JYVÄSKYLÄ STUDIES IN THE ARTS 4

IN QUEST OF TRUTH

Observations on the Development of Emily Dickinson's Poetic Dialectic

by
SIRKKA HEISKANEN-MÄKELÄ

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By Due Permission of the Faculty of
Humanities, University of Jyväskylä, to Be
Publicly Examined in the Old Auditorium,
on Saturday, January 31st, 1970, at 12 o'clock,
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

JYVÄSKYLÄ 1970
K. J. GUMMERUS OSAKEYHTIÖN KIRJAPAINOSSA

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URN:ISBN:978-951-39-8421-2
ISBN 978-951-39-8421-2 (PDF)
ISSN 0075-4633

K. J. Gummerus Osakeyhtiön
kirjapainossa Jyväskylässä 1970

To Martti, Otto and Hanna

CONTENTS

PREFACE

The stylistic development of Emily Dickinson's poetry has always proved a hard bite for her critics. As David. T. Porter notes in the preface of his recent work, most of them

> Are more concerned with her themes than with her artistic techniques. . . . [Thus] the developmental course of her poetic career remains unchartered.

Porter also gives an impressive summary of the statements of several earlier critics, who almost unanimously stress the impossibility and futility even of a developmental approach to Dickinson's work. After the publication of the Harvard edition of her poems (1955), however, views which cannot discern any development whatever in her artistic powers (Anderson) or see her growth to artistic maturity as a matter of a year or two only (Frye) seem somewhat limited. Yet assessments of her achievement on developmental basis have been slow in coming forth, and among the half-dozen critical studies of her work which have appeared since 1955 only two (Porter, Sherwood) really try to chart a definite line of development in it.

Perhaps the span of almost thirty years during which her active career lasted is, indeed, too vast to cover within one study. Something of the kind has been, however, attempted here, and although research of such an extensive field must leave a good number of questions unanswered, some relevant observations do seem to have been made about Dickinson's stylistic development, not only during her 'formative' years but also during the later part of her career, when her productivity was already on the decline.

For it is with her stylistic development this study is concerned, although from a very specific angle. While Porter's interest lies mainly in Dickinson's prosody, »in the way she speaks to us», and Sherwood is occupied with the growth of her 'mind' (i.e. with her developing attitudes toward the world as reflected in her work), the focus of this treatise falls somewhere between them: on her changing approach to reality *as a poet*, for whom poetry was not so much a means

of self-expression as it was a means of probing and analyzing the existence she was to lead. Although I have not »avoided biographical interpretation» (Porter), I, nevertheless, do not agree with Sherwood that »poetry is a form of autobiography». For me poetry is more than autobiography, it is *myth;* the realization on the virtual, symbolic level of language of all the poet's potential faculties of experience. Accordingly what I find interesting is not the circumstances out of which Dickinson's poetry seems once to have been born but the emerging pattern of the poet's experience of life, which goes far beyond the circumstances and finds in them, at best, only an affirmation, not an explanation of itself. As this pattern (which may, of course, be interpreted as the pattern of her personality) has been realized in language – the latter being, so to say, the prerequisite of the former – this is the history of a style, a reconstruction of the poet's gradual discovery of the ways in which Truth – her deepest experience of life – could be told.

As the 'circumference' – as she herself called it – of truth seems not only a recurrent theme but the central concern of Dickinson's poetry, it has given rise both to the title and the subtitle of this study. Although it does not belong to the ordinary paraphernalia of literary criticism, the use of the term 'dialectic' seems proper here. The Oxford English Dictionary definition (»art of investigating the truth of opinions, testing of truth by discussion, logical disputation») can easily be applied to Dickinson's art, and her approach to the phenomena of both the outer and the inner reality of man may aptly be described as that of a dialectician, a person »skilled in critical inquiry by discussion». To define my usage further, Dickinson's 'dialectic' means simply her way of dealing with her poetic materials as indicative of truth; now and then 'dialectic(s)' also refers to her specifically 'logical' way of composing her poetic arguments. The adjective, again, is mostly employed as corresponding to the latter usage: 'dialectical' argumentation is especially typical of Dickinson's late verse.

As a 'dialectical' (i.e., 'truth-seeking' and 'logical') approach to reality was a characteristic feature of Dickinson's cultural tradition, Puritanism, the first chapter of this study has been devoted, as an introduction, to examining the possible ways in which her New England heritage may have affected her artistic aspirations and achievement. In the remaining chapters the focus of interest is on her 'dialectic'; first on her peculiar manner of developing personally relevant symbols – a whole symbology – to express and interpret her awe-inspired experience of

life, then on her more or less 'dialectical' way of developing and refining the symbolic patterns already discovered. Each of the chapters observes Dickinson's development as an artist – her quest for truth – from different angles and forms an independent unity; if – in spite of the chronological progress of the discussion – some of them (especially Chapters Three and Four) seem to overlap slightly, this is due to the shifting of aspect, which presupposes the repetition of certain data. The plan of the work is synthesis by total analysis, observation with a shifting focus, till out of the totality of 'observations' there emerges for the poet one logical line of development – the dialectics of her poetry.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped me at various stages of my research. First of all I want to express my gratitude to the University of Jyväskylä and Valtion humanistinen toimikunta for their grants, which have enabled me to concentrate on my work at two critical periods of its preparation. I have also received financial assistance from Jyväskylän yliopiston julkaisutoimikunta, who have kindly included my book in their arts series and thus paid most of the expenses of its publication, for which I should like to thank the Committee. I also wish to thank Jyväskylä University Library for providing me with a study for three years and for the numerous books they have got or even purchased for me during these years.

Of all the people who helped me, I am, naturally, most indebted to Professor Aatos Ojala, the head of the Institute of Literature in the University of Jyväskylä, who has been kind enough to read the manuscript of this book several times and who has helped me greatly through his pertinent and sound criticism. Professor Irma Rantavaara from the University of Helsinki was the first person with whom I discussed my project, and she has shown unfailing interest in it ever since. I shall always feel grateful to her, both as my tutor and mental supporter. In December 1965 I also had an opportunity to discuss my would-be research with Dr. Napier Wilt, Professor Emeritus of English from the University of Chicago, and from him I received so much encouragement that I feel obliged to mention his name here. Aid given or received is always a matter of quality, not of quantity, and expert advice at a critical moment is, no doubt, the most valuable.

My thanks are further due to Miss Gillian Ellis, who corrected the English of this text, and Mrs. Tarja Wilson, who helped me read the proofs and compiled the index. A special mention should be made of my faithful maids, especially of

Mrs. Hellin Forss, who has »played the mother's part» to my family during my inevitable absence. As for my husband and children, they are not, of course, only the help but the inspiration of all my activity in life.

Jyväskylä, December 1969

S. H-M.

1

THE PURITAN WAY

Some Introductory Aspects of the Research

Most Dickinson scholars have been keenly conscious of the role the Puritan tradition played in her spiritual development and orientation in the world, and have tried to take it into account in their analyses of her poetry, either as the only relevant background from which it emerged or as the repressive environmental factor against which she rebelled through it.[1] Yet it seems that the full impact of Puritanism either on her personality or on her poetry has not been assessed so far, especially in regard to the evolution of her poetic techniques and to all the idiosyncracies of her established style. Although not feeling the least authoritative on the matter, I shall venture first to offer one or two suggestions about the possible ways in which the Puritan heritage affected her, not as an ideology to be accepted or rejected at will but as a *mental discipline*, a kind of psychic reality to the conditions of which her thinking and reacting had been, and always remained, adapted. While it is true that she often found herself at odds with this or that doctrinal aspect of Puritanism, its metaphysical system as a whole – and its method of piety in particular – was the very mould into which her mind was irrecoverably cast and which affected not only her perceptions and divinations about life but even her symbolic formulations of them; her very way of stating her case and putting and developing an argument.

Like all ideologies, Puritanism first lost its hold of the New England mind on the ideological level, as a theological or philosophical system, but as a moral and social dicipline it long continued to provide the only acceptable code. This was particularly true of Western Massachussetts, in which Amherst, Dickinson's lifelong residence, still »in those days lay isolated in a quiet and thickly-wooded area of the Connecticut valley, about eighty miles inland . . . from the commercial and cultural metropolis of Boston and Cambridge».[2] The issues of

even the hottest Puritan controversies and doctrinal disputes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, says Thomas H. Johnson, may have long since been dead,

> but the shape they gave to the moral sanctions of the Valley can still be observed, and in Emily Dickinson's time they were compulsive.[3]

For historical reasons the »moral sanctions» in the Connecticut River Valley must have been socially even more binding than elsewhere in New England,[4] but not only socially: to many of these people true »morality» still meant, not a hypocritical obligation to keep up the appearance of social respectability, but a deeply felt duty to lead a life of spiritual integrity. It was just this »native» Puritan sense of man's spiritual responsibility that gave Emily Dickinson's life the shape we know.

What, exactly, was the spiritual responsibility of a Puritan? According to Perry Miller, Puritan theology was based on man's ontological urge to learn and comprehend his own predicament in a universe in which – as a result of Adam's fall – he felt alien, blinded and deluded; thus it was, on the one hand, »an effort to externalize and systematize this subjective mood»,[5] a truly existential manner of claiming one's individual place in creation. On the other hand, a Puritan was never denied the possibility of attaining, through the workings of divine grace, a positive knowledge of his purpose and lot, and so the whole edifice of the Puritan creed

> rested upon a deep-lying conviction that the universe conformed to a definite, ascertainable truth, and human existence was to be had . . . upon the terms imposed by this truth.[6]

Therefore, even if the principle of predestination allowed the seeker only a chance of attaining divine truth, for him the existence of this truth was not a possibility but a certainty, and an incessant quest for it not merely a matter of choice but a responsibility. Thus the systematic theology of Puritanism tended to be a highly ordered discipline, which offered the believer, in the detailed doctrine of regeneration, the rules and means of how to seek and find out ultimate truth: a noble if precarious way of adjusting himself to the universe. In Miller's words, it »provided Puritans with completely satisfying symbols; it dramatized the needs of the soul exactly as does some great poem or work of art».[7]

It was probably this dramatic aspect of the Puritan view of life which most appealed to Emily Dickinson – both as a poet and as a »private» seeker of truth – and, as I shall try to show later, her crisis of life took on exactly the same phases of development and resorted to the same traditional symbols as a Puritan candidate for regeneration would have professed. In the following I shall merely point out some more general, more external similarities between her life and that of a Puritan devotee, those which seem closest to bear on her dedication to the practice of poetry as a kind of religious act. As Transcendentalism – or Emersonianism, rather – was, from my chosen point of view, only an organic expansion in time of the Puritan principle of man's spiritual responsibility to seek out his own truth, the influences Emily Dickinson received from this direction will be discussed under the same heading; in this way the differences between her – basically Puritan – disposition and the Emersonian frame of mind will also be most clearly exposed.

II

Two things about the poet seem evident from her youth: 1) that like a true Puritan she was hungering after the truth of her own human predicament, both in this life and in the life to come, and 2) that poetry and poetic inspiration seemed to her the very acts and means of revelation through which supernatural truth is made accessible to man. The latter aspect of Dickinson's disposition was most emphatically displayed in a conversation reported by a friend, who had inquired about her tastes and aesthetic criteria. Instead of any vague theorizing 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 *that* is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top my head were taken off, I know *that* is poetry. These are the only way I know it. Is there any other way. (L II, 342 a)

The 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. From the beginning she would also know her genuine inspiration by the same token, 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, first four stanzas)

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, first stanza)

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, first two stanzas)

To speak of an experience of the numen, or numinosity, as Dickinson's fundamental poetic impulse seems, indeed, justified if we remember that throughout her life she would both recognize and acknowledge truth, whether personal or universal, by the one and the same attribute, *awe*.[8] Sometimes this awe was felt at a mystery which seemed impossible to solve, as existential anguish (which in itself was one, although negative aspect of truth), sometimes at the 'truth' she herself or somebody else had already caught – 'circumscribed' – in words; in each case this numinous truth was felt to be of divine origin and telling it (in a poem) a pious duty, in the best Puritan tradition. Inspired and guided by the numen, the index of divine truth, she would discover and evolve her poetic gifts to enable her to express her full experience of this truth, in all its aspects, and although her manner – or 'dialectic' – of arguing it out in poetic language in the course of time greatly changed, her zeal for it never diminished:[9]

> Truth – is as old as God –
> His Twin identity
> And will endure as long as He
> A Co–Eternity –
>
> And perish on the Day
> Himself is borne away
> From Mansion of the Universe
> A lifeless Deity.
>
> (836, c. 1864)

The full consciousness of her calling to »tell all the truth» (1129) 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 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.[10]

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.[11] 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.[12]

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.[13] It is quite possible that after her ordeal at Mount Holyoke, which – as some scholars suggest – imprinted its indelible marks on her character,[14] 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 way to truth open to all people in the Christian Faith, it was only by the everyday testing of her ability to discover her own *private* truth about human life that she felt she was 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.[15]

Therefore 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».[16] 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 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 numisonum.[17]

In the above sense Dickinson's final resolution to confine herself within the walls of her home (in another sense a delayed substitute of the conversion which had 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 secure 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 can do so only on the condition that it was as much the love as the unhappiness that prompted her. In love she had discovered divinity at its most 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 I 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 in any other way and eventually made her even recoil from the object itself. Thus, in the end, the thing or person that gave her the shock of divine desire almost seems to have become of secondary importance, and what alone mattered was the numinous feeling, the capture and analysis of which now appeared the chief occupation of her life.[18] 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 . . .[19]

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

> I lived on Dread –
> To Those who know

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 Challenging Despair.
(770)

By now the almost pleasurable thrill she had first experienced at each new revelation of the numen had turned – as the mystery of life seemed impenetrable – into pain and anguish which had reversed the whole course of her life. Hers had been the truly existential awe that haunts man until – in gigantic effort to comprehend and articulate his fate – he is forced to transcend himself and understand that the denial of an answer is *the* answer, that his graceless grace is ever to reach for the impossible.

Overpowered by the superhuman struggle to understand her human predicament and be – by means of her poetry – maker of herself, the poet could not but dispose of all the disposable, superfluous aspects of life and abide by the essential only. 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.

III

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

I had a terror – since September – I could tell to 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, initially, for communication, to be understood and comforted in the grasp of her awesome 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 of 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 ecstasy she had to succumb to in order to have it.

In his biography of Dickinson, T. H. Johnson very skilfully 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.[20]

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.[21]

It may also be 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.[22]

The apparent 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, second stanza, c. 1861)

On the other hand, as Emily Dickinson was assured enough to inquire of Higginson's opinion, and let a good number of friends know of her poems, her later obstinate refusal to publish seems not so much due to an aversion for publicity as to an aversion to alter her established method of composition (which resulted in just the kind of diction Higginson and other »preceptors» were itching to »correct»).[23] 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 attainments –
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 a universal system 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.[24]

To what extent Dickinson was influenced by Emerson's style or ideas is disputable.[25] She was, however, most like the great sage of Concord in 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 an inner assurance that all her numinous experiences were but carriers of one basic truth, and that they, faithfully recorded and analyzed, 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 too obvious; as if removing with her plane unnecessary items, layer after layer, of reality to reveal its true form.

In its epistemological implications this kind of negative method of defining what is falls in with the lofty tradition of Puritanism, whose God – the ultimate truth – »is entirely incomprehensible to man».[26] There is also another – both Puritan and Emersonian – argument, implied in the above poem, for not building one's »temple» according to rules imposed from without: in the matters of spiritual integrity and self-discovery man is his own task-master.

It is doubtful whether Higginson, her letters to whom Emily Dickinson often signed as his »scholar», ever noticed in this designation a self-conscious allusion to Emerson's famous Phi Beta Kappa address. It seems evident, however, that Emerson's scholar, who »learns that in going down into the secrets of his own mind he has descended into the secrets of all minds»,[27] had given our poet the model of building her poetic temple in the shape of her personality. After »the long period of preparation», »in silence, in steadiness, in severe abstraction»,[28] she would one day recover final integrity, the self-assurance of a self-supporting soul, which sentiment she then expressed using the same building imagery which had proved symbolically so relevant in her private polemics with Higginson:

The Props assist the House
Until the House is built
And then the Props withdraw
And adequate, erect,
The House support itself
And cease to recollect
The Augur and the Carpenter –
Just such a retrospect
Hath the perfected Life –
A past of Plank and Nail
And slowness – then the Scaffolds drop
Affirming it a Soul.
(1142, the 1869 version of an early 1863 draft)

Consciously or unconsciously, Emily Dickinson's poetic activity tended, from the beginning, to the discovery and establishment of a consistent mode of expression – both dialectics and a symbology of her own – which should give sense to her awe-inspired experience of life, and by the mid-sixties she had, as she felt herself, succeeded in this. The hermetic system of symbols (her *myth* I shall call it) which she had created in her poetry had helped her discover her inner identity, not only as a »soul» but as a practicing poet, too, and she could now freely accept but also overlook the services done, let's say, by Higginson – or any other single person or event that has »assisted» her during the process.

A further proof that her guest for an adequate identity and view of life had been successful can also be seen in the fact that during the closing years of the sixties (1866–69) the poet lapsed into an almost complete silence; the»temple» of her personality was felt to be – at least temporarily – complete[29]. So much – even too much – had been experienced and said that the poetic impulse seemed, for the time being, exhausted. After the drought, however, a period of fresh creativity followed and the poet, though still mostly availing herself of the symbology she had created, showed now new stylistic tendencies in developing her dialectics toward more and more »severe abstraction».

IV

Emily Dickinson's formal poetics – her 'dialectic' at each stage of her career – seems, indeed, to derive from and evolve according to the need to express her developing experience of life and her relative vision of 'truth'. As she never primarily intended to communicate, it is not, however, easy to discover the strict inner logic of this development in single poems, whose purport remains more or less enigmatic, even incoherent, to the casual reader. In the conclusive elucidation and interpretation of her kind of poetry it is only the whole system that counts. Yet it is possible to point out, especially in matters of rhetoric and metrics,some external, traditional influences which have contributed to the hermetic quality of Dickinson's verse.

The significance for Emily Dickinson of the Puritan tradition of piety was not only in its insistence on the attainment and maintenence of personal integrity; her practice of poetry, as a form of worship or prayer, could not but find direct expressional models in the *style* itself in which this piety was preached and imposed. Thus certain 'dialectical' features – in the dictionary denotation – which may now be considered idiosyncratic of Dickinson's way of composition alone, seem to have originated from age-old cultural practices.

For a Puritan, divine illumination was the prerequisite and the only beginning of real wisdom, but only the beginning; as Perry Miller says,

> the impression grows undeniably that though Puritanism was a piety, it was at the same time an intellectual system, highly elaborated and meticulously worked-out. The emotional propulsion was fitted into the articulated philosophy as a shaft to a spear-head. . . . Conversion was seen as the humbling of the heart, but it also construed as an enlightening of the mind, and humiliation unaccompanied by a considerable degree of information was worthless.[30]

In Puritan experience faith and reason were no irreconcilable polarities as the latter would supplement the former, by helping to bridge the gap between man's natural understanding and divine wisdom. Accordingly logic was the legitimate handmaid of Puritan theology, and for generations sermons were constructed after the prevailing (Ramist) system of logic. The Puritan preacher, says Miller, did not »hesitate to put his congregation through the most difficult dialectical paces and take them over lofty metaphysical hurdles», nor was his vigorous teaching without effect:

The reign of logic in the New England mentality was an inheritance from the seventeenth century, and the rule continued unbroken until the Transcendentalists consigned consistency to the sphere of hobgoblins and Dr. Holmes wrote its epitaphs in the supremely logical construction of a one-hoss shay.[31]

As we do not know that Emily Dickinson ever learnt even the elements of scientific logic, we must suppose that all the rationalizing tendencies of her poetry and its seemingly logical effects of argumentation derive, more or less directly, from the tradition of formal inference in New England eloquence, which she could not help reflecting in her own writing.[32] From the hundreds and hundreds of Congregational sermons she must have heard in her lifetime their 'logical' formula of reasoning was for her self-evident, almost the only possible principle of serious composition for the young poet.[33] Some of her early poems could be well regarded as sermons in miniature, in which her youthful »emotional propulsion» has been »fitted into the articulated philosophy» of argumentative dialectics, in the best Puritan style. The dialectical building up of the poetic argument form one (metaphoric) notion to another, in a kind of cumulative syllogism, till the 'conclusion' (or the final abstractive statement of the 'tenor' of the argumentation) seems to be a favourite early formula of Dickinson's for developing a poetic motif; the formula is still rather crude in the following examples, but in it we can already see in embryo her latest, most characteristically 'dialectical' idiom, that of playing her poetic propositions, in the barest of forms, one against the other (usually in antithetic juxtaposition) to distil the most abstract 'truth' out of them:

When I count the seeds
That are sown beneath,
To bloom so, bye and bye –

When I con the people
Lain so low,
To be received as high –

When I believe the garden
Mortal shall not see –
Pick by faith it's blossom
And avoid it's Bee,
I can spare this summer, unreluctantly.
(40, late 1858)

If I should die,
And you should live –
And time sh'd gurgle on –
And morn sh'd beam –
And noon should burn –
As it has usual done –
If Birds should build as early
And Bees as bustling go –
One might depart at option
From enterprise below!
Tis sweet to know that stocks will stand
When we with Daisies lie –
That Commerce will continue –
And Trades as briskly fly –
It makes the parting tranquil
And keeps the soul serene –
That gentlemen so sprightly
Conduct the pleasing scene!
(54, c. 1858)

As the tone of the above poems is humorous (in the latter derisive even), it is dangerous, of course, to use them as examples of the young poet's fondness for logical, or 'dialectical' argumentation; she seems rather to ridicule the ponderous eloquence not only of sermons but hymns as well. On the other hand, her cultivation also elsewhere (and throughout her life) of repetitive or cumulative syntactic patterns (parallelism in diverse grammatical constructions) seems not simply a rhetorical device; it really appears to imitate the laborious movement of the mind from argument to argument, from premises to conclusion.

