le voir tel qu'il veut etre. Il prendra leurs âmes à pleines mains, il pétrira cette pâte blanche et lui donnera la figure qu'il souhaite; le milieu dans lequel l'homme peut et doit devenir ce qu'il est, c'est la conscience des autres. En se faisant exister comme objet pour autrui, Genet se crée dans l'en soi. ... Tenu pour voleur, il voulait le devenir: mais on ne donne pas l'être à ce qui est. Le coup de génie, l'illumination qui découvre l'issue, c'est le choix d'écrire. Il se créera voleur dans un autre domaine et en instaurant d'autres relations avec les honnêtes gens. Il devient celui qui manifeste le vol: réfléchissant sur ses larcins, il les transforme par un perpétuel "passage à la limite" en larcins exemplaires, comme le mathématicien transforme les vagues contours des choses naturelles en fermes traces géométriques. (Saint Genet, p.505.)

20. As a further development of the 351 motif of corporeal self-inspection, we may cite the following poem, in which at least a temporal equilibrium of exultation and despair is established:

I am alive - because
I do nor own a House -
Entitled to myself - precise -
And fitting no one else -

And marked my Girlhood's name -
So Visitors may know
Which door is mine - and not mistake -
And try another Key -

How good - to be alive!
How infinite - to be
Alive - two-fold - The Birth I had -
And this - besides, in - Thee!

(470, c.1862)

Chapter 5:

1. William Worringer, Empathy and Abstraction, pp.14-15.

2. Ibid., p.17.

3. Ibid.,pp.23-24.

4. Hermann Pongs, Das Bild in der Dichtung, pp.175-176.

5. Ibid., p.202.

6. Urban, op.cit., p.474; pp.471-475 ("The Aesthetic Symbol and Aesthetic Distortion") the author discusses the expressional function of aesthetic distortion, which he observes in close connection with artistic symbol making in general. For him, it is "part of the intuition itself", as

> the immediately given intuition is moulded in the very process of intuition in such fashion as to make intuition a symbol of non-intuited. (p.472)

> But these deviations, these lies, are more valuable than the real values. ... What, then, does valuable mean here? It means ...that precisely by these deviations certain aspects of reality are apprehended and expressed which could not otherwise be shown forth. It presupposes a distinction - between objects as merely perceived and as apprehended by the artist in aesthetic intuition - which is of fundamental importance for the philosophy of art. (p.473)

7. Pongs, op.cit., p.306:

> Was im Schaffen aus dem "Götterselbstgefühl" Gestalt wird als Urbild des Selbst in seiner wachsenden Reife, das stellt sich dar in der schöpferischen Leistung des Erbildens als verdichtete Vielgestalt des Andern, im Herausgehobensein aus seiner realen Eigensphäre in die künstlerische Formsphäre, die nur aus den bildenden Kräften eines Selbst geschaffen werden kann. Im metodischen Begriff der "Gestaltung" treffen sich damit die polaren Formen des dem Zufall des Ich enthobenen schöpferischen Wesens. Nicht zwar als Götterselbstgefühl empfindet der Erfühldichter sein Selbst, sondern als ein Verbundensein mit allen Mächten um ihn; gerade dies schöpferische Verbundensein ist es, in dem er sich über die Abhängigkeit vom Ich erhoben fühlt.

8. See Pongs, op.cit.: III. Das dichterische Bild, esp. pp. 267-369 (β)Vollformen I: Die mytische Metapher, 8) Vollformen II: Die magische und mystische Metapher).

9. Wellek & Warren, Theory of Literature, pp.204-205. For the next brief quotations, see pp.206, 204, respectively.

10. The only alterations from the first version to the second is the substitution of "Ghosts"(l.19) for "Swans"; from the third to the forth also one word is altered (l.7): "Flowers" becomes "Figures" - a noun far better suited to describe a magician's unnatural art.

11. We have availed ourself of Pongs' typology as it seems to explain certain (cognitive) aspects of Dickinson's later metaphorizing better than most others; yet it - as all classifications tend to be - is too dichotomic, for from the beginning Dickinson could be seen as a magician, first intent on discovering her own identity by means of the phenomenal world, then seeing in its phenomenality an identity, or meaning, alien or even superior to hers. The wish to manipulate life through abstraction - which her myth is, too! - goads her from her earliest years, though her exuberant experience of the life of the senses has first to find its expression in mythicizing.

12. See e.g. Kenneth Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form, p.5 ff. ("Magic and Religion", "Symbolic action").

13. Ibid., p.5.

14. For similar "magic" incantations of devotion, see e.g. nos. 275, 400, 438, 463, 528, 537, 549.

15. There are, it is true, also other early expressions of death-wish; cf. e.g. nos.50, 51, 54, 182.

16. E.g. nos. 590, 598, 615.

17. Cf. e.g. the last stanza of no.574 ("My first well Day - since many ill-"):

> My loss, by sickness - Was it Loss?
> Or that Etherial Gain
> One earns by measuring the Grave -
> Then - measuring the Sun -

18. Wheelwright, op.cit., pp.71-72, 73, 78, respectively.

19. Ibid., p.80.

20. Ibid., p.91; we are also to remember that for Wheelwright "presence"= numinous presence, the metaphysical dimension of a poet's inspiration. (See our note 2) for Chapter 1.)

Chapter 6:

1. Cf. Fussell, Poetic Meter and Poetic Form, pp.142-143:

One of the conventions associated with the ballad or hymnal stanzas is an illusion of primitive sincerity and openness. By using such a stanza for highly sophisticated and knowing or sardonic purposes, as Emily Dickinson frequently did and as Eliot does in "Sweeney Among the Nightingales," a poet can cause the bare stanza itself to contribute mightily to his irony.

Anderson (op.cit., p.27) makes a similar observation:

Choosing such a primitive lute for her sophisticated devotionals was characteristic of her strategy. For most of her poems, too, were hymns in their own special way. Not traditional anthems swelling the cathedral vaults nor pious psalms entuned in a Puritan nose, but the thin pipings of praise that were still possible for an estranged modern religious sensibility, diminished, tangential, sometimes actually cancelled by doubt.

Also cf. Porter, op.cit., p.55 ff.(Ch.IV,"Devotional Form and the Constant Occasion for Irony").

2. For a detailed account of the English psalmody metres such as they had been developed by Dickinson's times (and were further developed by her), see e.g. Johnson, Emily Dickinson, pp. 84-92. Of the poems sampled by us (pp.149-150), no.193 uses one of the rarer matres, (dactylic) Tens and Nines, nos. 313 and 508 (iambic) Common Particular Meter, a six-line extension of Common Meter, the basic quatrain measure of both hymnody and balladry, which (as the reader may have noted) was the one most often employed by Dickinson, too.

3. Cf. Johnson, op.cit., p.85:

Copies of Watt's Christian Psalmody or his collection of The Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs were fixtures in every New England household. Both were owned by Edward Dickinson and are inscribed with his name.

Also cf. Capps, op.cit., pp.73-74; Porter, op.cit., pp.58-61.

4. Cf. Porter, op.cit., p.55:

Whether one calls her recurrent four-stress-three-stress pattern the "fourteener", the "ballad-meter" or the "common meter" of hymnody depends somewhat upon where in the historical evolution of English prosody one chooses his terms.

As a glance into any collection of old balladry will prove, the metric variations of the ballad quatrain were many, too, and so Dickinson's practice of "merging in one poem the various poetic meters themselves"(Johnson, op.cit., p.86) was more in tune with the older tradition than the younger, which, in general, "tends to be more regular than the ballad"(Porter, op.cit., p.56).

5. Anderson, op.cit., p.28.

6. Fussell, op.cit., p.141.

7. H.J. Eysenck, in Sense and Nonsense in Psychology (pp.330-331),reports of a test on two poems, one with a quatrain structure, the other with a six-line stanza organization and a complex rhyming scheme. According to Eysenck, people's preference for one or the other seemed quite definitive, or, as he puts it,

> There is some evidence to suggest that in part, at least, these differences are due to temperamental factors. Extraverts tend to prefer the simple type of poem with a regular rhyming scheme, and the heavily accentuated rhythm; introverts prefer the more complex type of poem with the irregular rhyming scheme and the less obvious rhythm.

It is true, of course, that at its most regular a common measure stanza is rather chamless[f], but,as we shall see, the type of the quatrain cultivated by Dickinson (certainly no extravert) could be complex enough both as to its rhyming scheme and its rhythm[h]. Whatever general relevance Eysenck's test may have, it does not seem to bear upon our case or on the truly dialectical qualities of the quatrain; the two polar characteristics of a work of art (viz, its degree of "complexity" or "order") discovered by Eysenck are not evidently based on external traits alone but are, rather, a matter of inner organization or of "meaning" implied.