Apart from this 'syllogistic' manner of carrying on poetic argumentation, which characterizes her evolving dialectics as a persistent feature, there are also other, what could be called 'logical', effects in Dickinson's verse. To the end of her career she would, for instance, as an essential part of her symbolizing process, resort to direct statements of general 'truths' or to 'definitions' of (private or universal) mental experiences in the abstract. Also her reverent attitude to the Word – her trust in the possibilities of language to reveal truth – may be noted here. While her love for 'definitions', initially or conclusively used, cannot of course be accounted for only by referring them back to the 'texts' or 'doctrines' of Puritan sermons, her belief in the inference of definitive truth by using the right

symbols of the language is really Puritan. For her, as for her forebears, *logos* that created the world also reigned there and was, if ever so rarely, incarnate in the written or spoken word:[34]

> A Word that breathes distinctly
> Has not the power to die
> Cohesive as the Spirit
> It may expire if He –
> »Made Flesh and dwelt among us[»]
> Could condescension be
> Like this consent of Language
> This loved Philology
> (1651, second stanza; undatable)

Dickinson's conception of language as an adequate means of her quest for truth was, of course, greatly modified by her growing experience as a practitioner of poetry. Her initial belief in the existence of axiomatic truth, which also made her believe in the metaphoric analogies of language to show forth this truth directly, was soon undermined by the discovery that for man's limited capacities either to see it or express it, there was no unequivocal truth which could be set in unequivocal language. She was quick enough to learn that truth, however divine in origin, cannot in this world be worked into an absolutely consistent system that holds for ever and everywhere; at its best it is relative and potential, dependent on the situation and the context in which it appears.

That her faith failed in over-simplified explanations of the world-order; as well as in the analogical way of imposing them on reality, did not, however, discredit language, whose supreme function still remained to reveal truth, however relative. If the word was »alive» only in a context, it was all the more expedient to find this context, all the contexts and aspects of truth in which it could be possibly grasped. The following poem, which seems to echo Plato's famous cavern metaphor, expresses well the poet's mature epistemology. The truth which *can* be told is, necessarily, relative but always worth while telling, for telling it, however suggestively or »slant», contributes to the totality of truth and man's knowledge of the divine:

> Tell all the Truth but tell it slant –
> Success in Circuit lies
> Too bright for our infirm Delight

The Truth's superb surprise
As Linghtning to the Children eased
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind –
(1129, c. 1868)

The discovery that truth was to be told – if at all – »slant», *in metaphoric suggestion* only, marks a definite turning-point in Dickinson's stylistic development, for, from axiomatic statement of more or less universal 'truths', she now seems to turn to really metaphorical, multidimensional representation of reality. Although this was not for the poet so much a technical as an epistemological discovery, for her verse it had its own technical – or dialectical – consequences, which deserve to be studied most carefully. That truth was to be told as *brief* (and universally) as possible was, however, her second (or even first, Puritan) principle of composition,[35] which – as a purely technical aspiration – sometimes seemed to be in direct conflict with the principle of »slant», or metaphoric, representation. The conflict was, no doubt, enhanced by Dickinson's choice, as her basic metrical formula, of the traditional ballad and hymnal stanza (the quatrain), whose restricted line space favoured elliptic rather than figuratively expounding dialectics. The combination of these two aspirations, to metaphoric 'slantness' on the one hand and to elliptic briefness on the other, was, however, successfully carried through in Dickinson's later poetry, and resulted in entirely new kinds of poetic equivocation, in which 'magical' (as I shall call them) effects of euphony and sound-metaphor play a prominent part, again in full accordance with her Puritan tradition. These truly 'native' qualities of her verse – its simple metric patterns, its ellipticity, its fondness for phonetic equivocation, etc. – have gained astonishingly little attention and will be, no doubt, one of the most interesting subjects of this study.

V

Like Emerson's scholar, who felt called »to guide men by showing them facts amidst appearances»,[36] Dickinson came to consider the symbolic repsesentation of truth in poetry her calling. Unlike Emerson she saw, however, that symbolic approach to reality was not simply a matter of direct metaphoric equation, possible

»because the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind» or because »the laws of moral nature answer to those of matter as a face to face in a glass»;[37] for her the process soon proved to involve a far more sophisticated view of man's existential position. She was quick enough to discover that the Emersonian view, which equated man, nature and God (in the spirit which permeated all), was epistemologically too narrow, even naive, and that – considering all man's spiritual needs – it was not sufficient, in the long run, to depend only on »the outer creation, to give us language for the beings and changes of the inward creation».[38]

Though first but too eager to follow Emerson's advice to »pierce this rotten diction [of corrupted civilization] and fasten words again to visible things»,[39] Dickinson had soon to accede to the old Puritan conviction that nature could not possibly tell »all the truth», either of divinity or of the human mind. Her objections – had she ever cared to formulate them outside her poetry – to Emerson's optimistic idealism (which in its epistemological implications meant extreme realism) might have been the following. First of all man, though originally part of the creation, was a conscious Self and, as such, radically different from 'the outer creation', which could reflect only his sense of original union with the rest of the universe but not his separation from it, his tragic sense of isolation. Secondly, a divine presence or numinosity, which man could sense in nature, was only a proof that God had created it but did not mean that nature was divine through and through, a full image of divinity, which at times seemed rather to hide behind the created world than reveal itself through it. Nor did even man's most exalted experiences of divinity – his mystic visions, his moments of self-discovery, or his very state of grace – actually make him any better understand the godhead, who mostly chose to show men only »the mingled side of his Divinity» (576).

Her completely anti-Emersonian view Dickinson expressed, for instance, in the following poem, which considers the relations of God, nature and the Self entirely from the perspective of the latter and finds the correspondence between these three spheres of being almost non-existent:[40]

Nature and God – I neither knew
Yet Both so well knew me
They startled, like Executors
Of My identity.

Yet Neither told – that I could learn –

My Secret as secure
As Herschel's private interest
Or Mercury's affair –
(835, c. 1864)

The tone is clearly sarcastic. Divinity, the transcendental, numinous meaning in nature or in the course of human life, goads man to question his own meaning and identity, which he, nevertheless, has to discover all by himself, not through a sense of union with nature and God but in his complete separation from both. By the time this poem was composed the poet had already learnt that the laws governing 'the inner creation' – man's slow disclosure of his predicament – were not to be found without but within the registering mind itself. It was the mind alone that would discover in the course of events a symbolic pattern which made life meaningful. That this pattern was part of the divine truth was shown by its numinosity, its intrinsic inevitability, but – despite this holy sign – it did not necessarily reveal anything of the divine will that let these meaningful patterns appear.

Nor was it enough to discover meaningful, or 'true' patterns for 'the inner creation' only. While it was true that 'the outer creation', the natural happening, could not offer relevant symbols for man's spiritual development, it had its own patterns, which man – goaded by his sense of numinosity – also felt called to find out. Again these patterns – the intrinsic 'laws' of the natural happening – were to be discovered wholly independent of the other spheres of existence, the human and the divine, without interpreting any of its features as *direct* equivalents of human life or of the properties of the godhead; whatever similarity there seemed to be, for example, in nature to human life, it was to be presented only to reveal better the originality of nature's own intrinsic pattern – and the radical difference of the latter from any human activity. The pattern was of nature alone, not of us or of God, and it was not the poet's concern even to try to understand its meaning:[41]

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 –
. . .
What Deed is Their's unto the General Nature –
What Plan
They severally – retard – or further –
Unknown –
(742, c. 1863)

If we say that Emerson was an epistemological realist, who would see in his pattern of ideas a direct reflection of the existing order of things, Dickinson – like the greatest of the Puritan philosophers, Jonathan Edwards – might be called a nominalist, who saw the truth of a symbolic pattern she had created in that it helped the mind to master reality by reconstructing for it a meaning. That this meaning, or 'truth', appeared in a spontaneously emerging pattern, which was not imposed from without, alone seemed to guarantee its truthfulness. She might well have accepted Edwards' definition of truth as a consistency between the (spontaneous) ideas of the mind:

All truth is in the mind, and only there. It is ideas, or what is in the mind alone, that can be the object of the mind. Falsehood is an inconsistent supposition of relations. The truth that is in the mind must be in that mind as to its object and everything pertaining to it. The only foundation of error is inadequateness and imperfection of ideas; for if the idea were perfect it would be impossible but that all its relations should be perfectly perceived.[42]

It is true, of course, that as a poet, a sophisticated enough artisan of the language, Dickinson would never aspire to mutually absolute consistency of her »ideas», i.e. her symbolic patterns; their truth was always to remain only relative and potential, not necessarily applicable outside the context in which it had been discovered (cf.p. 29). Yet, as I have also noted (p. 24), she probably felt, like Edwards, that all these relative facets of truth were adding up to make the final, absolute truth, and that, in Edwards' words, the eventual, »the only adequate definition of truth is the agreement of our ideas with existence» (which, ultimately, was identical with God).[43]

»While this epistemological problem – i.e. in what sense the truth she hoped to »tell» was, despite all its relativeness and symbolic 'slantness' also, absolute[44] – seemed impossible to solve, the very discrepancy between the 'virtuality' (or po-

tential reality) of the symbolic patterns she had created and the 'reality' of actual happening seemed to refer the former to some higher, more absolute sphere of being, where all paradoxes were reconciled:

> 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, last two stanzas, c. 1862)

Accordingly, she accepted the relativity and the paradoxical nature of her truth as due to her human incapacity to perceive its »superb surprise», and saw that the reconstructing of these patterns was all she could do; she might well have joined Eliot in his famous remark on the topic: »The rest is not our business».[45]

One of the most important phenomena for which to find a pattern was, of course, her own life. During the whole first stage of her career Dickinson would try to find out and establish a consistent, intrinsically 'true' set of symbols to represent her own human predicament. Part of this search was devoted to the testing of traditional 'ideas' – or symbols which represented these ideas – as to their consistency with the inner truth she was after; she accepted only those parts of the traditional view which fit in with the emerging pattern of her mind (not, though, on the dogmatic but on the symbolic and mythic level of experience).[46] To credit the great spiritual and psychological insight of the Puritan system, she seems to have accepted more than she rejected; in principle she felt the Puritan way to truth her own.

2

EXPLORING 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 I could either use it as such or make slight misuse of it and say: »A poem does not employ language but rather tests it» (the test in the latter case applying to the ideas, too, by questioning the conventional denotations of the words and symbols of the language employed).

Whatever the sources she derived her language from – whether from school books, sermons and hymns, the Bible, vernacular, Shakespeare, or contemporary American and British authors[2] – she certainly adopted it first as such, with all its conventional idioms, 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 later metaphysical quest of truth. Judging by her early letters, it was evidently very easy for the bright 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,[3] it would seem difficult indeed to mix up the witty »drollery» of Dickinson's early experiments with the wilful extravagance and deliberate distortion she was to display in the dialectics of her later verse. On the other hand, the difference between the early and the late Dickinson is certainly hard to define if we look only at her vocabulary or her thematic interests at different periods of her career. Her vocabulary, as has been shown[4], was not exceptionally large or unusually differing from common usage, nor did it probably change very much within her adult years;

her thematic interests, too, were largely decided by her personality, circumstances and the peculiar character of her inspiration and persisted much the same throughout her life[5]. To me the difference seems, in the first place, a technical one, most easily recognized in her developing exploitation of the figurative materials of the language and in the gradual refining and rearrangement of the symbolic patterns discovered thereby toward greater and greater universality and abstraction. Together these two activities make up her dialectics whose development I want of consider: her peculiar way of extracting truth out of her numinous experience to life.

Fortunately for my research, it was not only the young but also the mature poet's habit – possibly even in a greater degree than is customary with poets in general – to adhere to a happy trope, image or metaphor which she felt to offer enough room for personal symbolism. This she would employ over and over again, in various contexts and in different moods, to force out of its figurative dimensions all the symbolic analogy to her own life and feeling it could possibly afford. By keeping to these recurring motifs I hope to show most clearly the organic development of her dialectics throughout the years.

One of Dickinson's chief characteristics as a poet was, no doubt, a keen eye for analogies, both in nature and in human life, but her reliance on these analogies, as indices of truth, was greatly modified and altered in the course of time. In her youthful epistemological optimism she seems first to have believed that the conventional tropes and simple natural analogies, through which she sought to find expression for her expanding experience of life, should offer her – if not the truth itself – at least an almost direct reflection of it, and she took evident delight in applying every exalted trope or figure of speech which she admired for her verse:

> My wheel is in the dark.
> I cannot see a spoke –
> Yet know it's dripping feet
> Go round and round.
>
> My foot is on the Tide –
> An unfrequented road
> Yet have all roads
> A »Clearing»at the end –

Some have resigned the Loom –
Some – in the busy tomb
Find quaint employ.
Some with new – stately feet
Pass royal thro' the gate
Flinging the problem back at you and I.
(10, c. 1858; the copy to Sue)

It was, however, only by serving this kind of apprenticeship to the language (the exact length of which is impossible to tell now as we do not know whether she preserved all her earliest exercises when she started to 'fascicle' her poems in 1858)[6] that the young poet learnt the proper metaphoric and symbolic approach to reality for good. Although she first seems to have applied the images and metaphors which struck her as significant almost at random (as above), there gradually emerged from among them a few whose numinous significance, or 'truth', not only persisted but also condensed into a distinctly denotative pattern; their 'soft focus' (to make use of Philip Wheelwright's term) became less and less soft till it could carry the weight of most personal symbolism.[7]

To demonstrate this »sea-change« which all imagial[8] and metaphoric material adopted by Dickinson had to undergo I have chosen first, out of the Johnson store of her very earliest verse, a series of poems which centre around a very conventional trope indeed, viz., that of 'a 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 reflecting the poet's most urgent emotional need, her longing for spiritually (as well as sensually) gratifying harbourage:

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 place, her developing dexterity in the symbolic use of metaphors. 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 search of a new harbour – his fear of the sea in face of shipwreck – his lonely death at sea, each aspect reflecting the poet's prevalent state of mind.) This is, of course, a very simple kind of 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 over its inclusion in the selection »lest the malignant read into it more than that virgin recluse ever dreamed of putting there».[9] 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 probably suggests a greater degree of sensuality than was meant. Yet the poem deserves to be singled out for the admirable workmanship the poet has achieved by this stage; by constant testing she has finally tailored imagery which fits her awakening feeling perfectly close – closer, perhaps, and more revealing (even to herself) than she originally intended.

There is also another series of poems in which Dickinson used the 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 my 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)

Here – as in the previous series – it is important to note how quickly a Dickinsonian image changes its symbolic value – or rather yields new possible values. The first apostrophic metaphor seems to refer to her thirst for life, which the sea accordingly symbolizes; in the next instances, however, it seems to be either God or love(r), probably the latter, which for her little substance is the sea. This kind of 'extrapolation' of symbolic meaning seems to have been particularly necessary for the poet when dealing with conventional figurative material; as I shall point out later, the establishment of a new, entirely personal subject-analogue relation within the tritest metaphoric equation would often effect an astonishing 'rejuvenation' of its symbolic value. In this case, besides, the introduction of an entirely 'profane' subject – her beloved – in place of God or eternity (as in the conventional analogy) is a sort of *double entendre*, which lends the metaphor a definitely ironic undertone and makes it work on a different symbolic level altogether.[10]

In general, the 'serial' treatment of imagial or metaphoric material (almost automatically) leads to multidimensional symbolization. We may suppose that each of the principal images which the young poet chose to cultivate embodied for her a meaningful – or numinous – experience, which she saw reflected in the total, undifferentiated *Gestalt* of the image. To make this image yield the greatest possible amount of information about her experience – and its numinosity – she would then develop several related metaphors, often a whole cluster of them, based on it. This procedure, which we might call *a symbological analysis* of the poetic material in question, usually resulted in the emergence of a symbolic pattern on a new level of generality; a pattern, which attached itself to the initial image, or to the most prominent part of it, as its symbologic denotation.

Sometimes the emerging pattern was distinct 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 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* described above), 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.[11]

These 'rationalizing' definitions abound, as will be seen, in Dickinson's late verse (in which the abstractive principle has been brought much further, into the symbolic pattern itself), but as no. 76 above shows, they occur in her earliest poetry as well, to name an imagial whole, as part of the ensuing process of symbological analysis. To take another early example, in 1861 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 masterly, 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 the bird, in and out of season.

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, second stanza)

Another poem with MS from the same year (1858) but clearly later in 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 I here consider as the hub of the series. I quote it in 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 inseed
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, second stanza, c. 1859)

After all these exercises it is 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 symbologic focus for each group of images with which she was experimenting[12], the exposition of a definition did not mean that all *further* 'dialectic' development of certain imagery would stop at it; on the contrary. In no. 250 (see pp. 94–95) 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. However, a real 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 this has the exact manner of the poet's self-identification with the bird been confirmed, a hidden symbolic structure revealed. In no. 335, the admirable absurdness of bird life in its persistent hope and in all its symbolic reference to human life has been 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 a new spiritual revelation.

The poet has learnt by now a truly 'dialectical' way of analyzing her poetic materials, by metaphorizing them with a shifting symbolic focus, but also another kind of development has taken place, viz., in the type of metaphor which she is using for the analysis. The simple ('mental' or 'natural') analogy in which she first delighted has now been replaced by real metaphor, in which there exists a far deeper, *iconic* relation between the subject and the analogue. To find a harbour

in the arms of a lover is a deeply iconic metaphor compared, for example, to looking for heaven as the goal of our earthly progress, and the image of a freezing bird can be viewed and developed in several dimensions at once, which greatly adds to its symbological value. From now on both conventional and spontaneous imagery is adopted by the poet for further development only if it allows for multidimensional symbolic interpretation.[13]

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 her language through and through. In looking for new dimensions and levels of poetic symbolization she did not explore language widely but deeply, and by concentrating on the diverse metaphoric aspects of a single imagial motif she would often create a symbolic pattern relevant to a great 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 incorporates a symbolic structure rich and differentiated enough to allow us to speak of a completely personal set of poetic symbols which can assimilate several aspects of her personality at once.

This, actually, was the only kind of generality for which her symbols at this period (in the very early sixties) were reaching: the extension of their relevance in the sphere of personal experience and self-expression. The serial technique of metaphorizing was first developed and used to discover adequate symbols – or, possibly, a whole symbology – to represent her frustrated experience of life, and it was only after this that she began to use it to universalize and abstract the 'truths' embodied in the symbolic patterns of her first, most lavish output.

II

»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 or weakened by previous use?[14]

Although not depending on conventional imagery alone, the young poet seems generally to have preferred the former alternative. Above I have shown how

old (or trite) imagery in fresh metaphoric use would yield her symbols (or symbolic patterns) that were really 'renovated', i.e. enriched with new, highly personal connotations. The same happened when she chose to apply some universally accepted symbols ('steno-symbols', as Wheelwright calls them) to the fresh emotive material of her experience: they would gain, separately or in their total mythic patterns, new connotations which were not only transferences but also extensions of the old in entirely new spheres of experience.

Whether Dickinson's adherence to traditional imagery and symbology was due to her being too deeply rooted in her cultural background ever to get rid of it or to the fact that her creative talent was – like a Shakespeare's or a Brecht's – rather of the 'renovating' kind, seems unimportant to speculate. What is important, instead, is to note how she learnt to make use of the 'steno-symbols' of her culture both to criticize the traditional views and to express her own, unorthodox views on some central 'ontological' problems of life. Thus she would, for instance, repeatedly express her reverent feeling for nature – her first source of numinous inspiration – in the terms of the Christian dogma and ritual, which she could never make herself accept as such:

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; first stanza omitted)

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 sophistries 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 *noted* 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 to 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 for 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 to make clear, not only what the ritual was originally meant to be, but what an empty form the dogma itself had become. The same critique was effected by 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, third and fourth stanzas, 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.[15] 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'[16] 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, that 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 me 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 thoroughgoing critique of Christianity, others only her »underlying vital faith»[17] reflected in them, I tend to regard them, in the first place, as an attempt to find a common ground of myth, which could offer her ample metaphoric material to reflect her own points of view and plenty of ready-made, age-old symbols, understood by almost anybody within her own culture. Besides, her mind and thought were evidently so deeply embedded and trained in the Biblical tradition of Puritanism that even her negative reactions to it had always to be expressed in its own terminology. Thus she seems never to be criticizing the tradition or its dogma openly, on the ideological level, but only by metaphorizing it, by levelling it down to her other linguistic practice, where its symbols lose their tabu character and are 'tested', accepted or rejected, like any other symbols of her inherited language, according to their intrinsic expressiveness in the personal sphere of experience.

The mature poet'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.

I shall later discuss the dichotomy dogma – myth (which is not, of course, simply a linguistic one). Here I only want 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, I hope, why she, from the first, felt the Bible to be »so handy» (LI, 8):

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, the 1861 version)

In each of the above poems the poet makes use of the narrative, mythic pattern of the Biblical story, both to understand and to make understood her own spiritual position, and through this simultaneous reach for self-discovery and communication the story, as a true myth which is continually capable of reflecting existing human reality, gains astonishingly in new vitality. The age of Dickinson was, as I have observed elsewhere, post-dogmatic, one bent on »probing existence in art and with language»,[18] and for her generation (of which Hawthorne and Melville seem most akin to her in this respect) Puritanism was a linguistic rather than a spiritual heritage. Its phraseology and symbols were no longer felt to have any real spiritual force in them but seemed, at best, (free as they now were of all former ideological significance) to be means of searching 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 she found its value as a symbol, however changed, to be great. As a solid point of reference in general myth it would both reflect and reinforce her personal destiny.

III

The rationalizing, abstracting bent of Dickinson's poetic dialectic, which (at least partly) may have been due to her Puritan background (cf. pp. 26–30), resulted, as has been noted, in the highly idiosyncratic method of fixing the symbolic focus of certain imagery through a 'definition'. To be exact, one should distinguish between two types of 'definitions' in her early verse. The more typical, the deductive type and its function has been discussed above (pp. 41–45), while the other, the 'pseudo-definition' (from my point of view) consists of a commonplace idea or maxim analyzed and revalued 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».[19] This sounds almost like saying that abstract, discursive thought was what she was after, her point of departure and arrival, and that the metaphoric context was there just for illustration. The truth is just the reverse. She never needed to »objectify» ideas through metaphoricor symbolic imagery as she has originally *experienced them as potential symbolic patterns*, 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 recreation of thought into feeling,

and of Donne:

> A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility.[20]

A true poet does not argue in abstract concepts but in images and metaphors, for the 'truth' for which he is reaching is not a conceptual but a symbolic one. In discussing the series of Dickinson's poems centering around the presiding image of the bird, I have shown how she moved from the various metaphoric treatments of the image to 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 an illustration of the mental state symbolized by the image rather than *vice versa!* – which procedure, as was observed, was only part of the poetic abstraction.[21]

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 occurred to her. It appeared to her in the guise of a personally meaningful 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:[22]

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 deplored 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»,[23] 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 illustration, 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 *real* 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 perhaps, which is not, however, meant to catch or convey the meaning 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 image 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 of which alone the poet seems able to work out and apprehend the basic issue *for herself* of the universal truth so easily stated in its first imagial exposition.