8. Cf. Fussell, op.cit., pp.138-139:

> Regardless of its length, the closed couplet seems both by its nature and its historical associations to imply something special about the materials enclosed in it. It seems to imply a distinct isolation of those materials from related things, a vigorous enclosure of them into a compact and momentarily self-sufficient little world of circumscribed sense and meaning. To construct a closed couplet is to draw a little boundary line, to set something off as special and perhaps a little fragile.

9. Of the triplet Fussell observes (op.cit., pp.139-140):

> The same rhyme sound repeated in sequence without relief tends to produce fatiguing and sometimes comic or bizarre effects: the triplet has enough rhymes just to risk this danger. Indeed, its number of sequential rhymes is probably as great as we can stand without inviting monotony or comedy.

It shall also be noted that Dickinson's triplets often tend to juxtaposition, being, in effect, incomplete quatrains (cf. e.g. nos. 21, 1365 above); in these cases the triple rhyme is mostly incomplete, too.

10. No.1260 ("Because that you are going"), for instance, consists of as many as ten quatrains, almost all of which are based on antithesis.

11. Anderson, op.cit., pp.28-29.

12. The rhymes quoted from The Giant Golden Mother Goose, pp.12, 40, 86, respectively.

13. Ibid., pp. 34, 58, respectively. The ironic tone of these rhymes well equals with Dickinson's occasional sardonisms on her fellow-men; the former may be compared to no.1207 ("He preached upon 'breadth' till it argued him narrow") and the latter to no.700 ("You've seen balloons set, haven't you?") discussed pp.121-122 above.

14. There is a possible reference to a well-known children's riddle ("Higher than a house, higher than a tree./ Oh! Whatever can that be?" The Giant Golden Mother Goose, p.56.) in the following poem by Dickinson, which resembles nursery rhymes also in its form of a (seemingly) playful wish; her later enumerative use of "magical" details to conjure up the presence and experience of the unattainable may have had an early model in the nursery-rhyme realizations of "wishes":

Ah, Moon - and Star!
You are very far -
But were no one
Farther than you -
Do you think I'd stop
For a Firmament -
Or a Cubit - or so?

I could borrow a Bonnet
Of the Lark -
And a Chamois' Silver Boot -
And a stirrup of an Antelope -
And be with you - Tonight!

But, Moon, and Star,
Though you're very far -
There is one - farther than you -
He - is more than a firmament - from me -
So I can never go! (240, c.1861)

15. The Giant Golden Mother Goose, pp. 33, 93, 96, respectively. For Dickinson's treatment of the bird motif, see pp.31-34 above; of the spider, no.605, p.113, and no.1138, p.178; for her early poems on flowers, e.g. nos.12, 25, 163, pp.57-58.

16. Cf. e.g. Porter, op.cit., the whole of Ch.IV, in which the author especially considers the uses to which the young poet put her hymnal patterns, summing up her achievement as follows(p.74):

> In a purely technical regard, the hymn schema performs a function absolutely appropriate to the impulse of this poet. A measure of her early artistry is the richness and density of effect she achieved by working out from that apparently simple and constraining formal base.

17. The first stanza of no.11 ("I never told the buried gold") quoted above, p.49. In his biography of Dickinson (pp.88-89) Johnson analyzes the poem, and although he does not comment on her use of parallelism as such, he notes the various "metric and rhyme shifts" and internal rhymes, all connected with her climactic use of repetition. Johnson ends his analysis:"The poet is still a tyro, but such skill as the poem has ... lies in the blending of the form with the mood."

18. It might be interesting to know how far Dickinson was instructed in her use of parallelism and antithesis by her Mount Holyoke text book of rhetoric, Newman's A Practical System of Rhetoric, or The Principles and Rules of Style, Inferred from Examples of Writing ... Capps (op.cit., pp. 66, 106-108), disappointingly, deals only with the subject-matter which Dickinson possibly derived from Newman, whereas information about the technical advice the young poet was offered thereby would be far more interesting and important.

19. Cf. Fussell, op.cit., Ch.8 ("Some Critical Implications of Stanzaic Forms"), e.g. p.167:

> One general principle with which we can begin is this: in a short multistanza poem, the poem generally tends toward a greater density the closer the number of stanzas accords with the number of divisions of action or intellection which the poem enacts. That is, the number of stanzas into which the poem is divided should itself express something; the number must not give the impression of being accidental. ...
> Thus a bipartite experience naturally calls out for expression in two stanzas, and a tripartite experience in three.

How very consciously Dickinson worked, in her later poetry, toward this correspondence of poetic form and poetic experience will, we hope, be illustrated by the poems sampled on the following pages.

20. Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, The Voice of the Poet, pp. 212, 213, respectively.

21. Cf. Porter, op.cit., the whole of Ch.VI ("Audible Correlatives of Emotional Tension"), esp. pp.117-124; Lindberg-Seyersted, op.cit., Ch.III ("Mighty Metres and Jingling Bells: A Poet's Prosody"), esp. p.156 ff. (3."Rhyme: Its Nature and Function in Emily Dickinson's Poetry").

22. See, however, Lindberg-Seyersted, op.cit., p.176:

> Sound patterns other than rhyme - such as alliteration and a less regular repetition of sounds in other designs - and the rhetorical structure of the poem which sets statements against questions may in fact be even more effective in giving these lines the firm unity they undoubtedly have.

Alliteration (but not other internal sound patterns) is touched upon, quite passingly, byt the author in her Ch.IV.1.("Rhetorical Patterns"), pp.207-208.

23. In her third letter to Higginson, who had evidently disapproved of her habitual near rhymes, Dickinson writes:

> I thanked you for your justice - but could not drop the Bells whose jingling cooled my Tramp - (LII, 265).

As among the poems she had, by then, sent to Higginson were such phonetically highly patterned ones as nos.216 ("Safe in their Alabaster Chambers", the 1861 version), 319 ("The nearest Dream recedes unrealized"), and 321 ("Of all the Sounds despatched abroad"), it seems to us the "the jingling Bells" refer as much to the internal as to the ending rhymes proper; regularizing the latter might have meant the destruction of the former, and that the poet could not bear.

According to the statistics provided by Lindberg-Seyersted (op.cit., p.157),Dickinson's use of full rhyme also varies somewhat throughout the years. Of the poems dated 1858 about half of the final rhymes are exact, 1862 only about one third, whereas 1874 and 1884 again give the estimate of one half of full rhymes. Thus it is also possible that - quite apart from her other euphonic practices - Dickinson's increased cultivation of near rhymes in the critical early sixties had an expressive function: the less she felt in harmony with life, the more dissonance she called up by her rhymes, too. Wether rhyme dissonance was made up by more internal euphony or whether there was diminishing in both (which does not seem probable) might be interesting to study some other time; here the question is certainly too large to be considered in any length.

24. Cf. W.K. Wimsatt, Jr., "One Relation of Rhyme to Reason" (in The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry, p.164):

> Rhyme is commonly recognized as a binder in verse structure. But where there is need for binding there must be some difference or separation between the things to be bound. ... So we may say that the greater the difference in meaning between the rhyme words the more marked and the more appropriate will be the binding effect.

Besides the semantic relations of the words linked by rhyme, one may also study, as Wellek and Warren suggest (op.cit., p.161),

> how far rhyme-words seem mere fillers or, at the opposite extreme, whether we could conjecture the meaning of a poem or stanza only from its rhyme words. Rhymes may constitute the skeleton of a stanza or they may be minimized so much that one scarcely notices their presence...

Following these recipes, Lindberg-Seyersted has studied Dickinson's practices of rhyme very thoroughly but is forced, in the end, to admit (p.170):

> In her rhymes Emily Dickinson does not seem to aim at achieving a shock effect by juxtaposing words belonging to quite unrelated semantic spheres, as do Pope ... and Byron ... Nor does she seem consciously to play off different grammatical categories against each other in the manner of Pope. She neither seeks nor avoids grammatical affinities or dissimilarities.

Yet for ten more pages (170-180) the author persists in her chosen course of study

> to suggest ways in which her approximate rhymes are sometimes reinforced by grammar or by semantic relations of sameness and difference.

To us all the instances proposed seem more or less casual (as the author herself suspects, too); as Dickinson has chosen to use not final rhymes but a far more complicated internal rhyming scheme to reinforce the (antithetic) structure and meaning of her poems, excessive importance imposed on the former is absurd (unless final rhymes form part of the general sound pattern of a poem).

25. See Kenneth Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form, pp. 296-304 ("On Musicality in Verse"). Cognates, in brief, are consonants which are pronounced with the lips and the tongue in the same position, or, to give Burke's own example (p.296):

> If you place the lips in the position to make the sound m, from this position you can make the sounds b and p. Hence, when looking for a basis of musicality in verse, we may treat b and p as close phonetic relatives of m. The three are all in the same family: they are "cognates".