After the most meaningful symbolic aspect of the imagial motif had been discovered, there were two further variants developed from 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 Goliah – was too large –
Or was myself – too small?
(540, c. 1862)

Fame of Myself, to justify,
All other Plaudit be
Superfluous – An Incense
Beyond Nescessity –

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 I have spoken of a 'symbolic pattern' abstracted out of certain imagery, what we encounter here could be called the next phase of the process, the abstracted pattern being 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, my chief concern here has been to investigate the symbolizing processes of Dickinson's early poetry, I must postpone the examination of her radically abstractive methods, so central for the understanding of her later poetry. Let this brief discussion, though, be an introduction to the subject.

IV

Dickinson's turning away from dogma to look for her own truth in the realm of language and poetry is displayed most clearly in a remarkable series of poems describing her numinous impressions of sunrise and sunset, the two natural phenomena to which she 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, which she keenly inspected 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 –
That is the break of Day!
(13, last stanza, 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 –
Anouncing me in other dells –
Unto the different dawn!
(24, last stanza, c. 1858)

Although dawn, as a poetic symbol, always seems to have retained for her the metaphoric undertone it once derived from her expectations of the eternal morning (cf. poems 101, 1619, pp. 182–183), the poet 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 teazing Purples – Afternoons –
The credulous – decoy –
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 symbolic expressiveness of 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.[24]

Neither can the Transcendental conviction that natural things are not only emblematic in themselves (of the ultimate, universal sameness of all happening) but also provide man with the only true symbols in *language* 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»[25], which Emerson hailed as the natural speech of man, long affected her descriptions of nature and made her repeatedly resort to personification as the chief metaphoric instrument by which she tried to solve the mystery of the numen. Thus it is easy to compile a whole list of early poems in which she sought, one 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 prize.
(11, first stanza, c. 1858)

The Guest is gold and crimson –
An Opal guest and gray –
Of Ermine is his doublet –
His Capuchin gay –
(15, first stanza, 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, first stanza, 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, first stanza, 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, the 1861 version)

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 I have discussed the way in which Dickinson would distil – in her 'definitions' –

the abstract, symbolic 'truth' out of the imagial wholes which she felt significant; here she seems to be adjusting her urgent but still formless feeling to various imagial patterns as if to see which might fit it best. We see »the metaphoric approach to reality» (p.37) practised here as she had learnt it by now, but, curious enough, none of these figurative patternings of her sensation seems 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 relevant symbolism. She evidently noticed it herself, and her rather solid, one-image personifications would 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 Wawe 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 a 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 naive 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:[26]

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, first stanza, 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 –
Enabled by his Royal Dress –
Myself distinguished God –
(595, c. 1862)

By this time Dickinson had obviously realized that her 'dialectical' method (of repeated metaphoric equation; cf. pp. 41–42) to question and analyze the symbolic significance of her experience was correct, or highly rewarding, but practising the method had also taught her that most of 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, symbolically equivalent, i.e. capable of reflecting each other's happening.

It may seem somewhat peculiar to ascribe (what is usually called) a person's spiritual or intellectual maturation to the development of his or her symbolizing faculties, but in the case of Emily Dickinson, of whose metaphysical

quest for truth poetry was the means and tool, the reversal of the normal usage seems only natural. It was in the symbolic patterns of the language that she always found the *confirmation* of a 'truth' she had only intuited elsewhere, and without her poetic reflection she would never have realized and carried out her individual predicament so resolutely. So also here. When symbolized and patterned in words the cherished natural and psychic images of girlhood were developed in a way whose logic seemed frighteningly true, her spiritual alienation sealed. Things which first had been 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, ever since the passive object of her perception.

It is with this existential discovery brought about by her unremitting but vain efforts to make poetry yield her a meaningful, united picture of life from (what we could call) traditional premises, that the first phase of Dickinson's stylistic development ends. During this period she was content to 'test' or 'explore' her linguistic resources by freely applying her symbols *to name* various objects and phenomena of interest whose meaning she wanted to analyze. That the process of symbolic naming resulted in a critique of the traditional symbols (with their traditionally ideological denotation) has already been noted; the fact that it also resulted in an analysis of the relations of 'the outer creation' and the self needs elucidation.

In brief, the very act of symbolic naming implies, on all levels, more than mere pragmatic exploitation of language to analyze objects of interest; besides obtaining through it a kind of control over various phenomena 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 this, for the very naming of an object – a symbolic representation of it – includes the act of differentiation. I 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 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.[27]

For our poet the differentiation of the inner and the outer, the subjective and the objective reality, whose spiritual implications will be the subject of my next two chapters, also resulted in a considerable alteration of her symbolizing techniques. While the first, unconscious dialectic of her poetry was, no doubt, the symbolic differentiation of the self from »the stream of consciousness», the differentiated self with »its changed relation to the content» of its consciousness had, in turn, to find a new, relevant symbolic approach to the outer reality, so alien to the newly discovered self. The development of these techniques will be the central issue of the last two chapters of this study.

3

EYES PUT OUT

Before the year 1861, which roughly marks the end of her experimentation period, Emily Dickinson largely, if not wholly, derived her inspiration from nature. This fact is but poorly displayed in most modern selections of her poetry, the compilers of which, 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 1), 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 of 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 hundred or so 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.1). I pick up a few typical examples of these early effusions (also see nos. 11, 15, 152, 219, 228, p. 60).

> 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, first and third stanzas, c. 1859)

While personification, based on naive anthropomorphizing sentiment, was simply a cliché in Dickinson's most trivial verse (»sent with a flower»; cf. no. 25 above, also see App.1), I have shown, and will show 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 has been observed, the metaphorizing of nature in human image could not but prove,

eventually, the analogies between the natural and the human world incomplete end 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 came to be then 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 – rudely dissynchronize 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 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 previously hailed 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 only been 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 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 take 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.1) 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 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 poeple. 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 me quote a passage from yet another poem, in which she metaphorizes the sense of elation which awakening to love had given her:[4]

I walked – as wings – my body bore –
The feet – I former used –
Unnescessary – 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, last four stanzas, c. 1862)

I 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 of prophesying and reflecting the former but no longer able 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 perhaps the most important metaphysical principle underlying and accounting for almost all Dickinson's 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 he does not find his truest human nature 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 believed she would discover the supreme principle of her spiritual being; what was lost in the former sphere of existence, 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; one would rather say that Dickinson renounced the world in order to gain *the world.* 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 the 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, pp. 19–20):

> 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 –
(572, first stanza, 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 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 symbolic 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, cf. pp. 15–20) which 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. She came to understand that to be a poet, who distils value and meaning out of phenomenal reality, meant *perpetuation of pain:* 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 herself 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 superceded (or swallowed up) by the virtual world of poetry. In the latter, man, the artist, could find his own temporal heaven, in the image of which, perhaps, some features of the eternal heaven of God might be seen 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 if 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 aspects of Puritan theology (such as immortality and heavenly recompense promised to »those who missed life's bouquet»), and 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 presbyterial 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 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 *the justification of her being*, 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 a Puritan's struggle for grace.

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 both in the terminology and methodology of Puritan theology, 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: (also see nos. 85, 317, pp. 51-52):

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

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 does'nt 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)

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 of 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 unorthodox 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 the Puritan thought cannot be objectively measured either, for, whatever use she made of certain contemporary models of the self or 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 single item of the Puritan doctrine, are always metaphoric (cf. pp. 46–53), their 'tenor' being found in her own private experience which they helped her to analyze; for her the acceptance of an ideal pattern did not, necessarily, mean the unequivocal acceptance of the ideal content.

In a previous chapter I 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. 19.). In that connection the term (»conversion») seemed only a metaphor, but here I want to discuss, briefly, the symbolic quality of the *act* itself, to show the manner in which Emily Dickinson would adapt the general 'truths' of theology to her life.

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 insufficiency of being. 'Sin' as a theological conception was evidently an incomprehensible, even a highly objectionable one to Dickinson, who rather seems to have subscribed to the Transcendental creed of man's innate goodness.[11] Nevertheless her mind – reminiscent of her early days at Mount Holyoke – was troubled by the general futility of her being, its lack of justification or, as she felt it, 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 Hear – *unshriven*!
(237, c. 1861)

We have seen Dickinson's sense of her 'gracelessness', her lack of redeeming love, reflected in various ways in her poetic imagery (esp. cf. poems 158, 248 pp. 77–78). 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 from 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. I do not, naturally enough, feel in a position to settle this question, but knowing her spiritual tension at the time, one may well suggest that whenever Wadsworth came, his coming was – either immediately or soon afterwards – understood as the sign of grace so long expected:[12]

> Except the 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 pp. 71–72)

For Dickinson, the discovery of her love for 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», it will be seen 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 my point clear, I 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]

We are to note, as Mrs. Laski points out, that even though Dickinson's mental crisis and reorientation followed the familiar behaviour pattern of a person suffering from 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 religon.[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 mental reorganization», especially as her »white election» was of her own free choice and

of lifelong 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 to? 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 it is to be remembered 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 of 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 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, 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
> 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 I shall, in a way, go back to the beginning and examine the whole process from a somewhat different angle, from that of her developing personality, which will, I hope, also expose some new aspects of her development as a poet. The reader is asked 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 (cf.p. 64), is of unique origin and importance for him. Based as it is 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 acepted as the *données* of the drama.[2]

Brooks' view of the inner dynamics of a poem seems substantially correct. In this connection, however, I should like to point out that often a poem only *poses* the poet's emotive attitudes – his potential reactions – in the form of images and metaphors, the aesthetic equilibrium of which offers merely a temporary balance, not a factual »unification of attitudes into a hierarchy subordinated to a total and governing attitude». I should really be content to speak of an »aesthetic equilibrium» only, as it seems to me 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 that 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 this 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', which is immediately followed not by an argument, but by a challenge to argue. The dialectic of the poem thus consists of a 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 resolution 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. It has been found possible on the stage, especially in the so-called Theatre of the Absurd, to show the development of a human situation so intrinsically problematic as to offer no seeming solution. In this sense, true, Dickinson's poem may also be called dramatic, as it too poses a metaphysical question rather than attempts to answer one.

Returning to my argument about the »aesthetic» balance created between the images and metaphors representing the poet's attitude(s) within a poem, I shall try to qualify the term. I have used it mainly to underline 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 denotation, even the number of false syllogisms is limited, while in poetry the very 'premises', the symbolic images launched as metaphors, are liable to continual transformation, especially when played against each other, and so seem to be most unreliable carriers of meanings. On the other hand, *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.* As it is 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 I do not mean that poetry is indispensable to us merely because it is a sort of mental gymnastics leading to a precarious balance, or 'equilibrium', of our emotional life. That would reduce the function of poetry to 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 therefore 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.

It is only natural that a poet's symbology should be subject to constant transformation and reshaping. All his symbols, expressive though they are of his central 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 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 appreance 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 attempt to elaborate the metaphoric process through which symbols are generally born, 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 about 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 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), and 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 to have deteriorated least. 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, I also like to imagine 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, which the reader can accept or reject. His or her private mythology may, of course, combine bits and pieces of popular myths, even dogmas, which have been assimilated in it; on this individual level of myth-making, however, they are 'rejuvenated', become understandable, acceptable to us.

I have already spoken of Emily Dickinson's rejection of religious dogma, which she could make palatable to herself only on the mythic level (p. 47 ff.). I have also observed her »conversion to be a poet» (pp. 83–84), which, no doubt, also expressed her unqualified 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 I have followed the establishment of her private symbology) I shall concentrate on the formation and significance of a poetic myth from Dickinson's own point of view, as the only possible means of her spiritual adjustment. The core of her myth 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 apprearance 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 me, however, the main interest of these symbolic masks – or 'roles', as it more correct to call them here, – lies in the way in which they seem to have 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 inspired 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. It can also be seen that many of the early imagial motifs chosen for serial development were highly dramatic and especially suitable for self-dramatization through the various roles that they could offer (cf. pp. 37–45; for the bird motif, also see

above no. 141). Accordingly she insisted, for a good many years, on identifying herself with a meek daisy on the lawn, and, however affected and Victorian this kind of posturing may seem, there was an 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 her own choice, it anticipated the homely, unpretentious role of an old maid in the 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 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 which was already at stake. The most pathetic thing to note is 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, the Daisy at the feet of her Maker was evidently a mental pose which she, for a considerable time, felt to be satisfactory in several respects, and even if it seems possible 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; first stanza omitted)

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
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 it is possible to think that Eden is not necessarily the kingdom of heaven but a far more worldly happiness which the poet felt she could still, to everyone else's surprise, 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 the 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 has been pointed out, sometimes stick to them even when they were no longer felt to be satisfactory. In these cases her expressive roles really tended to turn into 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 the Daisy sitting humbly at the throne of her heavenly Master that Emily Dickinson had written to Wadsworth and asked for spiritual advice; she still called herself the 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 that the roles so far either allotted her or created by herself had long been felt to be insufficient. From it can be also seen 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 involuntarily to give the aid he was asked for, so Wadsworth, knowingly or unknowingly, 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 shunning 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 *namelessness* 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 *partial* symbols to provide insight into her spiritual confusion.

A true myth, on the contrary, is the total exteriorization of man's inner *problématique*, 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. I 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 natural human being she must have suffered more than her share of the pangs of disappointed love – but what I shall 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 unrequited love for Charles Wadsworth became the symbol relevant to all her frustrated experience – as a woman, believer, and poet – and around him she span the interpretation of both her temporal and eternal destiny, which so far had lacked this central piece.[12]

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 probably did not feel she was lying. What she had felt and written before, 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 I have shown above the readiness with which the symbolic focus within a certain group of Dickinson's images is shifted from one metaphoric treatment of it to another (cf. p. 41), then now it may be noted that the centre of all her symbology is suddenly – as if by a movement of a conjurer's wand – removed into a new 'tenor'. Whether the former practice was inducive of this event can only be suggested here; in any case the new centre, the symbolic image of the beloved, from now on 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 I discussed the progressive development of Dickinson's early sea imagery (pp. 36–41), I shall give here two of the very first examples of her 'nuptial verse', in which we can see the almost furious collision 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 rejecting, for instance, all her earlier 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 now overturned Dickinson's (already shattering) spiritual balance; no symbols exploited hereto seem sufficient to describe it. The ecstasy which she has felt for nature does not seem in the least analogous with 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 –
»Shylook»? 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 if he is pledged to God as His representative on earth, equivalent of the love we are to 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. 77–78), she never referred to Wadsworth as Jesus; Christ, for her, was obviously only another instance of the general law of redemptive suffering, which she had discovered to apply to her own life. Yet the idea of a mediator, or a 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, first stanza, 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, first two stanzas, early 1862)

It is clear by now, I think, that Dickinson myth of love as a 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 consumma-

tion of love itself (273, 336). 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. In its one central, symbolic metaphor she could now realize whatever of life and herself she had till now hypothesized – 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 after. 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 it 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, the penciled draft, 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. It should also be noted 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 of the triumph of her mighty love which knew no impediments.

IV

Having discussed, at 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]

That she was well aware that art has (in Northrop Frye's words) »a relation to reality which is neither direct nor negative, but potential»,[17] is also clear from

those poems in which Dickinson's reflects on her myth as poetry and on herself »as the Representative of the Verse» (also cf., esp. last stanza of, no. 569, p. 76):

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, last two stanzas, c. 1862)

I dwe[l]l in Possibility –
A fairer House than Prose –
More numerous of Windows –
Superior – for Doors –
(657, first stanza, 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 the poet, the boundaries of reality and fiction were clear, and that she knew well when she was living in which. 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 confuse fiction and reality as the former was so very much 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), I have sometimes wondered whether she did not, as a poet, succeed in where Sartre thought 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]

This observation brings us very close to the solution of another popular Dickinsonian problem, viz., whether – and in what respect if any – she was a mystic. It is undeniable that many of her poems, both early and later, bear the impress of a mystic experience, but in the quality of this experience, as well as in its techical realization in poetic symbols, there is a definite alteration over the years.

If we examine, for instance, the very first poems quoted above (p. 16), we see in them reflected a numinous experience which can be clearly classified as 'nature mysticism', no doubt the most common kind of mystic experience.[20] But, as has

been pointed out several times, although nature as the source of poetic inspiration never lost its importance for Dickinson, as a gate of access to divinity it was quite soon disqualified (cf. p. 67 ff.). Nature ecstasies were, as we have seen, substituted by a similarly ecstatic exultation in self-discovery through sacrificial love (as depicted, for instance, in the poems quoted above, pp. 101–103); as a supposed mystic state of consciousness the latter needs, however, further qualification.

According to Professor Zaehner, 'nature mysticism', »the impression of reality» (or »cosmic consciousness»)[21] can hardly be called mysticism at all (in the most rigorously religious sense), and even in mysticism proper he distinguishes between two branches:

> Here, then, are two distinct and mutually opposed types of mysticism, – the monist and the theistic. This is not a question of Christianity and Islam *versus* Hinduism and Buddhism: it is an unbridgeable gulf between all those who see God as incomparably greater than oneself, though He is, at the same time, the root and ground of one's being, and those who maintain that soul and God are one and the same and that all else is pure illusion.[22]

As Professor Zaehner points put, »the Christian mystical tradition is, on the whole, strongly opposed to monism», and Emersonian pantheism would probably have appeared as the starkest kind of heresy for a Puritan.[23] With all her Protestant background Emily Dickinson could not possibly have accepted the self-centred, self-sufficient 'pan-en-henic' experience as the final 'truth' of her existence; for her, as for her forebears, God for ever remained »unlike His creation in every respect»[24] and could not be reached through the natural forms of this world (cf. p. 31 above). Hers was a definitely theistic view, although she did not, like a theistic mystic, aspire to »an intimate communion of the human soul with its Maker».[25]

Yet to say that »she experienced [only] the first stage of the Mystic Way – the profound vitalizing perception of an Absolute Power –» is not enough, nor did she simply »fail» (as she never probably tried) to achieve »the goal of the Mystic Way – the unitive life or the feeling of oneness with the Divine». Even if it is admitted that »she obviously never became a mystic in the sense of achieving complete harmony with a transcendental order»,[26] it is possible to define her case far more exactly.

In fact, Prodessor Zaehner has another interesting case of mystic experience

(or attitude) to offer, very similar to Dickinson's and closely comparable to hers as it is a writer's: that of Marcel Proust, out of whose mystic vision »sprang the whole theory that was to be brought to its triumphant conclusion in *Le Temps retrouvé*, 'Time rediscovered', or the finding of eternity within the human self». According to Zaehner, Proust's experience,

> though superficially it may have much in common with the ecstasies of the [natural mystic] type in that there is the same feeling of joyous release and of union with something that is normally imperceptible to the everyday ego, is really quite different; for whereas the nature mystics . . . all seem to experience a kind of union with Nature or oneness with all things, Proust, on the contrary, experiences his whole individual life as being integrated outside time. In the one case . . . it is the impression that the human being in some sense comprises all Nature or is dissolved into Nature; in the other it is the certainty that one has relized one's own soul as it is in eternity.[27]

Perhaps the whole problem of the different types of mystic experience and their mutual supremacy rests, as Zaehner seems – unwillingly – to imply,[28] on temperamental grounds, and in the case of Proust (and Dickinson) we have quite a peculiar type which cannot be strictly classified as any of the 'principal' types, natural, theistic or monistic. Proust's vision – or rather a whole series of visions, carefully recorded at various points of the enormous narrative[29] – is not, as Zaehner points out, only a motif but the very *motive* of the whole work: the latter was, in fact, only a laborious reconstruction of the entire disintegration, futility and *ennui* of life as a background for those very few Bergsonian moments in which »the past met the present, and both were felt with a totally new intensity».[30] Thus it was a symbolic realization of Proust's experience of the mode and conditions of his own human predicament, the very myth of his life which would integrate his personality in a final synthesis.

That the mystic – i.e. integrative – insight into one's own condition can be thus perpetuated in an 'art symbol'[31] adds a new, reflective dimension to it. In general, mystic experience is 'flitting', evanescent, devoid of any describable features. This particular kind of it seems, however, fixable in poetic symbology or myth, which, in turn, allows for a reproduction of it and a further reflection on its superb truth. Many times it seems that the symbol and the mystic experience occur simultaneously, the former almost conditioning the latter, which thus, through this instrumentality, gains a markedly different quality from all other kinds of mystic

experience, which do not presuppose – or are even incapable of – any kind of 'material' description or formulation.

Another case of an artist whose self-revelation or 'individuation'[32] required the formation of a poetic myth based on a mystic insight is offered by Jean Genet, of whom Sartre writes:

> Il n'est pas rare, en effet, qu'une mémoire condense en un seul moment mythique les contingences et les perpétuels recommencements d'une histoire individuelle. Ce qui compte, c'est que Genet a vécu et ne cesse de revivre cette période de sa vie comme si elle n' avait duré qu'un instant. Or qui dit »instant» dit *instant fatal:* l'instant c'est l'enveloppement réciproque et contradictoire de l'avant par l'après; on est encore ce qu'on va cesser d'être et déjà ce qu'on va devenir; on vit sa mort, on meurt sa vie; on se sent soi-même et un autre, l'éternel est présent dans un atome de durée; au sein de la vie la plus pleine on pressent qu'on ne fera plus que survivre, on a peur de l'avenir. C'est le temps de l'angoisse et de l'héroïsme, du plaisir et de la destruction: il suffit d'un instant pour détruire, pour jouir, pour tuer, pour se faire tuer, pour faire sa fortune sur un coup de dés.[33]

It seems, indeed, a characteristic tendency of all self-orientative myth-making to concentrate one's – possibly very gradual – spiritual development on certain momentous instants, which are interpreted – sometimes only in retrospective reflection – as turning points of one's fate and sudden as revelations or conversions. For Genet it was the moment when he first realized that the only way to assert his individual existence was as *un voleur*, in full, spontaneous acceptance and elaborate realization on the symbolic level of the very identity which he abhorred and for which society had rejected him.[34] For Proust it was the realization that in his own all-retaining consciousness he had an access to the past which he could not only recall but also *relive*, make his life meaningful by finding it a symbolic pattern by uniting the rediscovered past with the present. As to Dickinson, her fatal moment was created, possibly afterwards, out of her (in itself quite neutral) meeting with Wadsworth, whose unexpected visit at a critical period of her life opened up the channel along which she would later manage to direct the most vital impulses of her being into a full symbolic realization (cf. p. 81 above). In the image of »the Day» (cf. no. 356, p. 103), which gradually attracted to itself all the exultation and frustration she felt even in later years, she would continuously see both her past and future reflected; in it she – in Sartre 's words – »lived her death, died her life»: returned to it, indeed, as to the place of birth of her new self[35].

While it is true that this spiritual locality never lost its capacity to arouse in Dickinson a numinous thrill, a reflex of the mystic insight which had once forced her to recognize her true identity and fate as if in one flash, the mystic experience itself seems never to have recurred in the same intensity. Yet her confidence in the vision she once had never failed, which can be seen in its' fruits'[35], in the determination with which she – like the two other authors – pursued her lonely career. On the other hand, once the vision had been realized through the symbolic act of the »white election» and in the ritual of the symbolic word, her reflection on the achievement again assumed some of the exalted tones of the original experience, this time, however, without the anguish which the loss of one's old identity always brings about:

On a Columnar Self –
How ample to rely
In Tumult – or Extremity –
How good the Certainty

That Lever cannot pry –
And Wedge cannot divide
Conviction – That Granitic Base –
Though None be on our Side –

Suffice Us – for a Crowd –
Ourself – and Rectitude –
And that Assembly – not far off
From furthest Spirit – God –
(789, c. 1863)

The focus of the mystic light which first showed the poet only her desolate fate in this life has been removed from this world on to eternity where the roots of her being, thanks to her heroic »renunciation», now reach. It should be noted again that the poet does not pretend – or even care – to attain to God, although He seems to dwell in close vicinity. Hers is not the struggle of a theistic mystic for total dissolution in divinity but the very contrary: a determined (and very Puritan) quest for *personal* immortality, of which her poetic vision has been the affirmation, »the rounding off of an individual personality in both past and present and in eternity.»[37]

Although it does not easily fit in any 'normal' categories of the mystic experience, Dickinson's poetic vision cannot be denied genuiness as one; in its supraindividual other-worldliness or 'virtual' reality (see pp. 72–74, 102 above) it is certainly a phenomenon »in which sense perception and discursive thought are transcended in an immediate apperception of a unity or union which is apprehended as lying beyond and transcending the multiplicity of the world as we know it».[38] It seems, indeed, that we have here a very special kind of mystic experience – not uncommon among writers and poets – which, instead of being 'mute', finds the embodiment of the higher truth revealed as mystic insight in a symbol ('art symbol') or in an archetypal pattern of events (myth), by means of which the experience can be, at least partially, perpetuated and reflected upon. If we remember that the eventual outcome of a mystic experience of this kind may be the integration of the self, or 'individuation', we cannot help noticing that in it we have a very Western – and a very modern – kind of mysticism, which does not mean an escape back to »naked existence» (as in 'nature mysticism')[39] or a return to the godhead (the goal of theistic mysticism) but a free and full acceptance of one's human predicament, man spiritual responsibility as an individual being.

In the next chapter I shall discuss the results of this sort of 'instrumental' individuation from the point of view of the instrument, poetry (poetic language). As poetry came to be understood by Dickinson as an instrument, not only of self-expression but of self-revelation and mystic vision, it was also exploited – i.e. ruthlessly manipulated – as such. This, I think, is again typical of all mystic visionaries among poets and artists;[40] among the moderns James Joyce is a ready example to be added to the ones mentioned above.

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 contacting the truly numinous, and to assert herself as one, she developed a passionate attachment for nature, her first inspiration and numinous embodiment of poetic truth. Above I 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 development as a verbal artist as of her psychic and intellectual maturation (pp. 63–65). In the last two chapters my chief concern has been to account for the spiritual implications of her development as a poet. Returning now to examine her evolving poetic techniques, a far more difficult task is presented, that of revealing the stylistic whys and wherefores of her progressive dialectic.

In looking for an adequate model to describe the conspicuous change which took place in Dickinson's style during her most productive years 1862–64 (see App. 1) I 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 presented the following counter-argument:

> 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 empathic 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 present:

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, certainly, 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 I 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, it would be better to speak of the impulse of *self-objectification*, or *individuation*, 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 existence now also symbolically differentiated and isolated from the rest of the universe, felt bitterly her alienation from the 'outer creation', it was not for self-alienation, for an escape from the Self alone, 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 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 the ultimate truth from »the seeming arbitrariness of organic existence in general» was clearly 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 I 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 *empathy* (Einfühlung) by two other terms *Beseelung* and *Erfühlung*, which to some 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 himself empathically in the world outside himself, man has two ways to choose,

> die »Beseelung», die in Überströmen der eigenen schöpferischen Seele die Welt sich ringsum anverwandelt in eigner Einheit, und entgegengerichtet ein Fühlvermögen, das wir vorausgreifend »Erfühlung» nennen, als die Kraft, sich Anderes fühlend zu erschlies-

sen, unter Hintanstellung und Absehung vom Ich. Wirklich hat sich in beiden Richtungen die Sprache als Schöpfung bewegt; zwischen beiden Polen, 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 those 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) realized 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 her changing type of metaphor (in Pongs' category): *Beseelung*, once the poetic principle of her »overflowing», identity-seeking self, gave way gradually 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 antithesis, 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 afterlife, 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 the increasing abstractness of expression I shall, accordingly, first examine her descriptions of nature, in which she tried, by means of *Erfühlung*, »empathizingly participate in the other». Thus, I 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. I 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 herself to be a mere spectator of distant heavenly revels (see pp. 62–65):

> 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 is shown in the above example, she also experimented with a technique unknown until now. I have called it 'verbal painting', and it continued over a number of years and was 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. 61–62).

Indeed, at times it seems as if she, however habituated her mind was to 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 descriptive 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 the 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 Camboge 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 poetic image was never an end in itself, but interesting mainly for the implicit symbolic 'truth' it would present to her for abstraction. Enough examples of the progressive abstraction of Dickinson's early imagery (via metaphoric treatment of sensory or imaginative material) have been given above to show that it took place in order to find central symbols for the objectification of her own inmost experience, for the cognition of an entirely subjective state (cf. p. 46). Here, again, one finds the beginnings of another kind of abstractive process, which tends 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, are seen as pregnant with universal meaning, quite independent of her own existence, and the poet's task seems to be to investigate the signification 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 second chapter I have dealt with the 'symbological analysis' to which young Dickinson subjected all her imagery till a distinct symbolic pattern emerged; this she would then name by an abstract noun or define by an abstractive metaphor (see pp. 41–46). Here we meet the same principle of metaphoric definition in the closing stanzas of 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 an imagial pattern, 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 pattern 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 distortions, »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 in her vision and trusted her tool, language, more than ever, however »objectively» she tended to direct both. As Pongs observes, this confidence in 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 (cf. pp. 29–30 above).

Now it may also be noted that, whereas Dickinson in her early poetry found the mysteries of nature – as well as her own ignorance of them – very teasing indeed (cf. p. 16, nos. 122, 137, 155), in her later verse we discern but little impatience with the impenetrable phenomenality of the world; in fact it seems that her 'analysed' impressions were felt sufficient in themselves. It was the symbolic *Gestalt*, the retained 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 farthest possible abstraction 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 –

The Acre gives them – Place –
They – Him – Attention of Passer 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 one especially notes 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 memories), before our eyes. The second example, again, is Dickinson's reflection on phenomenality, such as she has learnt to expose it by this time. 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* includes two types: the 'mystic' (mystische) and the 'magic' (magische).[8] Reviewing Pongs' typology, Austin Warren and René Wellek note on the mutual 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 it is necessary to add, however, as I have already pointed out, 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». It is, anyway, very important to note her later 'magical' frame of mind. To illustrate its manifestations in her poetry, I shall take some further examples of her treatment of natural subjects.

Let me first take a poem on a 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 –
(the 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, and to this are added several other human features in the landscape (l. 4, ll. 5–8, ll. 17–18). 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 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 the alterations seem to be justified. The swiftness of the transformations of snowy nature is, this time, what enchants the poet, and it is metaphorically 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 similarity to the animal world. Thus organic movements 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 experiments at symbolic abstraction 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, pp. 121–122 above); this magical technique of disorganizing 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 I shall also point out in 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 own dualistic experience of life, and had, from time to time, also resorted to her earlier mythical habit 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

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, generally admired, sometimes abused, endlessly 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, but did not actually, exist.

Critique on human vanity in technological achievement? Maybe; possibly also a critical comment 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 when he sees it in nature as contrasted with 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 the mockery of man's poor attempts 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, object-searching metaphor of an alienated soul, I 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. In doing this, she trusted 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 in exerting 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 from 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 logical difference between 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, last stanza)

> 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, second stanza)

> 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, first stanza)

As noted earlier, both prayer and verbal magic as implements of rhetoric are originally based on a wish to change the prevailing situation, even to bring into existence 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 one may 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 any of the poems; on the contrary, a too great emotive charge seems to break down the effect, as is seen in Dickinson's first magical incantations of frustrated love (nos. 232, 236, pp. 98–99). Once, however, the truly magical stage of metaphoric presentation has been reached, both its motivation and function seem curiously to change. The element of naive faith has altogether disappeared and has been replaced 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, I think, lies the main difference between the two modes of magical language. As a rhetorical device, prayer is still comparatively crude as it only suggests, makes the wish potential, while magic affirms, proves, and makes the potential *virtual* (again to use the famous Langerian term), that is, conditionally real. By an exertion of language, magical metaphor *passes the line between wish and achievement*, moves the poetic act from potentiality to virtuality, makes available in the realm of poetry what is found lacking, but spiritually indispensable, in reality.

Again it seems difficult to decide how far this switch-over from naive magic to sophisticated magic is a psychological and how far a linguistic phenomenon. Above I 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 I 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, neces-

sarily, 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 denying the fact that behind magical metaphor, as its motivation, is a factual, existent need of something, but it is no longer effected merely for the expression or a compensatory, symbolic 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 poet the experience not of a 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»; through which her myth, otherwise incomplete, is 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 can be seen, 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 I have already given an example above, in 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. 100). 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 the 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 all phenomenal happening had earlier seemed only a sign of some spiritual reality, now the poet 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 *natural symbols* of her metaphysical divinations, were now made involuntary 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 are again reminiscent of a ritual; a kind of number magic (a popular device of the folklore) 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–

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 used 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, a reverse view of her magic is found, which is a critique of magical language in general: the poet, who has attempted in her poetry to capture 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.

One notes the painful dizziness caused in the poet's mind by an oscillation between her two worlds of reality and virtuality, which cannot, by any effort of will, be made to fuse. As has been observed (pp. 104–106), Dickinson was 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, and within this virtual system these relations are 'true' – truer than anything in the unsystematic world of our everyday existence – but they do not, necessarily, apply outside it. Thus the uses of magical metaphor must be very sophisticated, fully conscious of the non-natural, unreal 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 extravagant practices 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 – a 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 spoiled by a cliché-like description 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 was also a challenge to 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 perhaps the most striking paradox of Dickinson's life and poetry that while renouncing in her most intimate, sensuous verse the Puritan doctrine of the transcendence of the divine truth and the impossibility of absolute 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 these, I should like 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 had eventually come 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 the dead – she could not induce the actual state of otherness that she coveted, she would try to grasp death on the symbolic level. By performing the rites of death metaphorically, she would 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 death.[15] Some examples of her early approach to the subject will clarify this:

There's something quieter than sleep
Within this inner room!
It wears a sprig 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?
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 bewilderment 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 death's numinosity.

On the other hand, it was obviously not only the numinous but also the dramatic aspects of death that attracted the young poet, and, like her other 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 there are repeated references to death as the only democratic act of our lives (nos. 98, 171), 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 the dead body) to her own mental state is in the following poem, which can be compared, 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 endless routine of her daily chores,[16] but next year the same outlet is used for 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 –

And when they all were seated,
A service, 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) it is already possible to 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
Be witnessed – in the Room –

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

With Blue – uncertain stumbling Buzz –
Between the light – and me –
And then the Windows failed – and then
I could not see to see –
(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, some of the original frenzy of the poet's wish to die, and of her (not merely unpleasant) horror at the idea (cf. no. 281 above) can still be discerned; 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. However, most of her similes state that it only »tasted like» death, while in no. 465 she bluntly tells us that she »died», not merely 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. 104 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, the poet seems to be saying, is what is experienced at death, only the suffocation and distress, none of the majesty, which follows.

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 with it she has given several other, more or less ritualistic accounts,[17] but to show its symbolic importance in her spiritual development, I have chosen a group of three longer poems, in which, by means of a narrative sequence, she seems to indicate that her point of reference has, symbolically, been removed from this life to the next, that is, to eternity. In all of them, life is viewed as if from beyond death, as something distant; similarity with those of the 'nuptial' poems which also view the »girl's life» as one definitely past is obvious (cf. nos. 356, 461, p. 103), although these poems, of course, exhibit a darker view of her existential situation. As the poems are long, I shall only give extracts here:

'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 –
. . .

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 paussed 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 first two 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 p. 71) and 348 (»I dreaded that first Robin so», p. 69), 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 for life.[18] No. 712, again, puts the case differently. A direct allegory, it relates the poet's history of alienation in simple, unequivocal terms: death, which once symbolically took possession of her, has made her a dweller of the tomb, who has no expectations till Doomsday, no obligations to put on time, all on eternity.

In one of her nuptial poems Dickinson has also clearly expressed her sense of already living beyond death, in eternal, infinite time. This poem seems to link together her principal motifs of love and death in a highly meaningful manner (cf. e.g. nos. 273, 336, p. 101):

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 an inhabitant, no longer of this, but of the life to come, 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 will. On this sentiment is based both her increasingly bold exploitation of (magical) metaphors and her ever increasing tendency for abstraction; the virtualization and patterning of her experience of the world was made possible and was justified by her belonging, if not yet *in esse*, at least symbolically *in posse*, to another category of beings than the rest of men. »A Member of the Cloud» (273, p. 101), she needed to obey no other exaction than that of her own vision.

VI

I have argued more than once 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 the simple naming of things and phenomena in 'natural' met-

aphors she came to recognize their basic dissimilarity (pp. 63–65), and this recognition transmuted her (basically) mythic way of viewing the world into a magic volition to master its diversity by means of her language. In the process the naive, 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 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 disintegrating universe (cf. pp. 114–116).

Here it may be useful to recall what Philip Wheelwright says of the two functions of metaphoric activity, which are »the outreaching and the combining», and which he distinguishes 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.[19]

In its bold equations and its tendency to synthetic combinations Dickinson's later use of magical metaphor can be called diaphoric as well. If, for instance, her poems on natural motifs from different periods are compared (see pp. 116–122), it can be seen 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, 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).[20] This is only natural if the diaphoric, synthetic presentation of the world is regarded 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 quoted above (p. 118), I shall give two other examples of imagery in the choice of which one might even see 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 Hose –
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 an apparently incongruous but subtle metaphor for a bird on its bough! Dickinson's mature skill in catching and abstracting motion has been noted above (see pp. 123–126), and here are two other examples of her skill in using imagial and rhythmic timing to make her scenes move at the desired speed. If, in Wheelwright's words, »the role of epiphor is to hint significance, the role of diaphor is to create presence»,[21] both the poems are mainly diaphoric in their use of imagery. As it was noted earlier(pp. 116–122), the poet's aim at the time seems to have been only to describe and abstract phenomenality at its most essential. Because the aim of her metaphorizing here is to reach for the metaphysical universality of things simply 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 the reader's – delighted surprise at the vanishing scenes of nature.

In no. 500, besides the first breathtaking diaphor, it should be observed that the verbal suspense in the second stanza does not actually »slacken» till the beginning of the third, in which the real object of the bird's supposed interet emerges and releases him; the suspense is so tense that the last two neutrallysreflective 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 is, again, »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, there are the most appalling diaphoric equations to 'dead' matter, not to show any similarity in it to man, but in his experience of deadness to it. In addition to all the diaphoric scenes of dying or death examined above (see pp. 138–141), I shall give a few more 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 Degreeless Noon –
>
> It will not stir for Doctor's –
> This Pendulum of snow –
> The Shopman importunes it –
> While cool – concernless No –
>
> Nods from the Gilded pointers –
> Nods from the Seconds slim –

Decades of Arrogence 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, third and fourth stanzas; a 1872 redaction of the 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'or –
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 refers not only to the beloved bee but also to the earlier exercises on the motif (e.g. nos. 211, 213, 214 in Johnson), which gives it, too, a pungently diaphoric undertone.

Diaphoric usage of imagery is characteristic of much of Emily Dickinson's later poetry, especially in the sense that her analogues for objective perception and inner experience alike tend to be derived from more and more distant and abstract spheres of language. Her peculiar fondness for highly specialized and abstractive jargon seems, however, part and parcel of her other abstractive tendencies, and so all of them – whether symbolic, syntactic or metric in character – will be examined in our last chapter under the common epithet of 'ellipsis'. As the elliptic vein is present in her verse from the very beginning, it may be somewhat misleading to discuss it last, as if attributing it only to the last phase of her stylistic development; yet it is true that all the spiritual and technical development described above was needed before the passion for elliptic abstraction became the prime feature of her late verse.

6

ELLIPSIS, SOUND AND SENSE

Dickinson's adoption of the English psalmodic metres as the rhythmic basis of her poetic experimentations had abviously several, more or less instinctive motives. One of them – the largely devotional quality of her early verse – has already been touched above (pp. 15–20), and although I could argue, like Paul Fussell Jr. or Charles R. Anderson,[1] that psalmodic cadences often lend an undertone of irony to her probings of inner truth, it is mostly irony of disbelief striving for belief and despairing at 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 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, second stanqa, 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 climactic movement that overleaped sequences in its passion for consiseness. 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. 49) or her magical meetings with death (nos. 455, 529, 712, pp. 142–143), all depicted in traditional ballad quatrains, it seems truer to say that she resorts to the tradition *for certain purposes* rather than »rarely». In the same way 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 really very strange 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 to the purport of his poetic activity. It is apparently not 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 climactic 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 *dialectical* unit of verse, that is, the most concise 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.

The following examples of couplets, triplets and quatrains, which the poet wrote as independent maxims, will clarify the argument:

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 Culprit – *Life!*
(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 congruous (or incongruous) images or ideas, without any properly dramatic tension in their exposition. To create dramatic tension, more room is needed, certainly, 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, to the required length,[10] for illustration, opposition, or outcome of the original statement (cf. no. 301, p. 86).

Before I begin to examine the peculiar characteristics of the quatrain form as used by Dickinson, it is worth considering whether the young poet, always so inclined to drop an occasional maxim, had any popular model, *more* dialectical than hymnody or balladry, for her reflective practices.

Professor Anderson has hinted at »a third sub-literary use of this [quatrain] stanza that may have had implications for her, the Mother Goose Rhymes».[11] This suggestion deserves consideration. First of all, nursery rhymes seem to be characterized by the same conciseness and tendency to elliptic style as Dickinson's verse, and, if it were not the popular ballad that taught her the art of »strong colloquial idioms» or »proximate rhymes» (so irritating to the refined ear), it may 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. Very often her eye and ear for the absurd detail in social intercourse, too, catch 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 word play certainly had its nearest equal in the popular riddle,[14] some nursery rhymes may have offered her models for humorously sympathetic natural observation. It is also an attractive 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 the two other quatrain traditions, with their own rhetoric devices, for narrative and devotional purposes, and, together, the 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 was able to find an expression for the religious scruples of her Puritan mind as well as a voice for her ritual incantations of a devotee through this verse form. As she grew older and more sophis-

ticated, she rediscovered in the quatrain other, equally congenial dimensions of expression: the elliptic pithiness of a nursery rhyme rhetoric and syntax.

II

As I argued 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, it is 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. When the very first items of the Johnson edition of her verse are examined (e.g. nos. 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; the reader may also study the series of early poems given pp. 36–39), it is easily noted that parallelism in them is mostly mere repetition, used for cumulative emphasis of the initial poetic statement and characterized by very little advancing movement (no. 11 being the most notable exception).[17] A similarly archaic – even primitive? – tone is effected in no. 23 (see p. 43) 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 (pp. 47–48) 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. It should be noted, though, that the symmetrically parallel lines (with their connecting rhymes) are, as yet, 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 climactic rather than really antithetic:[18]

> One sister have I in our house,
> And one, a hedge away.

There's only one recorded,
But both belong to me.
(14, first stanza)

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 I have quoted and discussed above (pp. 54–55), is an excellent example of the manner in which Dickinson learned to master and vary juxtapositional structures to perfection. Apart from the gradual symbolic development of the poetic motif itself through successive metaphoric handlings, the development in purely formal dialectics is also clear. While nos. 67 and 73 only metaphorically expand, in later stanzas, the idea given in the first, parallelism in no. 126 already launches the argument *forward*; 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 there seems to be three functions to which Dickinson put her quatrain form, viz. devotional, narrative and elliptic, so three correspond-

ing uses for parallelism in her mature rhetoric can also be seen. 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. 128–131). Climactic parallelism was reserved either for narrative, ballad-like poetry (cf. pp. 142–143) or for highly dramatic description (e.g. nos. 280, 465, 510, pp. 138–141); often her usage of either is not really so much repetitive as progressive, generative of swift movement (cf. no. 430, pp. 71–72). Dickinson's highest achievement as a master of quatrain dialectics is, however, antithesis, the juxtaposition of most conflicting poetic elements in the briefest of external form but with the strictest of inner economy. As an example of this skill I have chosen the last of the series so often referred to: no. 713 (pp. 56–57).