Besides cognates, Burke finds several other ways, too, of creating hidden musicality in verse (p.299):

> To sum up: we have the repetition of a sound in cognate variation, acrostic scrambling, [tonal] chiasmus, augmentation, and diminution. If we now apply this whole set of coordinates, we may note the presence of one or several, in different combinations.

Most of these secret elements of musicality seem, indeed, to be present in Dickinson's poetry, and in such subtle combinations that it is quite understandable why a contemporary critic like Higginson, whose "taste was conventional and ... perceptions limited"(Johnson, op.cit., p.104), could never make up his mind about its irregular worth.

26. Here Burke's categories seem especially suitable to explain the fascination of these phonetic couplings. In addition to cognates we discover that the third pair, for instance, presents what Burke calls "tonal chiasmus", i.e., the repetition of the same sounds in the reverse order; it is also phonetically linked with troubled question (l.4), which mightily contributes to the inner coherence of the whole stanza.

27. The function of Dickinson's late reflective quatrains may also be compared to that of

> the Buddhist mandalas or circles, usually of Thibetan origin. They consist as a rule of a circular padma or lotus which contains a square sacred building with four gates, indicating the four cardinal points and the seasons. The center contains a Buddha or more often the conjunction of Shiva and his Shakti or an equivalent dorje (thunderbolt) symbol. They are yatras or instruments of ritual for the purpose of contemplation, concentration and the final transformation of the yogin's consciousness into the divine all-consciousness. (C.G. Jung, Psychology and Religion, p.82).

28. Cf. Wellek & Warren, op.cit., pp.161-163.

29. No.620 may be considered a somewhat later realization of the motif of escape from nature in no.348 ("I dreaded that first Robin so", p.59 above); the same motif, from a slightly different angle, is treated of also in no.327 ("Before I got my eye put out", pp.60-61) and, here, in no.891. For a less abstracted observation of a bird, see e.g. no.328, p.112, while the bee as a sexual symbol appears at least in nos. 211, 213, 661, and 869 before no.896.

30. Fussell, op.cit., p.173.

31. Johnson, The Poems II, p.777.

32. From her early school years, Emily Dickinson took obvious delight in scientific vocabulary and mode of expression, but to this she was prompted rather by her idiosyncratic poetic sensibility than by any scholarly disposition proper. As had been the case with theology, scientific terminology would offer her a very special dimension of metaphoric language; her simulation in her later phenomenal description of the scientific jargon was, in the first hand, symbolic of her mode of approach, desirous as she was of an objective, detached apprehension of the world. It was not, of course, the exactness and universality of information that she was seeking but that of perception; what she abstracted and universalized was not the phenomenon itself (which remained as particular as ever) but the metaphor that represented it and conveyed its poetic meaning. Thus the perception embodied by the metaphor is rather an impression: what remains of a scene, motion, sound, etc. that has been; the simplified, essential pattern of a phenomenal situation, seen, indeed, not through the natural eyes but through the memorizing eyes of the mind.

33. The reader is here referred to a very interesting discussion of Dickinson's conception of words as vehicles of communication, namely, Chapter 2 ("The Communication of the Word") of Donald E. Thackrey's Emily Dickinson's Approach to Poetry (pp.9-28). Although we do not share all of the author's rather pessimistic opinions (to us, the poet does not seem particularly to suffer from "the impotency of words", for instance), he has many acute observations to make on Dickinson's treatment of her language, as is shown by the following quotation (p.17):

> The tendency of human minds to interpret words in the light of their own prejudices, ignorances, and inclinations is easily apparent. Therefore the fewer words one used, the less opportunity he provided for misinterpretation - that is, if the words were chosen which in their denotative meanings and their connotative associations would most exactly convey one's intentions. Thus Emily Dickinson attempted to develop a shorthand system of poetic language which would combine the advantage of conciseness with the capability of connoting a rich complex of suggestions.

34. R.P. Blackmur, Language as Gesture, p.47.

35. In fact, there are (at least) three other later poems on the spider motif, nos.1167, 1275, and 1423.

36. This seems, indeed, the equivalent in verbal art of the abstractive tendency which Worringer noted in the pictorial arts, motivated, according to him, by a desire

> to wrest the object of the external world out of its natural context, out of its unending flux of being, to purify it of all its dependence upon life, i.e. of everything about it that is arbitrary, to render it necessary and irrefragable, to approximate it to its absolute value.

(Worringer, op.cit., p.17).

37. Cf. Wellek & Warren, op.cit., p.187:

> Synaesthetic imagery (whether the result of the poet's abnormal psychological constitution or of literary convention) translates from one sense into another, e.g. sound into colour.

Dickinson's practices of synaesthesia seem, however, due to neither a psychological abnormality nor convention but to a conscious tendency to abstract her metaphorizing. While purely visual imagery too easily leads to conventional, anthropomorphizing tropes and personification, synaesthetic imagery tends to break down the conventional way of merely "seeing" things, of making them too concrete and rational. The use of synaesthetic imagery is not, as known, abstractive in the direction of developing linguistic differentiation but rather means a regression back to the very vast generalities of primitive speech. As it, however, has a strong psychological basis in the felt similarities of our diverse sense perceptions, synaesthetic metaphors can be very powerful, especially in conveying states of mind aroused by what we have called numinous effects.

38. Joseph E. Duncan, op.cit., p.28.

39. In her most conscientious study of Emily Dickinson's prosody, Brita Lindberg-Seyersted has examined both Dickinson's rhetorical and her syntactic patterns (op.cit., "Rhetorical Patterns", p.197 ff.; "An Idiosyncratic Syntax", p.234 ff.), but, except for a few of her rhetorical-syntactic structures, the author has not considered rhetoric and syntax together. The task might be rather difficult but probably worth the trouble.

A P P E N D I X

A P P E N D I X 1

The number and percentage of Dickinson's poems on natural motifs in 1850-86

Year	Total	On nature	Percentage
1850-60	215	94	44
1861	86	24	28
1862	366	77	21
1863	141	41	29
1864	174	44	25
1865	85	20	24
1866-70	112	35	31
1871-75	171	45	26
1876-79	135	51	38
1880-86	171	44	26

We are to note, first of all, that the tables above include only those of Dickinson's poems which are (so far) datable; secondly, the inclusion or exclusion of a poem has, of course, been rather arbitrary. In the first group 1850-60 (rather 1858-60) as well as in the last, for instance, many poems on nature are just four-line maxims or brief notes in verse following a gift of flowers or fruit; in the latter case they have been frequently omitted. Especially since 1861 the treatment of natural imagery tends to be increasingly metaphoric from the natural to the human sphere, the 'tenor' generally being some human being or relation. Accordingly those poems which borrow their metaphoric imagery from nature without being directly descriptions of nature or of sentiments aroused by nature are not usually included in the figures above.

The number of lines and their grouping into stanzas in Emily Dickinson's datable poems:

	Total	2-4(4)	6	2x4	9-10	12(3x4)	4x4	Longer groupings of quatrains and other stanza forms
1858-59	146	8(7) = 5,5%	5 = 3,4%	54 =37,0%	11 = 7,5%	21(13) =14,4%	20 =13,7%	27 =18,5%
1860-61	150	11(9) = 7,3%	8 = 5,3%	29 =19,3%	6 = 4%	30(25) =20%	23 =15,3%	43 =28,7%
1862	366	7(6) = 1,9%	8 = 2,2%	87 =23,8%	9 =2,5%	67(64) =18,3%	77 =21,0%	111 =30,4%
1863	141	12(7) = 8,5%	2 = 1,4%	52 =36,9%	2 =1,4%	24(21) =17,0%	20 =14,2%	29 =20,6%
1864	174	29(27) =16,7%	3 = 1,7%	87 =50,0%	1 =0,6%	23(17) =13,27%	19 =10,9%	12 =6,7%
1865	85	26(25) =30,6%	4 = 4,7%	41 =48,2%	-	5(5) = 5,9%	5 = 5,9%	4 =4,7%
1866-70	112	27(23) =24,1%	4 = 3,6%	49 =43,7%	2 =1,8%	17(17) =15,2%	9 = 8,0%	4 =3,6%
1871-75	171	32(32) =18,7%	8 = 4,7%	90 =52,6%	2 =1,2%	24(22) =14,0%	9 = 5,3%	6 =3,5%
1876-79	135	36(34) =26,7%	9 = 6,7%	59 =43,7%	1 =0,7%	16(15) =11,9%	5 = 3,7%	9 =6,7%
1880-86	171	64(56) =37,4%	14 = 8,2%	66 =38,6%	4 =2,3%	10(9) = 5,9%	7 = 4,1%	6 =3,5%
Total	1651	252(226) =15,3(13,7%)	65 = 3,9%	614 =37,2%	38 =2,3%	237(208) =14,4(12,6%)	194 = 11,7%	251 =15,2%

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

L I S T O F W O R K S C I T E D

1. Works by Emily Dickinson

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