In it, the second stanza develops the same antithetic idea as the first but through inversion. Although one cannot point out, except for the first lines, a point-to-point parallelism in the treatment of each, the bipartite structure is made use of, most economically, for juxtaposition. 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. It also seems correct to say that 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 (cf. pp. 96–97). Then she showed similar skill in handling one, two or three quatrains for her antithetic revelations (although the bipartite structure was evidently felt to be the best for the purpose).[19] If, for instance, nos. 1286 and 1233 (p. 71) are re-examined, it will easily be noted that parallelism, no longer in the least mechanical, is, in the former, subtly progressive through its juxtapositions, which also cleverly introduce the effects in the poet of a paradoxical experience; in the latter, the cause and effect are simultaneously presented by the antithetic 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 it is »never

crudely obvious» in her mature poetry, is the least that can be said of it; to me, it appears as varied as the phenomena upon which she chose to meditate by means of the device.[20]

III

Dickinson's practices of rhyme have been much discussed, but they have never been dealt with in connection with the rhetoric patterns she favoured. Two recent studies of her prosody have offered plausible explanations of 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 cumulative or climactic parallelism reinforced by assonant or consonant sound effects along lines,[23] I prefer to take a few new examples from her later, more 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. First 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)

The first thing to notice is 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 *them* the chief agent of poetic coherence).[24] Instead, a very strong similarity between the sounds of all meaningful words within lines is noted, 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 repetitive 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] Also *most* in the last line of the first stanza of no. 1683 is echoed by *boast* in the second, and line 3 of no. 829 is 'rhymed' interiorly at caesura (*wait-break*) as well as with the end word (*straight*) of the first line of the second stanza. After noting that *Judgement* (l. 3) in no. 829 'rhymes' with *Exellent* (l. 4) it is clear 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; this also neatly concludes 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. This development can be seen in the following examples:[26]

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!
(48, 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 the 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, again there is no special preponderance of meaning accumulated in the rhyme words; rhyme is regular enough in all three poems, but inconspicuous. Instead one can notice the many subtle ways in which the poet phonetically binds together all important words *within* lines. In no. 48 there are several 'cognates', mysteriously euphonious pairs of words or word combinations (*Dove – deep; bewildered – wings; bestirs* (*her*) *– her mistress; Courage – Columba*, etc.);[27] in no. 49 whole series of interliner '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 accompanied by less important but equally euphonious words (*closed, before*). Especially note-worthy is 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. 104), 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.[28] It was just as imitation of the reflective, centripetal movement of the mind that parallelism (climactic 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, for her, 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 did not need to be new; what counted was its restricted, phonetically suggestive form of a charm. I 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 an 'eye-rhyme' for the latter) embodies the initial consonants of both, while *lest*, retaining *l*, also simulates the *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 – (extent)
through
(the realm of) you

Should practices of euphony of the above kind be called *sound-metaphors* or not? As they are present not only to reinforce meaning but also seem to become, in extreme cases, the chief means of suggesting it, it might be advisable to make here the same distinction as 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. On pages 61–62 I gave examples of her skill to »paint in words» the visual scenes she so greatly admired, and it can be noted that the poems are also paintings in *sounds:* 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.[29] The following, somewhat later examples show her skill in choosing just the right words to describe an acoustic impression:

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)

Here one should note the effective use of explosives in the first stanza of no. 620 (11. 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 (1. 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 a notable feature is also Dickinson's clever punning with 'cognates' (1. 11): 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.). An even 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* (11. 3–4) prolong the original vowel note, as if carrying it after the poet's retreating ears. *Cave* (1. 5), again, gives us a spacious, somewhat hoarse diphthong 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 I shall show elsewhere, 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-pattering 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. 164–166) are 're-patterings', removals of old imagial or ideal motifs into briefer and briefer quatrain structures with closer and closer woven phonetic textures.[30] 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 the 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 I pointed out above, her later 'objectivity' in natural description was »simply a method of manipulating the phenomenal world through its very physicality» (p. 126), 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. 122).

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 I 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 fascinating as analysis of its 'message' is fruitless. Parallelism is again used to build a complete circle, for all seeming antithesis 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 repetitive 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.[31]

IV

As Paul Fussel observes,

> the shorter the poem, the more perfect we expect to be its accomodation of form to its other elements.[32]

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 'meaning' at its purest.

That the aspiration toward a more and more concise rhetoric form was not a matter of age and diminishing vitality but of a developing poetic dialectic is proved by the 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 ecconomical in her striving for poetic abstraction. The poet clearly felt that within the restricted line space of, for example, 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 of them as a 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 our a stanza or two (a practice occasionally engaged in by her editors, too). It was as if the poet had been producing more imagial or rhetoric material than was strictly necessary for the economical development of the poetic idea and then discarding 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. The following two variants are examples of the latter. The first 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 doubtful 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»;[33] to me 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 that to deseribe *change* the most econnomical 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 proper 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 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 would, before composing her new poem, have re-read her earlier one about the appearing, swelling, vanishing »miracle» of bird voices at dawn, it can be supposed 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. 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 the third and the fourth stanza of no. 783 are omitted, then the metaphors in the second, fifth, and the sixth correspond quite closely with those in the second and third stanza of no. 1084. A closer inspection of each will show how they vary in quality.

While the first stanzas of each poem are independent compositions, the second stanzas, as has been stated, 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.[34] It must be remembered, though, that – as the last technical device of her progress to »metaphorical universality» (cf. pp. 119–122 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 it is possible to 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 as few words as possible, as much as possible; to find words with such 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. I shall repeat what I said above (p. 167) of the metaphoric and symbolic emancipation of words in Dickinson's late poetry. Even apart from any 'concrete' poetic context they will retain, for her, certain permanent characteristics which make them available as metaphoric 'vehicles'.[35]

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 (for example, »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, when all contextual information is lacking, it is impossible to 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. However, instead of making the reflection any more direct, the 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 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. 42–45): it could even be called 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».[36]

At times, however, elliptic metaphor develops the poetic dialectic 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 can be well considered a later treatment of the same poetic motif as in no. 605 (p. 118),[37] it is possible to 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.[38] When discussing above (pp. 119–122) Dickinson's new, 'objective' approach to phenomenality I especially noted the emancipation of detail in her natural description; a feature which I 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 imagial *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.[39] In no. 1463, an elliptic retreatment of no. 500 (p. 146), both types are found, with a good degree of phonetic patterning to reinforce the abstraction.

Above (pp. 146–147) I 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 me-

taphors. In the poems sampled, for instance, on pages 138–141, there are 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.

Neither must Dickinson's euphonic play with sound and meaning in lines like »Shot the lithe Sleds like shod vibrations» be missed, for here 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 a universal, 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»,[40] 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

R. P. Blackmur, whose appreciation of Dickinson's poetry has always been more or less qualified, has observed in a (rather superficial) article the possibility of mixing up the individual lines of many of her argumentative poems without much damage either to their structure or their »sentiment».[41] The observation is clever enough, but the explanation offered for the phenomenon is somewhat peculiar:

> It is the sort of thing that happens to poetry when it is released from the patterning barriers of syntax and the force of residual reason.

To compare Emily Dickinson to Surrealist poets and especially her technique to their 'automatic', associative method of composition is rather hazardous. If her poetry is »released from . . . syntax», it is due simply to the careful syntactic patterning of her verse, and as to reason, there is probably far more logic »in the movements of her psyche» than Professor Blackmur seems to think. Somehow these questions also bear upon each other.

In order to see the effect of altering the line order, I shall take two of Dickinson's fairly late double quatrains and treat them in a similar way to Professor Blackmur. However, I shall not take every second line of each stanza in turn (as he did) but rearrange the lines within each separately:

I a
To pile like Thunder to it's close
Then crumble grand away
When Everything created hid
This – would be Poetry –

Or Love – the two coeval come –
We both and neither prove –
Experience either and consume –
For None see God and live –
(1247, c. 1873)

II a

This would be Poetry –
To pile like Thunder to it's close
When Everything created hid
Then crumble grand away

Or Love – the two coeval come –
Experience either and consume –
We both and neither prove –
For none see God and live –

I b

Had we our senses
But perhaps 'tis well they're not at Home
So intimate with Madness
He's liable with them

Had we the eyes within our Head –
How well that we are Blind –
We could not look upon the Earth –
So utterly unmoved –
(1284, c. 1873)

II b

So intimate with Madness
But perhaps 'tis well they're not at Home
He's liable with them
Had we our senses

So utterly unmoved –
How well that we are blind –
We could not look upon the Earth –
Had we the eyes within our Head –

This kind of syntactic re-patterning of the poems does not, indeed, seem to cause much damage to them (except for the metre); even their dialectical progress still remains easy to follow if we keep to the stanza division. How can this be explained?

Suzanne M. Wilson, who has studied Dickinson's structural patterns thinks she can discern in them a 'major' plan, which consists of »statement or introduction of topic, elaboration, and conclusion», and three variations on it:

> In the first variation the poet makes her initial announcement of topic in an unfigured line; in the second she uses a figure for the purpose. The third variation is one in which she repeats her statement and its elaboration a number of times before drawing a conclusion.[42]

Wilson ascribes the presence of these patterns in Dickinson's verse to the influence of the congregational sermon, but as I have noted earlier, behind the 'dialectical' sermon tradition of her day there was probably another, that of the Puritan system of logic and rhetoric (cf. esp. pp. 26–29 above). I should like even to speak of a syllogistic (instead of a »quasi-homilectic») quality in Dickinson's poetry, especially as she seems to have cultivated her 'logical' – or dialectical – patterns more or less consciously. As Wilson herself remarks, there is a definite development in those patterns over the years:

> The poetry of 1862 represents a continuation of basic variations plus the substitution of an implicit conclusion through imagery for an explicit commentary. The poems written in the period 1863—1865 represent a slight narrowing of her exploration of the possibilities of some variations and a consolodating of experiment. And those poems written during the last twenty years of her life represent an even further consolidation; in these poems we find the variations of the statement-elaboration-conclusion pattern limited substantially to two, the repetition variation having been eliminated.[43]

The development of Dickinson's poetic rhetoric from repetitive to antithetic parallelism described above (p. 157 ff.) can also be seen as one result of her aspiration to the greatest possible ellipticity of expression. This development, which can be most easily observed from one variant of a motif to another, may be compared to syllogistic reasoning, through a series of propositions, of which all redundant terms are finally left out. In poetic antithesis, where only the metaphoric terms relevant for the conclusion remain, the conclusion, as Wilson remarks, can be implicit; in fact, Dickinson often launches her mature 'syllogisms' rather as problems to be solved than as fully expounded inferences (cf. pp. 86–87 above).

One consequence of the mature Dickinson's aspiration to syllogistic ellipticity in her versification seems to have been that she seldom composed her

poetic propositions longer than two lines; mostly they consist of one line only. This, in turn, accounts for the success of the mix-the-lines game played above. Moreover, the mutual logical dependence of these propositions guarantees that presenting them together makes sense, even if their proper dialectical order is destroyed. This sense – or »sentiment», as Professor Blackmur chooses to call it – is far more coherent than any merely associative process of the mind could make it, and in the following discussion I shall try to show how Dickinson made, my means of hidden syntactic links, her apparently incongruous technique of antithesis work as an implicit inference.

Above (pp. 124–126) I paid attention to the astonishing dexterity and economy with which Emily Dickinson would, by means of her predicate verbs, bind together, into one continuous sentence, a poem of several stanzas. The syntactic unity achieved by the process is very close, indeed, and this closeness seems to have been a general aspiration of her 'dialectical' rhetoric. The syntactic links with which she secured the dense inner logic and co-operation between the different parts of her poems were many and various, and the consistent sifting out and development of these links till every word and part of her most compact poems seems to refer – not only phonetically (see pp. 160–165 above) but also grammatically – to some other word and part is clearly another result of her tendency for elliptic expression.

Discussing poem no. 1721 (pp. 167–168) I pointed out its economic circular structure of two parallel halves. The same form is characteristic of the following (comparatively early) poem, too, although the movement is seemingly continuous from the start to the end:

> A Weight with Needles on the pounds –
> To push, and pierce, besides –
> That if the Flesh resist the Heft –
> The puncture – cool(l)y tries –
>
> That not a pore be overlooked
> Of all this Compound Frame –
> As manifold for Anguish –
> As Species – be – for name –
> (264, c. 1861)

One notes Dickinson's habitual parallel formula (double quatrain) of argumentation and the ease with which the idea has been moulded in it: the whole syntactic

sequence is constructed so that it fits in the formula with the least grammatic modulation of its parts, i.e. with the minimum of inflected forms. Accordingly it is difficult to tell, for instance, the actual subject of the one-sentence poem, whether it is really »the puncture» (the grammatical subject), which as a synonym only repeats – or rather abstracts – »a Weight» with its two-line row of adjuncts, or possibly the whole stanza one, whose *total* active potentiality is eventually directed through the predicate (the only inflected verb form) to its object, stanza two, a similarly »compound» structure (also within a quatrain) of prepositional adjuncts and attributive clauses. The rhetoric economy and impressiveness of the poem depends, no doubt, on the effective exploitation of the parallel structure, which allows the accumulation of adjuncts on the same, very few parts of speech till they seem magnetic poles which attract to themselves all the meaning in the poem. Thus a very dynamic whole is created with two equal points of interest but only one channel – the predicate – to transfer the interest from one to the other, from the mechanism of pain to the pain inflicted.

Dickinson's stylistic devolopment from cumulative parallelism to elliptic, i.e. antithetic, parallelism observed and discussed above means, of course, a natural shift-over from repetitive syntax to elliptic syntax, of which poem 264 is an interesting borderline case. In poetic rhetoric it means not only the rejection of all repetition (which is often more seeming than factual) but also the rejection of all spurious syntactic elements (replete inflection, prepositions, adverbs, etc.) so that the remaining elements are brought together not in comparison but in sharp juxtaposition. Thus the adaption of a sharply antithetic dialectic instead of repetitively progressive dialectic automatically results in a radical shortening of the poem, which has been reported above (cf. p. 168 ff.).

To take an example, in 1859 Dickinson would still question 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 she would put her question in a far superior way, indirectly, in a single quatrain. That poetic rhetoric has its own developing dialectic cannot be more clearly shown than by comparing the following poem with its early sketch. The dynamic suspense of the four-line version, which hides its urgent question in an apparently calm statement, is far more effective than all the direct questions and apostrophes of the three-stanza effusion:

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

The one-sentence poem seems,[44] indeed, to be a flat statement, but a closer inspection of its syntactic structure reveals that it is hardly a statement at all. One ideal of Dickinson's elliptic syntax is, no doubt, *the multiple functioning* within a poem of the words and grammatical forms used (which is one reason for the almost overdue importance which she attached to discovering just the »right» word for her »thoughts»). In no. 1619 it is especially important to notice the multifunctional (sylleptic) usage of the negative participle »not knowing», which is made the focus of all meaning in the poem. It is to it that all other parts of the poem-sentence are – syntactically or logically – linked, most notably the interrogative adverbs that smuggle in the awe-stricken questions to ask which the young poet needed three stanzas. The trick is not performed only to make a pun, but the syntax is left open mainly to reflect the fact that the poem is a 'statement' of questions which must remain unanswered. A very similar elliptic copulation of the arguments is effected in one of Dickinson's »late magical chants» discussed above (»I have no Life but this», no. 1398, p. 164). In it the opening line serves as the rack upon which, by means the uniform adverb »nor», the poet hangs all the things which she rejects (»except»

her lover). Many other of her most elliptic poems which have already been dealt with (see e.g. nos. 829, 1683, 1721, pp. 160–161, 168, respectively) are characterized by the same feature, the heavy dependence on the one and the same syntactic structure which she makes multifunctional in the poem to introduce – or rather to juxtapose – through it her dichotomic divinations of the world.[45]

I should like to point out here that punning, whose syntactic condition is repetition, means also radical syntactic concision, for it enables a quick transition from one level of meaning to another without any properly logical linking of the things thus united. Dickinson's interest in pun seems to come just from this expedient possibility of uniting through it most diverse, even contrasting elements of experience, and she used both syntactic pun (syllepsis) and phonetic pun (paranomasia) to create dramatic tension within her highly patterned (and accordingly static) quatrains. Of the former I have given some examples above, but of the latter a few more examples might be useful:

Upon Concluded Lives
There's nothing cooler falls –
Than Life's sweet Calculations –
The mixing Bells and Palls –

Makes Lacerating Tune –
To Ears the Dying Side –
'Tis Coronal – and Funeral –
Saluting – in the Road –
(735, early 1863)

Somehow myself survived the Night
And entered with the Day –
That it be saved the Saved suffice
Without the Formula.

Henceforth I take my living place
As one commuted led –
A Candidate for Morning Chance
But dated with the Dead.
(1194, December 1871)

While we were fearing it, it came –
But came with less of fear

Because that fearing it so long
Had almost made it fair –
(1277, first stanza, c. 1873)

Frigid and sweet Her parting Face –
Frigid and fleet my Feet –
Alien and vain whatever Clime
Acrid whatever Fate.
(1318, first stanza, c. 1874)

A Saucer holds a Cup
In sordid human Life
But in a Squirrel's estimate
A Saucer holds a Loaf.
(1374, first stanza, c. 1876)

The phonetic puns here (*Bells – Palls, Coronal – Funeral; saved – the Saved, Candidate – dated; fear – fair; sweet – fleet – feet; life – loaf*, etc.) are, of course, closely connected with Dickinson's habit of phonetic patterning of her verse, and with her 'magical' sound-metaphors discussed above, but they have also a purely structural function. The similarity of sound in the words contrasted by means of the antithetic syntactic patterns helps to recognize the disparity of their meanings, and thus all replete logical copulation of the poetic propositions can be omitted. In highly patterned, elliptic forms of verse, like Dickinson's late poetry, punning seems indispensable also to break down its static, sterile abstractness. As there is very little actual imagery and circumstance left in it, punning brings in the dynamic tension needed to enliven the congealed form and make it meaningful. For Dickinson, puns are means of linking together antithetic things and notions through phonetic magic, without an explicit act of inference, but they are also means of exploding her too rigid syntactic patterns: the latent meaning in danger of remaining latent is released through them.

VI

One might say that the old Emily Dickinson worked her verse in miniature, not only for form but also for imagery and syntax. There is very little outward, direct movement in her late poems, only enough to make the little there is more con-

spicuous. She uses antithetic parallelism as a dialectical pattern to fix everything – imagery, euphony, syntax – in a static balance, then adds a surprise element – a concrete image, an active verb, a pun – to light the apparently lifeless pattern with sudden revelation.

In the preceding discussion many important aspects of Dickinson's late style (e.g. her peculiar, elliptic syntax) have only been touched on or some, such as her elliptic use of the subjunctive, have been entirely omitted. As grammatic and syntactic idiosyncracies, however, 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 try to chart their over-all functions and development here.[46]

Instead, I have concentrated upon two features only of her late style, 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 'dialectical' tendencies. It seems to me that, in general, the value of Dickinson's very late poetry has been underrated, and so I have tried, following as I have been her general development over years in dealing with a poetic argument, to understand this verse, too; to see what she wanted to achieve with it.

It is true that our understanding and appreciation of Dickinson's late poetry is often impeded by its formal and symbological 'petrifaction', i.e., by its too tightly-knit phonetic and rhetoric patterning and, above all, by the poet's increasing dependence on private connotation in her most violently elliptic metaphorizing. However, at her very best the old Dickinson would 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 of her late poems embody deep metaphysical understanding of nature and human life, and it would not be a bad simile, I think, to compare hers to the capricious, calligraphic hand of the old masters of Chinese and Japanese 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-like 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 most concise of quatrain form; it was the

antithetic, syllogistic 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.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1

The number and percentage of Dickinson's poems on natural motifs in 1850–86[1]

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
Total	1656	475	29

In the first group 1850–60 (rather 1858–60) many poems on natural motifs are just four-line maxims or brief notes in verse following a gift of flowers; in the latter case they have frequently been omitted from the tables. 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 sentiments aroused by nature are not usually included in the number found above.

[1] The tables in both the appendices were computed and composed before the appearance of R. W. Franklin's *The Editing of Emily Dickinson* (1967). As the few alterations and corrections (less than a dozen) he makes in the text and dating of the variorum edition would not have substantially affected my tables, they have been preserved the same as in the unpublished version of this thesis. As already noted (Ch.2, note 3), there are eight more poems which Franklin has been able to date and which should go into the tables, but, considering the great number of poems already included, they would not probably have changed the figures considerably.

APPENDIX 2

The number of lines and their grouping into stanzas in Emily Dickinson's datable poems:

Year	Total	2–4 (4)	6	2×4	9–10	12 (3×4)	4×4	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 = 4,0%	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) = 13,3%	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 %

NOTES

NOTES

Chapter 1:

1. One of the very first serious attempts to relate Dickinson's poetry to her Puritan background (or rather to the rapidly declining condition of that tradition in her lifetime) was Allen Tate's (in *Contradictory Essays*, 1933), which attempt was partly approved of, partly criticized by R. P. Blackmur (in *Language as Gesture*, 1935). After that it was her biographers (Whicher, Todd Bingham, Johnson) who first took up the topic in earnest, not so much in order to interpret her verse, of course, as to throw light on her personality and 'thinking'. Even most of her latest critics (Gelpi, Sherwood), approach her work in the same way, whereas the influence of the Puritan tradition on her formal poetics has been generally overlooked. It is true that as the editor of Dickinson's poems Johnson naturally pays considerable attention to the traditional hymnody metres which she assumed for her verse (a topic discussed at some length also by Whicher), after which a series of articles has been published about Watts' supposed influence on her style (see Chapter 6, note 2). Charles Anderson also gives a few useful hints about other possible traditional influences which may have affected the form of her verse, but he does not make any use of them in his own criticism. The lack of interest in the formal qualities of Dickinson's verse, which seem largely to derive from her New England background, has been deplored, for instance, by Suzanne M. Wilson (in *American Literature,* March 1963).

2. Douglas Duncan, *Emily Dickinson,* p. 1.

3. Thomas H. Johnson, *Emily Dickinson*, p. 9.

4. What is here referred to is, of course, the famous Stoddard controversy (cf. Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province*, p. 227 ff.; also see e.g. Norman S. Grabo, *Edward Taylor*, p. 31 ff.), thanks to which the Northampton area long remained as if isolated from the rest of the country. Cf. Johnson, op. cit., p.9:

> Like Boston in 1640, Amherst in 1820 [when Amherst Academy and College, either of which all the Dickinson children were later to attend] was, if not a howling wilderness, at least an infant cosmos, with its own theological identity. It still had its Valley traditions handed down by men of parts who had challenged the authority of Boston a century earlier. Its children should grow up to know their heritage. Let the mercantile centers wax prosperous and let the colleges in Cambridge and New Haven decline into liberalism, western Massachusetts would be a bulwark of orthodoxy in a sea of shifting currents, where a ministry and laity could still be trained in the school of solid Congregationalism.

5. Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The 17th Century,* p. 5.
6. Ibid., p. 5.
7. Ibid., p. 6.
8. 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 (see Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, esp. ch. II, pp. 19–21). Although it seems 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, there are 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.
9. When we compare poem no. 155 to no. 836 we note that in the (six) intervening years Dickinson has learnt to make the very Puritan distinction between God and the truth He has installed in the universe. After her very early (Emersonian) years she never again interprets her sense of numinous presence as the presence of God; it is not God but His awesome truth, i.e. His eternal laws, which man is allowed to observe and even to learn to know (cf.p. 30 ff. below). Thus we understand the somewhat blasphemous tone of the later poem. From man's point of view, is not what he can himself comprehend and make comprehensible far more important than a mysterious Divinity who chooses not to be known?
10. Especially informative in this respect are the letters (LI, 10, 11, 13) which Emily Dickinson wrote to her friend Abiah Root from Mount Holyoke in spring 1846 and in which she laments her »folly» and her »indifferent state». Full though the letters are of religious phraseology and pious wishes to »be with the lambs upon the right hand of God», they prove more of the suggestive persuasion techniques of her teachers than of her own inclination to be really converted. The sense of isolation – an important part of the converting techniques – which she felt then (probably for the first time in her life) appears her most deeply felt experience and seems still to be reflected in some of her poems from later years (see e.g. nos. 85, 203, 317 pp. 51–52). For accounts of her early religious scruples, see e.g. Johnson, op. cit., pp. 12–15, or G.F. Whicher, *This Was a Poet*, p.58 ff. Also cf. Dickinson's letters to Abiah Root, LI, 23, 36.
11. Cf. Johnson, op.cit., pp. 70–72, or *The Poems of Emily Dickinson,* Intr. pp. xix-xx.
12. Millicent Todd Bingham, *Emily Dickinson's Home*, pp. 39–40.
13. Cf. Perry Miller. *The New England Mind: The 17th century,* p. 53:

This much, consequently, is clear: the doctrine of regeneration caused the founders of New England to become experts in psychological dissection and connoisseurs of moods before it made them moralists. It forced them into solitude and meditation by requiring them continually to cast up their accounts. . . . Before his regeneration the sinner must

scrutinize his soul each day for the first stirrings of grace; afterwards the saint must not relax his vigilance, for not only is the working of grace within the soul a strange and wonderful occurrence which must be studied intently, but after it has appeared the soul will still encounter dejection.

14. 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.

15. Todd Bingham, op. cit., p. 39.

16–17. 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.

18. Her refusal in later years to see even her dearest friends (cf. Johnson, op. cit., pp. 49–56) was clearly due to her too acute feeling for them. When she wrote the following lines to one of them (Kate Scott Anthon), she implied that for her the experience of love in all its numunosity was more essential than the meeting, and that by declining to see her friend she felt to keep her feeling unimpaired:

> We shun because we prize her Face
> Lest sight's inneffable disgrace
> Our adoration stain (1429, c. 1877)

This kind of view may seem extreme solipsism, but to maintain the intensity of her approach to life it was imperative. As Johnson remarks (p. 56), »Her life, like her art, was planned with utmost economy.»

19. Otto, op. cit., p. 47.

20. Johnson, op. cit., pp. 134–135.

21–22. Johnson, *The Poems*, Intr. pp. xxxiii–xxxiv.

23. 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»; *The 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 text.

24. *Emerson: A Modern Anthology,* Intr. p. 10.

25. 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, *Emily Dickinson's Reading,* pp. 113–119.

26. Miller, op. cit., p.10.

27–28. Emerson, 'The American Scholar', in *American Poetry and Prose,* p.490.

29. While Johnson still ascribes to the year 1865 as many as 85 poems (see App.), for 1866 the number is only 36 in all; for the years 1867, 1868, 1869 the respective figures are 10, 22, and 17. As to letters from these years, there are only 24 of them altogether. Johnson comments on this as follows (LII, p. 448):

> The total number of known letters for the four years that conclude the decade of the sixties is the smallest by far that Emily Dickinson is known to have written during her mature years. The reason probably is not that some letters of this period are irrecoverable. Psychologically she was dormant. The great poetic drive was suddenly at an end . . .

It is also to be noted that when writing to Higginson she had up to this time often adopted fantastic pseudonyms (»scholar», »gnome», »Barabbas»). Now this hide-and-seek was in end, and she signed her letters to him simply as »Dickinson». This seems to suggest that she felt hers a completed identity, not one still sought in or protected by fictitious roles.

30. Miller, op. cit., p.67.

31. Ibid., p.68.

32. Although a book of logic (Richard Whately's *Elements of Logic*) was included among the textbooks in use at Mount Holyoke during the period 1847–1848 when Emily Dickinson attended the seminary (see Capps, op.cit., Appendix B, 'Emily Dickinson's Mount Holyoke Textbooks'), she – as a member of the Middle Class – never got as far as to studies of logic. Of her studies at the seminary, which she dutifully records in her letters, the last she mentions are »Astronomy and Rhetoric», which are to take her »through to the Senior studies» (LI, 23). As she did not go to South Hadley for another year, logic – obviously belonging to the Senior Class – slipped her; what she probably studied, instead, was Isaac Watts' *Improvement of the Mind,* a small volume listed in the »Studies Required for Admission to the Seminary» (see Capps, op.cit., pp. 103–105). Although Watts' »method of invigorating and properly directing all the powers of the mind» was not properly logical (Whately, for instance, criticized its objective as »a most magnificient object indeed, but one which not only does not fall under the province of Logic, but cannot be accomplished by any *one* science or system that can even be conceived to exist»; Whately, op. cit., p. 10), its over-all ambition »to subject every power, thought and pursuit, to the empire of reason» (quot. from Capps, p. 104) seems well to have expressed the New England ideal of education. Whether she studied Watts or not, says Capps (p. 104),

> Emily Dickinson was subject in her formal schooling to an educational philosophy that placed great emphasis on repeated readings and the memorizing of vast quantities of detail, a fact that accounts in some measure for her extensive vocabulary and for her unusual variety of metaphor.

33. According to Miller (op. cit., p. 132), the procedure of composition for the Puritans »was always the same» and followed closely the logical (Ramist) model:

first we invent individual arguments; second, we dispose one with another to form an axiom; third, if in doubt, we dispose one axiom with another in a syllogism to get a conclusion; fourth, we set our conclusions in order and so make a discourse, a sermon, a poem, or an oration.

In the highly traditional atmosphere of the pulpit fashions do not change in a generation or two. Here we have Robert E. Spiller's account of Emerson's essay style, which clearly reflects his style at the pulpit (*The Cycle of American Literature,* p. 51):

There is always the initial establishment of rapport with an unseen audience, usually in a paragraph recalling a familiar human experience or declaring a homemade text. Then follows a paragraph or two of bold generalization to galvanize the attention. Finally the persuasive ascent is undertaken in a spiral form of dictum, argument, and illustration, from the level of the relative to that of the absolute.

If we read Dickinson's early letters (e.g. the ones she wrote to Abiah Root, see above), we note how the ecclesiastical phraseology was constantly ringing in her ears; in the same way the logical construction of the sermons seems to have been transferred to her early style. Suzanne M. Wilson writes on the structural characteristics of Dickinson's verse ('Structural Patterns in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson', *American Literature,* XXXV, March 1963, pp. 53–59):

The major structural plan or ordering of logical elements conforms to that most commonly found in the sermon and consists of three parts: statement or introduction of topic, elaboration, and conclusion. The high rate of incidence of this pattern contributes, of course, to that »quasi-homiletic» quality apparent to most students of Emily Dickinson's work.

And later she adds:

Certainly the poet's exposure to the tradition of the Protestant New England sermon cannot be denied. What we know of her life, training, and contacts with other New Englanders could certainly lead us to say that the basic organization she uses could be considered perfectly »natural» for her if not thoroughly normal and to be expected in the time and area in which she lived.

Although we may well suppose that the New England sermon was Dickinson's first structural model of composition, it was, of course, only the starting point of her structural experimentation; a question which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

34. Cf. Grabo, *Edward Taylor,* p. 90:

In Taylor's terms, one reasons correctly when he first sees things as God actually intended them to be seen and then applies the correct name to them. Correct naming of objects of experience is a sign of wisdom, Taylor argues; for he assumes that in the order of the universe the connection between words and the things they signify is a God-ordained, immutable one. . . .

Language is the symbol of thought to Taylor; and, if language is inaccurate or inadequate or unsuitable, it bespeaks a failure of thought and reason, or, in the last analysis, a want of wisdom. Simply to articulate sounds and put them together with stress and intonation is not, in itself, to speak. There must also be truth in the sounds . . .

Of Dickinson's poems expressing the same sentiment, see e.g. nos. 952, 1212, 1261, 1651.

35. Cf. Miller, op. cit., Chapter XII, 'The Plain Style', which beautifully sums up the rhetoric ideals of the Puritans. Esp. noteworthy is the distinction Miller makes between the Anglican (metaphysical) and the Puritan (»plain») sermon, a distinction which might well be made to bear on Dickinson's style as contrasted to that of the metaphysicals, to whom she has been so frequently compared.

36. *American Poetry and Prose,* p. 489.

37–39. Ibid., pp. 471, 469, 471, respectively (from *Nature,* IV. Language).

40. It is difficult here – as well as elsewhere – to prove an exact reference to Emerson, whose work Dickinson knew well enough to polemize it in a private allusion. The name Herschel seems to refer the poem to 'The American Scholar' and his »slow, unhonored, and unpaid task of observation», as contrasted with the illustrious work of famous scientists like Flamsteed and Herschel (*American Poetry and Prose,* p. 489). The purport of the reference appears to be that God's nature, however watched and studied, cannot teach man his essence; thus Emerson's poet-scholar – with whom Dickinson had already identified herself – has labored in vain, though Emerson hails him as »the world's eye».

41. Cf. Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness,* pp. 190—191:

They [the Puritans] would concede that the visible universe is the handiwork of God, that He governs it and is present in the flight of every sparrow, the fall of every stone, the rising and setting of suns, in the tempests of the round ocean. . . . But it did not follow that the universe, though created by God and sustained by His continuous presence, was God Himself. We were not to go to nature and, by surrendering to the stream of natural forces, derive from it our elevated thoughts. . . . The same power that made a blade of grass made also the angels, but grass and angels are not the same substance, and so the spirit of God which is in the setting sun and the round ocean is not the same manifestation which He puts forth as a special and »supernatural» grace in the regenerate soul. »There comes another spirit upon us, which common men have not.»

42. See Townsend, *The Philosophy of Edwards,* pp. 28–29. Perry Miller defines the epistemological difference between Edwards and Emerson as follows (*Errand into the Wilderness,* p. 185):

Edwards went to nature, in all passionate love, convinced that man could receive from it impressions which he must then try to interpret, whereas Emerson went to Nature, no less in love with it, convinced that in man there is a spontaneous correlation with the received impressions.

Another way of saying this might, it is evident, be to define Emerson as an Edwards in whom the concept of original sin has evaporated. This would satisfy the textbooks: Edwards sought the »images or shadows of divine things» in nature, but could not trust his

discoveries because he knew man to be cut off from the full communion with the created order because of his inherent depravity. But Emerson, having decided that man is unfallen (except as his sensibilities have been blunted by civilization), announced that there is no inherent separation between the mind and the thing, that in reality they leap to embrace each other.

43. *The Philosophy of Edwards,* pp. 32–33.

44. The discrepancy between the absolute (divine) truth and the relative truth man could hope to obtain was, actually, the central problem of Puritan epistemology ('technologia'), too. The Puritan doctrine of technologia, says Miller (*The New England Mind: The 17th Century,* p. 161),

> is not easy for a twentieth-century mind to grasp, not because of its profundity but because of its simplicity. . . . When God created the world, He formed a plan or scheme of it in His mind, of which the universe is the embodiment; in His mind the plan is single, but in the universe it is reflected through concrete objects and so seems diverse to the eye of the human reason; these apparently diverse and temporal segments of the single and timeless divine order are the various arts; the principles of them are gathered from things by men through the use of their inherent capacities, their natural powers . . . It must be obvious to begin with that God sent forth His wisdom to an end, and so each of the arts, being a part of that wisdom, tends toward the end . . .

As Miller points out, this view – based though it was on a rather pessimistic metaphysical vision – helped the Puritans not to bother too much about the universal order of things and calmly concentrate on their worldly business; the same, should we say, pragmatic attitude is characteristic of Dickinson and her mature epistemology.

45. See T.S. Eliot, 'East Coker', in *Collected Poems 1909—1962,* p. 203:

> But perhaps neither gain nor loss.
> For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.

46. A nutshell definition of Dickinson's spiritual position in her own time is offered by *Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics,* in its article on American poetry (p. 26):

> Of her Am. predecessors she would appear most dependent on Emerson in her colloquialism and her metrical freedom; but more than Emerson she went back to a Puritan view of man and nature, although she was far from orthodox; and she sensed the fullness of experience that the poem as symbol might allow. . . . Hesitating at the orthodoxes of the Connecticut valley, she retained the view of limited man confronting sovereign godhead, and from the intensities of that confrontation came a poetry that since its publication in 1890 has constantly meant more to its readers.

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 work 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. (Cf. Chapter 1, note 32 above.)

3. The tentative chronology of the Johnson (variorum) edition (1955) has been critically examined by R. W. Franklin, whose *The Editing of Emily Dickinson: A Reconsideration* (1967) can – besides correcting some textual and chronological errors made by Johnson —date eight more of her poems (nos. 1710, 1712, 1725, 1727, 1729, 1730, 1737, and 1739 in Johnson) so far considered undatable. As Mr. Franklin's work, important as it may be for establishing correct readings for some of Dickinson's poems, does not substantially alter the total arrangement – within a year only – of the Johnson edition, the latter has been followed here, especially as it still provides the only standard text for critical analysis (cf. Appendix 1, note).

4. William Howard, 'Emily Dickinson's Poetic Vocabulary', *PLMA,* Vol. LXXII, pp. 225–248. As a summary of his research Howard writes:

> Whether or not the verbal symbols used most often by Emily Dickinson have deeper symbolic significances than their conventional meanings is a question beyond the scope of this discussion, but, whatever symbolic interpretations may be read into her poems, she couched her thoughts primarily in words that were in themselves understandable to the reader in terms of his daily experiences. Her poetic vocabulary is reasonably large and certainly inclusive, but it is not repetitious. Nor is it particularly unconventional or original. . . . That she may appear to [use more unusual words than most other poets] . . . is possibly due to the brevity of her poems and the consequent concentration in individual poems of words suitable to the figure she has chosen to express her thoughts.

And a little later Howard adds:

> It is not in the words she uses but in the way in which she uses them that Emily Dickinson is most original.

5. Because of Dickinson's »tendency to return again and again to a few themes and areas» (Anderson), a thematic approach to her work has always appeared the most convenient and appealing to her critics. The same, however, seems to apply here as to her vocabulary: it is not in the themes she cultivates but in the way in which she cultivates them that Dickinson is most original. Determined to examine her work developmentally I could, of course, have begun to study the development of her themes, i.e. the manner in which her 'thinking' within them advances. (This is the approach chosen e.g. by Sherwood.) As it seemed, though, that her attitudes toward the things usually regarded as her

'themes' (nature, God, death, love, etc.) became quite soon (by the early sixties) fixed, after which there was hardly any development in them, this course of study would not, probably, have proved remunerative in the long run but would have left me somewhere on the way in the assessment of Dickinson's artistic achievement.

As some of these 'themes' – however well-developed and static the poet's attitudes within their 'area' might appear – persisted, it began to seem that they were not so much themes as they were motifs, i.e. recurrent mental situations, and that the development was not so much of 'thinking' or attitudes as it was of the technical realization in symbolic language of these 'thoughts' and attitudes, although the former was, to a certain extent, also involved in the process. Accordingly I decided to concentrate on the establishment and further refinement of her linguistic habits, which would include the development of both her symbology and her formal poetics (i.e. rhetoric). Only one of her 'themes' – her theme of themes we could say – has been separately dealt with, viz., her over and over again expressed wish »to tell all the Truth», but even this is not so much a regular theme as it is an 'aspiration' (Porter).

6. When we read her brilliant early letters (which have been preserved from her thirteenth year on) it is very difficult to believe that she did not write verse, too, before the late 1850's. Although only a few of her poems (the five first in Johnson) can be dated earlier than 1858, there is no reason to suppose that they were the only ones she wrote before that year.

7. The reference is to the third of Wheelwright's 'Principles of Expressive Language' (*The Burning Fountain,* p. 60 ff.), viz.,

Principle of soft focus: that there are meanings which do not have definite outlines and cannot be adequately represented by terms that are strictly defined. Strict definition is possible only to those who agree upon a semantic convention, which involves the systematic omission of whatever meanings or elements of meaning cannot be commonly shared. Such a common nucleus of meaning establishes a denotation to which a given steno-symbol (verbal or other) may refer. But over and above its denotation every symbol bears a connotative fringe, which is not likely to be altogether the same for everybody.

»A distinctly denotative pattern» here means simply that the symbologic signification of some imagery remains basically the same from poem to poem; eventually the meanings of some of Dickinson's symbolic patterns really became established enough to allow for a 'definition' (cf. p. 41 ff. below).

8. In lack of a suitable adjective to be joined or contrasted by adjectives *metaphoric* and *symbolic* in various combinations, I have coined this, which is, of course, derived from the noun *image(ry)*, as denoting the poetic presentation in words of all sensory experiences, not only visual. Thus *imagial,* in my usage, qualifies only things which pertain to verbal image-making, as in combinations like »an imagial motif», »imagial material».

9. Johnson, *The Poems,* I; note to no. 249, p. 180. The importance for the poet of just this symbolic aspect of the motif is shown by a somewhat later version of it (no.368),

which begins as an almost regular sonnet (à la Barrett 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 a Mooring – unshared by thee.

10. If Kenneth Burke is right in asserting that »we cannot use language maturely until we are spontaneously at home in irony» (*Language as Symbolic Action,* p. 12), Emily Dickinson reached her maturity in this respect very early. From the beginning she took delight in criticizing the too dogmatic features of her tradition in metaphoric *double entendre* which, in one way or another, equated the 'holy' with the 'profane' (cf.p. 50 ff. below).

11. Joseph E. Duncan, *The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry: The History of a Style,* pp. 78–79.

12. Another example of an early symbological 'definition' might be no. 76 (pp. 38–39 above), which serves to fix, if not the 'focus', at least a very important aspect of the symbolic meaning of the image. Other (later) examples are e.g. nos. 668, 695, 744, 745, 983, 997, 1118, 1155, 1474, 1512, 1763.

13. Here I again refer to Wheelwright's 'principles' (op. cit., p. 60 ff.), first to the first,

Principle of iconic signification: that there are symbols which, although they may point beyond themselves, have a largely self-intentive reference as well.

Wheelwright points out that signification naturally belongs to things which are considered symbolic of something else, although the very use of them as symbols tends gradually to wear away the iconic element of their meaning. Yet, Wheelwright continues,

> The symbols which develop are, in every healthy culture, still partly iconic – i.e., they mean by resembling – and this shows itself in the love for the medium. Not only what is said but the way of saying it counts . . .

It is peculiar of Dickinson's development as a poet that the different phases of her career seem due to an oscillation between her wish to symbolize some greater, universal truths and her »love for the medium», between impulses of representation and presentation, which is especially apparent in her natural descriptions. Her first turning to nature for her imagery and symbols was not evidently so much inspired by an Emersonian belief in 'correspondences' as it was by a need for iconic signification in symbolization; her 'ironic' treatment of conventional tropes and symbols at the time proves the same need, too (cf. pp. 46–53 below).

»Multidimensional symbolic interpetation» of imagery, again, can be related to Wheelwright's second principle,

Principle of plurisignation: that an expressive symbol tends, on any given occasion of its realization, to carry more than one legitimate reference, in such a way that its proper meaning is a tension between two or more directions of semantic stress.

The iconic signification and plurisignation of symbolic language seem really the ideals

which the young poet was – consciously or unconsciously – aiming at during this formative period of her career.

14. Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality,* p. 96.

15. For the term, see Anderson, *Emily Dickinson's Poetry,* ch. 2 ('Words'), esp. pp. 36–37. Besides Dickinson's biblical phraseology, the author also discusses, in a larger perspective, the general development of her poetic vocabulary.

16. For the term, see Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality,* p. 99 ff.

17. Todd Bingham, op. cit., p. 32.

18. In the (unpublished) first version of the present thesis I wrote (p. 18):

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» [a reference to Joseph E. Duncan's *The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry*, pp. 13-14], and yet, speaking of Dickinson, this seems nearest to the truth. A time of revaluation and analysis of traditional culture – similar to the seventeenth century (and not 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. What obviously prevented Emerson from ever becoming a *great* metaphysical poet was his naïve belief – in 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.

19. Douglas Duncan, op. cit., pp. 43–44.

20. T. S. Eliot, *Selected Prose,* p. 116 ff.

21. 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 experessing a special sort of emotion and sensibility.

22. The reference is, no doubt, to Emerson's theory of 'compensation' (see the essay of the same name), availed of by Dickinson in many of her early poems (cf. e.g. nos. 125, 153, 167), but a more direct allusion is probably again to Emerson's 'scholar', with whom she seems so closely to have identified herself (see pp. 24–25 above). A tone of self-irony is apparent in some of the poems.

23. Allen Tate, 'Emily Dickinson', in *Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays,* pp. 22, 25, respectively.

24–25. Emerson, *Nature,* IV. Language; in *American Poetry and Prose,* pp. 471, 470, respectively.

26. Emerson himself professed similar sentiments in his essay 'Nature' (*Essays, Second*

Series, in *Essays* pp. 307–308), of which there are verbal echoes in Dickinson's poems quoted here (also cf. poems quot. p. 16 and no. 658, pp. 116–117):

Quite analogous to the deceits of life, there is, as might be expected, a similar effect on the eye from the face of external nature. There is in woods and waters a certain enticement and flattery, together with a failure to yield a present satisfaction. This disappointment is felt in every landscape. I have seen the softness and beauty of the summer clouds floating featherly overhead, enjoying, as it seemed, their height and priviledge of motion, whilst yet they appeared not so much the drapery of this place and hour, as forelooking to some pavillions and gardens of festivity beyond. It is an odd jealousy: but the poet finds himself not near enough to his object. The pine-tree, the river, the bank of flowers before him, does not seem to be nature. Nature is still elsewhere. This or this is but outskirt and far-off reflection and echo of the triumph that has passed by, and is now at its glancing splendour and heyday, perchance in the neighbouring fields, or, if you stand in the field, then in the adjacent woods. The present object shall give you this sense of stillness that follows a pageant which has just gone by. What splendid distance, what recesses of ineffable pomp and loveliness in the sunset!

The eight intervening years between the publication of *Nature* (1836) and this essay (1844) evidently somewhat modified the philosopher's epistemological optimism; that the more pessimistic view appealed to Dickinson is shown by another reference she made to the very same passage (in no. 213, »Did the Harebell loose her girdle»):

Is it, that beauty can never be grasped? in persons and in landscape is equally inaccessible? The accepted and betrothed lover has lost the wildest charm of his maiden in her acceptance of him. She was heaven whilst he pursued her as a star; she cannot be heaven, if she stoops to such a one as he.

27. Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms,* vol. I, 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 corporcal 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; *American Poetry and Prose,* p. 469.)

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. 94), 214; esp. the last mentioned poem (»I taste a liquor never brewed-») seems beautifully to reflect her sentiment of »love as the fulfilment of nature».

5. Cf. nos. 125, 167 in Johnson.

6. As I shall have ample opportunity to show, Dickinson, while abandoning Puritan theology as doctrine and belief, retained its terminology and symbols to express her deepest experience of life as well as its formulas of thought as psychological principles according to which her spiritual development advanced. Although I do not agree with Sherwood on every point of the account he gives of the influence Dickinson's Puritan heritage had on her 'mind' – the interest of this study lying more in her art – I shall quote a passage from his book (*Circumference and Circumstance,* pp. 139–140) to support my view that Dickinson could turn the barren dogma into a fruitful myth, a relevant, working model and explanation of her spiritual troubles (cf.p. 89 ff. below):

All commentators assume what even her poetic vocabulary reveals – the recurrence of the terms *election, witness, grace,* and *despair* and the verbs *sanctify* and *justify* are evidence enough – that she was familiar with the basic tenets of Puritan thought, but led by Allen Tate, most critics have found this thought to be but a scaffolding, but wood with the green gone out of it, a few sights or boundaries to keep a would-be transcendentalist from dissipating into the oversoul. The contention here is that her Puritanism, far from being the stock from which she manufactured intellectual supports, was live, firm, and deeply rooted.

And a little later (p. 141) Sherwood remarks (confirming my observation that before long Dickinson had – however reluctantly – to accept the epistemological and psychological correctness from her point of view of the Puritan system of thought):

The fact that she used the terminology and even, as the similarity between the epigraphs from Anne Brandstreet and Edward Taylor and her own poetry indicate, the verbal iconography of Puritanism to depict her own questioning of or rebellion against Puritan ideology, does not, as Tate avers, show her independence of this heritage but her inextricable commitment to it, a commitment that she acknowledged at some time in 1862, not because she consciously adopted the ideology but because, in the best Puritan tradition, she had the experience of being adopted by it, the experience of grace itself.

The reader easily notes the difference of Sherwood's and my interpretation of Dickinson's »commitment» to her Puritan heritage. In my (as in Tate's) opinion she was – like most of her contemporaries – fully independent of Puritan ideology, while »its metaphysical system as a whole – and its method of piety in particular – was the very mould in which her mind was irrecoverably cast» (p. 13).

For a consideration of »specific matters of approach and technique», in regard of which Dickinson belongs entirely to another – much older – tradition of American poets than Emerson, see Gelpi, op. cit., p. 146 ff.

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 –

For a discussion of Emerson's theory of compensation in comparison with Dickinson's epistemological view, see Sherwood, op. cit., p. 60 ff.

8. Whicher, op. cit., p. 101.
9. Ibid., pp. 11–12.

10. Dickinson's view here may well be compared to that of the famous French philosopher and mystic Simone Weil, who writes (*La pesanteur et la grâce,* 'Désirer sans objet', pp. 31–32):

> Si l'on descend en soi-même, on trouve qu'on possède exactement ce qu'on désire.
> Si l'on désire tel être (mort), on désire un être particulier, limité; c'est donc nécessairement un mortel, et on désire cet être-là, cet être qui . . . que . . ., etc., bref., cet être qui est mort, tel jour, à telle heure. Et on l'a – mort . . .
> La souffrance, le vide sont en de tels cas le mode d'existence des objets du désir. Qu'on écarte le voile d'irréalité et on verra qu'ils nous sont donnés ainsi.
>
> Quand on le voit, on souffre encore, mais on est heureux.

Of the vacuum (le vide) created by an unfulfilled desire and the supernatural energy (grace) required (and received) to fill it up she writes ('Accepter le vide', op. cit., pp. 20–21):

> Ne pas exercer tout le pouvoir dont on dispose, c'est supporter le vide. Cela est contraire à toutes les lois de la nature: la grâce seule le peut.
> La grâce comble, mais elle ne peut entrer que là où il y a un vide pour la recevoir, et c'est elle qui fait ce vide.
> Nécessité d'une récompense, de recevoir l'équivalent de ce qu'on donne. Mais si, faisant violance à cette nécessité, on laisse un vide, il se produit comme un appel d'air, et une récompense surnaturelle survient. Elle ne vient pas si on a un autre salaire: ce vide la fait venir.

Although »to hear the Grace depart» which she had »never thought to see» (472, p. 81) first seemed to Dickinson a loss which nothing could recompense, she would later learn the »Blessing» (756) the soul experiences when – after giving up hope and abandoning itself to despair – it suddenly understands the principle of 'gain in loss'; that in refusing to accept anything else but that which is denied one gains all, an independence of lesser desires:

I could not care – to gain
A lesser than the Whole –
For did not this include themself –
As Seams – include the Ball? (655, 2nd stanza; c. 1862)

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. 49) Whicher argues (op. cit., p. 105):

There is much to lead us to 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); it must be remembered, 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); the concordance of her poems counts as many as 63 uses for the word, a frequency which is really notable.

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, I have, however, preferred to quote it.

15. Laski, op. cit., p. 290.

16. Cf. James, op. cit., pp. 180–181. Also cf. Sherwood's interpretation of Dickinson's 'conversion', op. cit., ch.4, p. 137 ff.

17. Here we have another 'definition', summing up and uniting two earlier motifs: her immediate experience of painful loss (no. 327, pp. 70–71, »Before I had my eye put out») and her intuitive acceptance of renunciation as a means of spiritual growth (see p. 72 ff. above). It is especially important to note the bold, highly abstractive metaphors with which she is, by now, able to catch the essential core of her dual experience; cf. Blackmur, *Language as Gesture,* 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 masquerades as the Daisy, see e.g. nos. 85, 93, 124, 137.

10. This is the very wording she used herself in a letter to James D. Clerk (Aug. 1882) when referring 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)

Sherwood (op. cit., p. 16) has given a very apt account of the psychological motivation behind Dickinson's adherence to 'overripe' roles both in her life and in her poetry. He writes:

But there is another aspect of Emily Dickinson, one less appealing to those who take her seriously but one which is nonetheless characteristic – that of the poet as child, or better, infant, a placating, innocent, frightened, effusive creature. This is the »Emily», or »Emilie», who appears in her neighbors' reminiscences, her biographers' studies, and her critics' analyses all too frequently. This »little figure,» also characterized by the poet herself in such pathetic diminutives as »little pilgrim,» »tiny courtier,» or even »little Gentian» represents the Emily who could not follow her rebellion through or bear the isolation it entailed, who at the onset of the terror that seemed to follow every vital assertion, was willing, temporarily, to excuse her guilty actions as childish pranks, to become the »naughty girl» or »little tippler» to soothe and charm into forgiveness her father, on earth as in heaven. We can be grateful to this infantile »Emily,» though we may prefer to read Emily Dickinson, for her presence helps us to explain the attitudes she expressed in poetry and the compensation she found in writing it, as well as the compromises she made in life. As a deliberate disguise, a mask, »Emily» is used simultaneously for propitiating and manipulating various aspects of the external world; but the fears which produced this figure are very real ones; and one can speculate that the very tensions and frustrations these fears aroused reinforced the intensity of Emily Dickinson's poetic drive.

11. From her earliest schoolgirl's infatuations, Dickinson's experience of love seemed to fall into one pattern, that of continual disappointment and repudiation; whether for Ben Newton, Sue, Kate Anthon, or Wadsworth, her love was either discovered too late or remained unrequited, in a way which seemed to seal a fate. (For her early friendships and loves, see e.g. Johnson, *Emily Dickinson,* p. 72 ff., or Whicher, *This was a Poet,* ch. V and VI, pp. 79–112.) A similar pattern of repeated frustration was established when she tried to assert herself as a poet: none of her confidants – Sue, Higginson, Helen Hunt Jackson – seemed ever to understand the deepest aspirations of her verse.

12. Cf. Sherwood, op. cit., p. 84:

Wadsworth matters because some four hundred and fifty poems . . . are resolved into a coherent sequence once we piece together from the inferences, allusions, and metaphoric language of the »Master» letters the fantasy that Emily Dickinson made of him. Wadsworth, then, does not supply the inspiration for these poems so much as he does the »plot» of them, a plot consistent with the Emily Dickinson who before Wadsworth ever came to Amherst yearned for an antidote and antitype to the only God she knew.

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 factor in her life, and, in a sense, their relation set 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 that 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. Also cf. Mabel Loomis Todd's 'narrative' of Dickinson's habitual behaviour toward strangers; in Leyda, *The Years and Hours of Emily Dickinson,* vol. II, p. 357.

17. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism,* p. 93.

18. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Baudelaire,* pp. 25–26.

19. If – according to Sartre (op. cit., p. 27) – »Baudelaire was the man who chose to look upon himself as though he were another person; his life is simply the story of the failure of this attempt», we may venture to account for this failure. Mere symbolic presentation – however fit and clever – of one's existential anguish is never sufficient to return one's identity: it is only a mythic view into one's condition that can unite the 'divided' self. Only myth can give a really relevant picture of the self and provide it with features of such universality as to render it valid in all circumstances, remove it for ever beyond all psychological dissection. To make it a matter of sophistication would certainly be too simple, but the difference between the two poets could be formulated as follows: Baudelaire failed where Dickinson succeeded because he had lost his faith in supraindividual experiences and his capacity to project himself outside his own mind. The conscious self (*le pour-soi* in Sartrean terminology) cannot possibly create an adequate picture of itself, which must be sought for outside the »reflective consciousness» (Sartre), in objectifying, supraindividual myth.

20. For descriptions of spontaneous natural mystical exprerience, see James, op. cit., pp. 366–386 (Lectures XVI and XVII, 'Mysticism'), and R. C. Zaehner, *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane,* p. 30 ff. (Chapter III, 'Some Nature Mystics'). The latter, after having referred it to the theories of 'collective consciousness' of modern psychoanalysis, attempts a definition of the phenomenon (p. 41):

> The interpretation of this (i.e., of the actual content of the experience) we must, for the present, leave to the psychologists. Here we only wish to emphasize the overwhelming nature of the evidence for the universality of this natural mystical experience. The nature of the experience can best be summed up in two phrases drawn from the passages we have

quoted above: (i) 'without and within are one', and (ii) 'death was an almost laughable impossibility'. In other words nature mysticism means to transcend space and time.

And somewhat later (p. 50) Zaehner adds:

It is frequently termed 'pantheistic'. This is a misnomer as will have appeared from the examples we have quoted in which there is no mention of God. It would, therefore, be more accurate to describe it either as a 'pamphysistic' or 'pan-en-henic' experience, an experience of Nature in all things or of all things as being one. In all cases the person who has the experience seems to be convinced that what he experiences, so far from being illusory, is on the contrary something far more real than what he experiences normally through his five senses or what he thinks with his finite mind. It is, at its highest, a transcending of time and space in which an infinite mode of existence is actually experienced.

As also noted elsewhere (cf. Chapter 1, note 9), Dickinson names her mystic experience of ecstasy and awe as the presence of God only once (in no. 155), evidently under the influence of Emerson, a pantheist; her rapturous identification of herself with nature is, instead, depicted over and over again in her early verse (see e.g. poems quoted p. 60).

21. The former term is Zaehner's, who reviews the whole question of the different types of mysticism in his chapter X ('Conclusion', p. 198 ff.), the latter is from James, who in turn borrows it from R. M. Bucke; see James, op. cit., p. 384.

22. Zaehner, op. cit., p. 204.

23. Ibid., p. 205. The distinction made by Zaehner is most useful, and even Perry Miller, who in his *Errand into the Wilderness* considers the New England tradition of transcendentalism in particular and the Puritan attitude toward mysticism in general, might have profited by it. When Miller writes (op. cit., p. 191) that

Both mysticism and pantheism, in whatever form, identified Him with nature, made him over in the image of man, interpreted Him in the terms either of human intuitions or human perceptions, made Him one with the forces of psychology or of matter

and sees that in Puritan New England all mysticism was regarded as suspicious, he clearly misses the point of the question. From the doctrinal point of view it was only the monistic mystic experiences that were dangerous and heretic as they seemed to be evidence of man's own capacity to attain divine truth; theistic mysticism again, as instanced by Jonathan Edwards, perfectly fitted in the Puritan system of thought. If the distinction suggested by Zaehner between the two types of mysticism is made, »the amount of reeling and staggering» there was in Puritan New England in the question of inward communication is easily accounted for (cf. Miller, op. cit., p. 190).

24–25. Zaehner, op. cit., pp. 205, 206, respectively.

26. The references are to Donald E. Thackrey's *Emily Dickinson's Aproach to Poetry* (pp. 49, 32, respectively), in which the author, especially in his chapter 3 ('The Mystical Tendency'), arrives at a negative conclusion of the issue. Louise Bogan (in *Emily Dickinson: Three Views*) notes both the difference and the resemblance between the frame of mind

of mystics and of poets, but her approach to the subject is too immaterial to let her come to any clear-cut conclusion about it.

27. Zaehner, op. cit. p. 58.

28. Cf. ibid., p. 206:

Thus it seems that theists and monists cannot ever agree; for the former see in the latter's final state only the isolation of the soul in 'natural rest', while the latter regard the transports of the former as an early stage on the way to isolation, the stage of *bhakti* which, for the monist, means paying homage to a deity which one has oneself imagined.

To this Zaehner, whose sympathies seem to lie on the theistic side, however adds:

This is, perhaps, because in India the available deities as represented in legend could not satisfy the religious mind as being undistorted images of the one true God.

29. Among the mystic moments explicitly recorded in *A la Recherche du Temps perdu* are the episode of the Petite Madeleine, the sight of the spires of Martinville, the appearance of three mysterious trees which seem to possess a supernatural reality, and the uneven paving-stones in front of the house of the new Princesse de Guermantes. Together the occurence of these, in themselves undramatic, episodes revealed Proust his true self (Zaehner, op. cit., p. 59):

These are the little things that suggested correspondences with events and emotions in time past, and through these correspondences and analogues produced a vision of a harmonious reality, the sum-total of which adds up to the fulfilled personality of Marcel Proust himself.

30. Ibid., p. 56.

31. The Langerian term seems, indeed, most appropriate here, as the definition of it by the author will show (*Problems of Art,* p. 139):

The art symbol, on the other hand, *is* the expressive form. It is not a symbol in the full familiar sense, for it does not convey something beyond itself. Therefore it cannot strictly be said to have a meaning; what it does have is import. It is a symbol in a special and derivative sense, because it does not fulfill all the functions of a true symbol: it formulates and objectifies experience for direct intellectual perception, or intuition, but it does not abstract a concept for discursive thought. Its import is seen in it; not, like the meaning of a genuine symbol, by means of it but separable from the sign. The symbol in art is a metaphor, an image with overt or covert literal signification; the art symbol is the absolute image – the image of what otherwise would be irrational, as it is literally ineffable: direct awareness, emotion, vitality, personal identity – life lived and felt, the matrix of mentality.

32. Zaehner (op. cit., pp. 60–61) uses the Jungian term in attempt to distinguish between 'nature mysticism' and the Proustian kind of mystic experience, and it seems most suitable for the present purposes, too. The whole passage in Zaehner runs:

The one would appear to be the fusion of the human psyche with Nature, the other is rather the realization of one's true nature in itself. Or, if we prefer the Aristotelian phraseology, Proust became his final cause; or, to use the Jungian jargon, he achieved the integration of his personality or 'individuation'. He became 'what he is and always was'.

33. Sartre, *Saint Genet,* p. 9.

34. 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 circumstances. As my view, to some extent, seems akin to the Sartrean view of artistic volition, it may be useful to take a further quotation (p. 505) from his famous study of Genet, in which Sartre sees that the development of the self-martyred writer, even as a person, was, above all, symbological: he could not grasp a true conception of himself until he had projected the would-be self into art, into poetic language, which act, in turn, 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 coincider 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 être. 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 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.

35. Of the retrospective descriptions of »that Day» among Dickinson's poems the most notable are, no doubt, nos. 293, 296, and 410 (all from 1862). To give credit to Sartre's psychological insight in defining the principal traits of *l'instant fatal* (»it is the time of anguish and heroism», »one feels both oneself and somebody else»), I shall quote parts of the two latter:

I tasted – careless – then –
I did not know the Wine
Came once a World – Did you?
Oh, had you told me so –
This Thirst would blister – easier – now –
You said it hurt you – most –
Mine – was an Acorn's Breast –
And could not know how fondness grew
In Shaggier Vest –
Perhaps – I could'nt –
But, had you looked in –
A Giant – eye to eye with you, had been –
No Acorn – then – (296)

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)

36. James, the pragmatist, warns against the notion that mystical states be necessarily good in themselves; there is also the diabolical kind of mysticism exhibited by cases of paranoia and other insanity, and – in over-all synthesis – »the mystical feeling of enlargement, union, and emancipation has no specific intellectual content whatever of its own» (op. cit., p. 410). That there really is, in the case of the three poets mentioned, a genuine, positive, kind of mystical experience seems even more obvious when we consider its effect on their later orientation in the world; the mystic vision changed the whole course of their lives for good.

37. Zaehner, op. cit., p. 61. Also see pp. 24–25 above.

38. Ibid., pp. 198–199.

39. The quoted phrase is Aldous Huxley's, who uses it to describe the sensation given him by his mescalin experimentations (*The Doors of Perception, Heaven and Hell,* p. 17). Zaehner adopts it for a discussion on the difference of 'nature mysticism' and »the mysticism of the Christian saints», whose kind of mystic experience embodies for him the only genuine variant of it (op. cit., pp. 200–201.

40. If mystic experience is, in itself, incommunicable and those who have it necessarily find, as D.H.S. Nicholson and A.H.E. Lee in the introduction of their perennial work, *The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse,* state, »that their lips are sealed by the sheer insufficiency of language as a medium for conveying the sense of their supreme adventure», why do so many of them still resort to language, especially to verse, »to give what hints they may of the Reality that is eternally underlying all things» (op. cit., pp. vi-vii)?

It seems, indeed, that the question is not so much of communication as of retentive cognition. If the mystic undergoes the effort of finding verbal (poetic) symbols to present his experience, he does so in order 1) to extract, by means of these symbols, a conceivable 'sense' for it and, possibly, 2) to reproduce at least a reflection in his mind of the experience through its symbolic presentation, which seems to retain a pattern for its recurrence. The mystic vision, so full of hidden meaning, has to be grasped in recognizable forms which, although they certainly cannot explain it, will *perpetuate* the meaning, for contemplation and private ritual. Norman S. Grabo, who has noted this cognitive aspect of mystical writings, comments on it in his study of Edward Taylor (pp. 87–88):

The mystic, transcending the world of sense to achieve union with God, has had an actual experience for which his vocabulary – even his categories of understanding and discursive reason – are inadequate. The fullness of his experience is not only inexpressible

in the propositions of literal language but also logically unthinkable. To reduce the ineffable experience to something tangible enough to be grasped and retained in the understanding, he must find a symbol or set of symbols to stand for that experience – some mechanism by which he can conceive and order his utterly new cognition . . . For this reason, all discussions of mysticism become, at their most profound, symbolic; and always because the whole human complex is involved in the experience, these symbols serve affectively or emotionally as well as intellectually. In fact, the symbolism is designed not so much to assist communication or discourse as it is to make possible the formulation of new concepts.

For »the articulate mystic» (Grabo) the Word seems, indeed, to be an instrument for mentally conceiving and ordering – even, to some extent, evoking and regulating – his vision, and this accounts for the hermetic symbology and ensuing 'difficulty' of much of mystical verse as well as its ritualistic quality.

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)

And he continues:

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)

Kenneth Burke (in *Language as Symbolic Action,* p. 45) expresses the same idea as follows:

Even if any given teminology is a *reftection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection* of reality.

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., ch. III ('Das dichterische Bild'), esp. pp. 267–369.

9. Wellek & Warren, *Theory of Literature,* pp. 204–205. For the next brief quotations, see pp. 206, 204, respectively.

10. The only alteration from the first version to the second is the substitution of »Ghosts» (l.19) for »Swans»; from the third to the fourth also one word is altered, »Flowers» (l.7) becomes »Figures», a noun far better suited to describe a magician's unnatural art. Now we must remember, though, that the very first version of the poem was not Dickinson's but Emerson's, the second stanza of whose 'The Snow-Storm' (1841) goes as follows (*American Poetry and Prose,* p. 447):

> Come see the north wind's masonry.
> Out of an unseen quarry evermore
> Furnished with tile, the fierce artificer
> Curves his white bastions with projected roof
> Round every windward stake, or tree, or door.
> Speeding, the myriad-handed, his wild work
> So fanciful, so savage, nought cares he
> For number or proportion. Mockingly,
> On coop or kennel he hangs Parian wreaths;
> A swan-like form invests the hidden thorn;
> Fills up the farmer's lane from wall to wall,
> Maugre the farmer's sighs; and at the gate
> A tapering turret overtops the work.
> And when his hours are numbered, and the world
> Is all his own, retiring, as he were not,
> Leaves, when the sun appears, astonished Art
> To mimic in slow structures, stone by stone,
> Built in an age, the mad wind's night-work,
> The frolic architecture of the snow.

A comparison of Emerson's ornate *Beseelung* style with Dickinson's shorthand *Erfülung* technique is illustrative of both. Despite some distant echoes of Emerson's wording (»A swan-like form», »as he were not») Dickinson's poem is an entirely different realization of the motif; it seems as if she, while copying the slow, 'organic' images of Emerson's animating technique had speeded up the reel to distort and disfigure again the too-well animated picture. Her love of abrupt, dramatic change has made her reject the uninterrupted flow of a film narrative and revert to a magic lantern technique which can project the natural as miraculous.

This private polemic with Emerson was not the only occasion on which Dickinson adopted a motif or a theme used by another poet just to show how *she* would 'make' it. Johnson records (*The Poems III,* pp. 960–962) a case in which a poem by Higginson himself provided her with poetic material to be moulded anew. To express the central theme of Higginson's seven-stanza lamentation she wrote a single elegiac quatrain, on which he later (1891) commented to Mrs. Todd: »She wrote it after re-reading my 'Decoration'. It is the condensed essence of that & so far finer.»

11. I have availed myself of Pongs' typology as it seems to explain certain (cognitive) aspects of Dickinson's later technique better than most others. Yet it is – as all classifications tend to be – 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. Referring to two of her early letters (LII, 11, 86, from 1846 and 1852), in which Dickinson tells her friends Abiah Root and Jane Humphrey about her first experiences and reflections of death, Johnson writes (*Emily Dickinson,* pp. 206–207):

> From first to last her concern with death was neither morbid nor idle. It was on occasion clinical in the same way and for the same reasons that Jonathan Edwards observed and reported workings on the »soul's affections». It is clinical in the way a medical examiner hopes to test the validity of a theory and submits himself first to the test, or watches a patient with alert sensibilities to detect the true symptoms and eliminate the false.

Apart from the poems which commemorate dead acquaintances (and are clearly comparable to those'sent with flower'; see e.g. nos. 53, 144, 145, 146, 147), Dickinson's early verse on death seems to be an attempt to solve, by means of careful observation, what death *as an experience* is like. That her poetic imagination could not, in lack of adequate symbology, grasp the mystery, was only natural.

16. There are also other expressions of death-wish among Dickinson's early poems; cf. e.g. nos. 50, 51, 54, 182.

17. E.g. nos. 590, 598, 615.

18. Cf. 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 –

19. Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality,* pp. 71–72, 73, 78, respectively.

20. Ibid., p. 80.

21. Ibid., p. 91; it should be remembered that for Wheelwright »presence» = *numinous* presence, the metaphysical dimension of a poet's inspiration (ibid., pp. 154–159).

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. There are also some comparative studies of Watts's and Dickinson's metric practices, e.g. articles by James Davidson, M.W. England, and W.E. Stephensen (see List of Works Cited). Of the poems sampled here (pp. 151–152), no. 193 uses one of the rarer metres, (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 was the one most often employed by Dickinson, too.

3. Cf. Johnson, op.cit., p. 85:

Copies of Watts'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 also many, 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 charmless, but the type of the quatrain cultivated by Dickinson (certainly no extravert) could be complex enough both as to its rhyming scheme and its rhythm. Whatever general relevance Eysenck's test may have, it does not seem to bear upon this 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 should 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 equals Dickinson's occasional sardonic comments 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 p. 126 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 (apparently) 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. 42–45 above; of the spider, no. 605, p. 118, and no.1138, p. 175; for her early poems on flowers, e.g. nos. 12, 25, 163, pp. 66–68.

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») has been quoted above, p.60. 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 tyre, 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 textbook 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, only deals 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 tripatite experience in three.
>
> How very consciously Dickinson worked, in her later poetry, toward this correspondence of poetic form and poetic experience will, I 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 cursorily, by the author in her chapter 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 – (L II, 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 me that »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, which the poet could not bear.

According to the statistics provided by Lindberg-Seyersted (op. cit., p. 157), Dickinson's use of full rhyme also changes over 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. Whether 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 elsewhere, but here the question is certainly too large to be considered at 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 me 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,

laying too much importance 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 co-ordinates, 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 easy to understand 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. As to the exact dating of the poems, the MS of no 48 (Bingham 4e) is found in packet 80, which seems to contain Dickinson's very earliest verse (see Franklin, op. cit., p. 68, Table 9). No. 49, again, is in packet 1 (signed as H 36), most of whose contents Johnson dates as written in 1859 (see Franklin, p. 13, Table 3). No 1732, whose text is based on the (1896) printer's copy (see Franklin, p. 89, Fig. 13), can no longer be dated but can hardly be considered earlier than 1862; when Mrs. Todd transcribed the poem by hand 1889 (after having first used a typewriter), she seems generally to have copied poems belonging to Dickinson's mature output (cf. Franklin, op. cit., pp. 14–17).

27. Here Burke's categories seem especially useful when explaining the fascination of these phonetic couplings. In addition to cognates we discover, for instance, that the third pair presents what Burke calls »tonal chiasmus», i.e., the repetition of the same sounds in the reverse order; the words are also phonetically linked with *troubled question* (l.4), which adds greatly to the inner coherence of the whole stanza.

28. The function of Dickinson's late reflective quatrains may also be compared to that of the Buddhist mandalas or sacred circular paintings, which serve as

> 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).

The reader is here also referred to what has been said above (p. 115) of an art symbol as means of mystic revelation.

29. Cf. Wellek & Warren, op. cit., pp. 161–163.

30. 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. 69 above). The same motif, from a slightly different angle, is treated in no. 327 (»Before I got my eye put out», pp. 70–71) and, here, in no. 891. For a less abstracted observation of a bird, see e.g. no. 328, p. 117, while the bee as a sexual symbol appears at least in nos. 211, 213, 661, and 869 before no. 896.

31. In this connection one cannot but be reminded of »the habit of acrostics», which – according to Norman S. Grabo (op. cit., p. 114) – »was a wide-spread Puritan vice». Although no anagrams or word-puzzles of the acrostic kind can, of course, be found in Dickinson's poetry, her *sound*-puzzles may, in their own way, perpetuate the ancient practice. As in an acrostic, the things she says seem to gain in significance when said in words that make up a 'pattern', constitute a 'meaning' on another – the phonetic – level of interpretation desides the symbolic.

32. Fussell, op. cit., p. 173.

33. Johnson, *The Poems II*, p. 777.

34. From her early school years, Dickinson took obvious delight in scientific vocabulary and mode of expression, but to this she was prompted rather by her poetic sensibility than by any scholarly disposition proper. Like biblical and theological vocabularies (see p. 46–53 above), scientific terminology would offer her a very special dimension of metaphoric language, and her later simulation of the scientific jargon was, in the first place, symbolic of her 'objective', detached approach to the world. It was not, of course, the exactness and universality of information that she sought 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 in the metaphor is rather an impression: what remains of a scene, motion, sound, etc. *that has been;* the simplified, essential pattern of a phenomenal happening, seen, indeed, not through the natural eyes but through the memorizing eyes of the mind.

35. 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 one cannot share all of the author's rather pessimistic opinions (to me, for instance, the poet does not seem particularly to suffer from »the impotency of words»), 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.

36. R. P. Blackmur, *Language as Gesture,* p. 47. Sometimes both the sentiment and the meaning seem lost, as in the following verse on the bobolink:

> Of impudent Habiliment
> Attired to defy,
> Impertinence subordinate
> At times to Majesty. (1279, c. 1873)

'Big' words like these serve well enough for comic or ironic purposes, but in a wholly serious context – as here – their effect is not only pompous but ludicrous as well, certainly not the one intended.

37. In fact, there are (at least) three other later poems on the spider motif, nos. 1167, 1275, and 1423.

38. This seems, indeed, the equivalent in verbal art of the abstractive tendency which Worringer noted (op. cit., p. 17) 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.

39. 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, to be 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 man's diverse sense perceptions, synaesthetic metaphors can be very powerful, especially in conveying states of mind aroused by what I have called numinous effects.

40. Joseph E. Duncan, op. cit., p. 28.

41. R. P. Blackmur, 'Emily Dickinson's Notation', *Kenyon Review,* XVIII, Spring 1956, pp. 224–237. Also in Sewall, *Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays,* pp. 78–87. Quotations from Sewall, p. 87.

42. Suzanne M. Wilson, 'Structural Patterns in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson', *American Literature,* XXXV, March 1963, p. 54. Carroll D. Laverty, again, thinks to discover »at

least eight definite structural patterns» in Dickinson's verse, which patterns, however, seem to be elaborations of Wilson's 'variations'. See Laverty, 'Structural Patterns in Emily Dickinson's Poetry', *Emerson Society Quarterly*, No 44, III Quarter 1966, pp. 12-17.

43. Wilson, op. cit., p. 58.

44. Cf. Laverty, op. cit., p. 16:

Perhaps the simplest structural pattern in all Emily Dickinson's poetry is the one-sentence pattern – a mere assertion or exclamation. A considerable number of her poems are only one sentence, some of them long, some short.

As examples of Dickinson's one-sentence poems Laverty mentions nos. 105, 177, 183, 481, 974, 1008, 1510, and 1676, which proves that the pattern was cultivated by the poet throughout her career. No. 264 analyzed above (pp. 181—182) is another example of Dickinson's economic treatment of the pattern.

45. Sylleptic multifunctioning of some part, or parts, of Dickinson's one-sentence pattern seems to be almost a rule. Two more of her late epigrams will illustrate the poet's interest in structural syllepsis:

> Too happy Time dissolves itself
> And leaves no remnant by –
> 'Tis Anguish not a Feather hath
> Or too much weight to fly – (1774, c. 1870)

> Sometimes with the Heart
> Seldom with the Soul
> Scarcer once with the Might
> Few – love at all (undatable, from a transcript by Sue)

46. 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 while.

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INDEX OF FIRST LINES

The number in paranthesis is that of the poem in the Harvard edition; following it is the page number of the thesis. The spelling is regularized as in the Harvard edition.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Emily Dickinsonin tuotanto, joka saavutti määrällisen ja laadullisen huippunsa 1860-luvun alussa (1861—65) mutta jatkui aina runoilijan kuolemaan asti (1886), on tyylillisessä suhteessa osoittautunut vaikeasti määriteltäväksi ja analysoitavaksi. On luonnollista, että tämän vuosisadan aikaisempina kymmeninä, jolloin runoilijan tuotanto ei kokonaisuudessaan ollut tutkijoiden ulottuvilla ja jolloin tutkimusote yleensäkin oli biografinen, Dickinson-tutkimuksen pääpaino oli runoilijapersoonallisuuden tulkinnassa, ja hänen runojaan analysoitiin lähinnä elämäkerralliselta pohjalta tai sen sevittämiseksi. Hämmästyttävää sen sijaan on, ettei vielä vuoden 1955 jälkeen, jolloin Dickinsonin runojen ensimmäinen todella täydellinen ja kriittinen laitos (Harvard edition) ilmestyi, runoilijan tyylinkehitystä ole nykyistä laajemmassa määrin pyritty kartoittamaan; tutkimus on yhä — muutamaa aivan viimeaikaista poikkeusta lukuun ottamatta (David T. Porter 1966) — joko pysytellyt turvallisilla biografis-psykologisilla linjoilla (Griffith 1964) tai uskaltautunut laajamittaisempaan analyysiin korkeintaan hänen 'teemojensa' (elämäntuntojensa) tai 'ajattelunsa' pohjalta (Anderson 1960, Sherwood 1968). Ovatpa useat tutkijat pitäneet minkäänlaisen kehityslinjan löytämistä Dickinsonin tuotannossa suorastaan mahdottomana ja näin jatkaneet (eräiden uuskriitikoiden, lähinnä R. P. Blackmurin aloittamaa) myyttiä runoilijasta eräänlaisena 'luonnonnerona', joka ilmaisi itseään vaistonvaraisesti ja jonka runoilijanlaatu voidaan tyhjentävästi määritellä juuri mainitun 1860-luvun alkuun osuvan 'huipputuotannon' analyysilla. David T. Porter, jonka oma tutkielma valmistuneena pyrkii ilmeisesti analysoimaan ja määrittämään Dickinsonin koko runontekotekniikan (prosody), toteaakin teoksensa alkulauseessa, että useimmat Dickinson-tutkijat ovat jatkuvasti olleet enemmän kiinnostuneita hänen teemoistaan kuin hänen taiteellisesta tekniikastaan, jolloin hänen runoilijanuransa yleinen kehityskulku on jäänyt kartoittamatta.

Ehkäpä Dickinsonin tuotannon tavaton laajuus (Harvardin laitos: 1775 runoa) ja sen jakautuminen lähes 30 vuoden ajalle osittain selittää tutkijoiden vastahakoisuuden ryhtyä selvittelemään sen tyylillisiä piirteitä kehityshistorialliselta kannalta. Vaikka tämäkään tutkielma ei missään tapauksessa pysty — eikä pyri — tulkitsemaan runoilijan tyylinkehityksen kaikkia piirteitä, itse tutkimusaspekti on epäilemättä oikea ja tarpeellinen: Dickinsonin ilmaisutekniikan vähittäisen kehittymisen selvittely ja hänen tuotantonsa omalaatuisten piirteiden tutkinta juuri tällaisen laajemman kehityslinjan pohjalta on tähän asti pahasti laiminlyöty.

Tutkimuksessa on siis kyse tyylinkehityksen selvittelystä, mutta se ei kuitenkaan pyri olemaan perinteistä tyylintutkimusta, Dickinsonin *kaikkien* tyylipiirteiden (sanaston, figuuroitten, trooppien, syntaksin jne.) kvalitatiivinen tai kvantitatiivinen esittely (vrt. Lindberg-Seyersted 1968), joka kehityshistorialliselta pohjalta olisikin ylen vaikea, ellei mahdoton tehtävä. Koska kehitystä ei voi kuvata selvittämättä kehitystä ohjaavia tekijöitä, niitä yleisiä (elämänkatsomuksellisia tai filosofisia) pyrkimyksiä joita runoilijalla runoilijana on, tässä tutkimuksessa on ensisijaisesti pyritty pääsemään käsiksi näihin tekijöihin, joista tärkeimmäksi katsottu on pantu esille tutkimuksen nimessä.

On näet ilmeistä, että Dickinson katsoi, sekä kulttuuritaustansa että oman persoonallisuustyyppinsä pakottamana, että runouden tehtävä on ennen kaikkea kognitiivinen, tekijälleen ja lukijalleen todellista tietoa elämästä antava, ja että runoilijan kutsumus on, ellei koko totuuden, ainakin sen mahdollisimman monien aspektien paljastaminen. Otsikko si-

sältää täten oikeastaan kaksi tehtävänmäärittelyä: toisaalta Dickinsonin runoudelleen asettaman 'totuudenetsinnän' vaatimuksen, toisaalta tutkielman oman pyrkimyksen paljastaa ja analysoida ne keinot, joilla hän eri aikoina uransa kuluessa pyrki löytämään ja ilmaisemaan niin omakohtaista kuin universaalia totuutta.

Sekä Nykysuomen sanakirja että Uusi sivistyssanakirja tuntevat sanan 'dialektiikka' lähinnä merkityksessä "väittelyoppi, väittelytaito" tai "käsitteiden tieteellinen selvittely"; sivistyssanakirja viittaa tosin Hegelin filosofiaan ja käyttää myös ilmausta "käsitteiden johtaminen toisistaan". Mikään näistä merkityksistä ei kuitenkaan liity sanan platonilaiseen alkuperään, joka sen sijaan on vielä näkyvissä sanan englantilaisen vastineen 'dialectic' eri denotaatioissa. OED esittääkin käsitteen sisällöksi paitsi merkityksen "looginen väittely-(taito)" myös seuraavat: "taito tutkia väitteiden totuutta", "totuuden esille saaminen väittelyn avulla". Näiden määritelmien mukaan dialektiikka on keino juuri *totuuden* selville saamiseksi (eikä vain vastaanväittäjän nujertamiseksi), mistä syystä se tuntuu hyvin soveltuvan Emily Dickinsonin tyylipyrkimysten kuvailutermiksi. Runoilijana hän todellakin tuntuu olevan 'dialektikko', joka pyrkii käyttämään kaikkia runokielen ilmaisukeinoja "tutkiakseen asioita kriittisesti" (OED).

Dickinsonin 'runollisella dialektiikalla' (poetic dialectic) tarkoitetaan siis tässä tutkimuksessa hänen *muuttuvaa ja kehittyvää tapaansa käytellä (runo)kielen ilmaisukeinoja* (sanoja, kuvia, symboleja; metriikkaa, rytmiä, soinnutusta) *niin yksilöllisten kuin universaalien 'totuuksien' etsintä- ja kiteytysvälineinä;* joskus termi (dialektiikka, dialektinen) viittaa myös hänen 'loogiseen' (syllogistiseen) tapaansa esittää ja komponoida sanottavansa. Jälkimmäinen termin käyttö on Dickinsonin suhteen myös varsin mielekäs, olihan 'dialektinen' esitystapa — juuri logiikan sääntöjä noudattavan komposition mielessä — tyypillistä hänen kulttuuritraditiolleen, uusenglantilaiselle puritanismille. Totuuden etsintä, sekä omakohtaisen elämyksen (lähinnä uskonnollisen revelaation) että sen rationaalisen analyysin avulla, tuntuu Dickinsonissa liittyvän kiinteästi hänen kulttuuriperintöönsä. Tästä syystä tutkielman ensimmäinen johdatteleva luku onkin omistettu runoilijan kulttuuritaustan ja niiden puritanismin ideologisten ja filosofisten piirteiden selvittelyyn, jotka mahdollisesti vaikuttivat Dickinsonin omaan ilmaisutapaan suorastaan leimallisina tyylipiirteinä. Ensimmäisessä luvussa on käsitelty myös (lähinnä emersonilaista) transsendentalismia yhtenä puritanismin kehitystrendinä 1800-luvulla ja Dickinsonin ilmeistä riippumattomuutta emersonismista, johon vielä useissa yhteyksissä palataan.

Johdattelevan ensimmäisen luvun jälkeen siirrytään varsinaiseen asiaan, Dickinsonin tyylinkehitykseen, jossa erotetaan kaksi päävaihetta. Ensimmäistä kehitysvaihetta motivoi pyrkimys 'subjektiiviseen' totuuteen, jolloin pääpaino — tyylintutkimuksen kannalta — on tuotetun runouden symbolisessa kuva-aineksessa, jonka tehtävä tähän aikaan on paljastaa runoilijalle hänen oma identiteettinsä ja 'roolinsa' tässä maailmassa. Osittain on kysymys — erikoisesti runoilijankehityksen kannalta — myös relevantin tarkkailupisteen löytämisestä, minän eriytymisestä muusta elämäntapahtumisesta, etenkin luonnosta, riippumattomaksi yksilöksi, jonka kehitystä määräävät tietyt sielulliset, yksistään ihmiselle ominaiset lainalaisuudet, eivät fenomenaalisen maailman lait.

Minän individuaatio (eriytyminen, itsenäistyminen), joka Dickinsonin, runoilijan, kohdalla tapahtuu taiteen (symbolien) avulla, merkitsee paitsi oman minän, oman tarkkailupisteen löytymistä, myös vieraantumista muusta, nyt vain tarkkaillusta elämästä, johon ei enää tunneta voivan osallistua. Dickinsonin runoudessa tämä vieraantumisen tunto (ennen kaikkea luonnosta) esiintyy suorastaan henkilökohtaisena ongelmana, mutta vielä tärkeämpi sen vaikutus on runoilijan tyylinkehitykseen: hänen asennoitumisensa ulkomaailmaan ja niin muodoin myös kuvailupyrkimyksensä sen suhteen muuttuu subjektiivisesta, minäkeskeisestä, objektiiviseksi, kohdehakuiseksi.

Hermann Pongs on erikoisesti tarkastellut — juuri tyyliä määräävänä tekijänä — näitä runoilijan kahta asennoitumistapaa, subjektiivista ja objektiivista (*Das Bild in der Dichtung I* 1927). Systeemissään (joka perustuu Worringerin ja Lippsin teorioille) Pongs käyttää näistä tarkkailuasenteista nimityksiä *Beseelung* ja *Erfühlung*, ja niiden avulla hän tahtoo selittää eri runoilijain luovassa empatiakyvyssä (Einfühlung) ilmeneviä eroja. Edellinen runoilijatyyppi kokee itsensä osalliseksi kaikesta tapahtumisesta, samaistaa itsensä fenomenaaliseen maailmaan, tulkitsee kaikki sen piirteet omana kuvanaan, sielullistaa elottomankin. Jälkimmäinen sen sijaan ei pyri antropomorfisen vaan objektiivisen maailmankuvan luomiseen runoudessaan ja ikään kuin tahtoo ymmärtää ja analysoida maailmaa sen omilla ehdoilla. Pongsin mukaan 'sielullistavalle' runoilijalle on ominaista 'myyttinen' metaforien käyttö, kun taas 'objektiiviseen' maailman tajuamiseen ja valloitukseen pyrkivä *Erfühldichter* käyttää ennen kaikkea ns. 'maagista' metaforaa, jolle on ominaista deanimoiva (epäelollistava) ja abstrahoiva, voimakkaasti synteettinen luonne.

Soveltaessaan Pongsin teoriaa Dickinsoniin tutkija on erottanut hänen tuotannossaan sekä myyttisen että maagisen vaiheen, joiden rajakohtana on juuri tuo mainittu individuaatiotapahtuma, runoilijaidentiteetin löytyminen runouden symbolien ja runollisen myytin avulla. Jälkimmäisessä vaiheessa hän on kuitenkin ollut havaitsevinaan kaksi aivan erillistä metaforatyyppiä, toisaalta varsinaisen maagisen metaforan (jonka käyttöä on selitetty myös Wheelwrightin termillä *diafora)*, toisaalta nk. 'elliptisen' metaforan, joka on — kuten edellinen — luonteeltaan sekä objektiivinen että syntetisoiva, mutta edustaa jo symbolisen abstraktion seuraavaa vaihetta.

Dickinsonin tyylissä on epäilemättä jo alun alkaen huomattavissa selvä pyrkimys abstraktiivisuuteen, mutta tätä tyylipiirrettä on käsitelty laajemmin vasta tutkielman viimeisessä luvussa ('elliptiivisyys'-otsikon alla), koska se on erikoisen ilmeinen juuri runoilijan myöhäistuotannon suhteen (1870-luvulla). Tässä myöhäisvaiheessa runoilijalle on tyypillistä se ettei hän yleensä enää etsi uutta runollista materiaalia vaan useinkin tyytyy käsittelemään uudelleen aiemman tuotantonsa aihelmia abstrahoiden niiden sisältämää symbolista ainesta yhä pitemmälle, esimerkiksi juuri mainitun 'elliptisen' metaforan avulla. Tässä viimeisessä vaiheessa Dickinsonin runouden 'maagisuus' ei enää olekaan siinä määrin metaforista (kuvallista) kuin runojen 'loitsumaisesta' äänneasusta johtuvaa, jolloin niiden poeettinen monimielisyyskin useimmiten perustuu sanaleikin (pun) luonteiseen äännemagiaan. Tämä tekee Dickinsonin myöhäisrunot, jotka yleensä ovat myös muodoltaan hyvin suppeita, toisaalta lastenlorumaisen yksinkertaisiksi, toisaalta varsin vaikeaselkoisiksi, etenkin kun runoilija — juuri elliptiivisyyteen, mahdollisimman lyhyesti ilmaisevaan muotoon pyrkiessään — turvautuu usein sanavalinnoissaan yksityiseen konnotaatioon, jota lukijan on mahdoton tajuta sen pitkälle abstrahoidussa kontekstissa. Kaikesta kritiikistä huolimatta, jota Dickinsonin myöhäistuotantoon voidaan kohdistaa (ja on kohdistettu: yleensä on arvostettu eniten hänen 1860-luvun alun tuotantoaan), siihen sisältyy monia todellisia 'helmiä', mikä tutkimuksessa on pyritty osoittamaan.