

EMILY DICKINSON, MATERIAL RHETORIC, AND THE ETHOS OF
NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN WOMEN'S POETRY

by

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Abstract

“Emily Dickinson, Material Rhetoric, and the Ethos of Nineteenth-Century American Women’s Poetry” examines the ethos of women’s poetry as it was negotiated through the material rhetoric of mid-nineteenth-century American periodicals, and Emily Dickinson’s strategic alignment with that ethos to paradoxically distance herself from the literary market. As I argue, Dickinson negotiated an enduring marginality that would forestall her entry into public modes of poetic address while she lived, in order to preserve a poetic address that could foster interpersonal affectivity. Establishing the methodological framework for my study, the introduction demonstrates how material rhetoric contributes to the ethos of poetry by defining ethos as emerging from a poetry’s delivery and reception in material contexts of address. Chapter 1 maps the ethos of women’s poetry as it develops in the U.S. between 1830 and 1864, and especially the crucial ground that Civil War newspapers provided for the negotiation of a gendered authorial ethos for women’s poetry. Chapter 2 demonstrates how Dickinson’s poetry was implicated in such negotiations, as her poems were published in her daily newspaper, the *Springfield Republican*, under literary editor Fidelia Hayward Cooke during the early 1860s. Arguing that this implication transformed her poetic address and prompted decisive action on her part to limit further publication, I then investigate the ethos Dickinson herself negotiated with poetry she addressed to correspondents. Chapter 3 reads Dickinson’s negotiation of an amateur ethos with her correspondent Thomas Wentworth Higginson as a deliberate move to indefinitely defer her entry into the literary market. Chapter 4 maps Dickinson’s practice of sending poetry as, in, or with letters to correspondents, to demonstrate her investment in mobilizing interpersonal affectivity through personal, specific—not public, unspecific—poetic address. This dissertation makes substantial contribution to the field in three ways: it redresses the critical omission of

materiality in the study of the rhetoric of nineteenth-century American women's poetry; it extends feminist historiography of women's rhetoric to include the materiality of poetic address; and it extends the study of Dickinson in context, by situating her among her peers, deeply and inextricably in the material context of mid-nineteenth-century periodical culture.

Preface

This dissertation is original, independent work by the author, Judith Jeannine Scholes.

A version of Chapter 2 has been published as “Emily Dickinson and Fidelity Hayward Cooke’s *Springfield Republican*” in *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 23.1 (January 2014): 1–31. Copyright © 2014 The Johns Hopkins University Press.

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List of Abbreviations

- F *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Variorum Edition*. Ed. R. W. Franklin (Cambridge: The Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1998).
- L *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*. Eds. Thomas Herbert Johnson & Theodora Ward (Cambridge: The Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1958).
- BPL Emily Dickinson Papers, Galatea Collection, Boston Public Library Rare Books and Manuscripts. Manuscripts from this collection will be cited by this abbreviation followed by the catalog number (e.g., 1097.3)
- OMC *Open Me Carefully: Emily Dickinson's Intimate Letters to Susan Huntington Dickinson*. Eds. Ellen Louise Hart and Martha Nell Smith (Ashfield: Paris P, 1998).
- SR *The Springfield Republican*, Springfield MA.
- DB *The Drum Beat*, Brooklyn and Long Island Sanitary Fair, Brooklyn NY. Images by permission of The Houghton Library, Harvard University © The President and Fellows of Harvard College.
- AC Emily Dickinson Collection, Archives & Special Collections, Amherst College. Manuscripts from this collection will be cited by this abbreviation followed by the catalog number (e.g., 769).
- H Emily Dickinson Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University. By permission of The Houghton Library, Harvard University © The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Manuscripts from this collection will be cited by this abbreviation followed by the catalog number (e.g., MS Am 1118.3).
- ADEL *An American Dictionary of the English Language*. Ed. Noah Webster (1844. Renovated Online Edition. Ed. Cynthia Hallen. *Emily Dickinson Lexicon*).

For ease of reference, I cite Franklin's (F) or Hart and Smith's (OMC) numbering system for Dickinson's poems and Thomas Johnson's (L) numbering system for Dickinson's letters and any letters to Dickinson included in the Johnson edition of *Letters*. Quotations from Dickinson's poems and letters for which a manuscript was available follow my transcription of the manuscript and cite manuscript source alongside the Franklin and Johnson numbers. Quotations from Dickinson's poems and letters for which a manuscript was not available follow Franklin's or Johnson's transcription. Wherever possible, Dickinson's spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and line breaks have been retained and, following Franklin's variorum edition, Dickinson's dashes are represented as spaced hyphens.

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To Ruby, who knows the matter of things.

Introduction

Reading the Rhetoric of Women's Poetry

On May 11th, 1869, Emily Dickinson received a letter from author, activist, and critic, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, with whom she had been corresponding for several years. Higginson hoped that Dickinson would meet finally him in person for the first time, in Boston:

You must come down to Boston sometimes? All ladies do. I wonder if it would be possible to lure you to the meetings on the 3d Monday of every month at Mrs. Sargent's, 13 Chestnut Street at 10 A.M.—when somebody reads a paper and others talk or listen. Next Monday Mr. Emerson reads and then at 3:30 P.M. there is a meeting of the Women's Club where I read a paper on the Greek goddesses. That would be a good time for you to come... I shall be in Boston also during anniversary week, June 25 & 28 (L 330a).

Higginson's itinerary is followed with a post-script at the end of his letter, referring to the proposed date of June 25th: "There is an extra meeting at Mrs. Sargent's that day & Mr. Weiss reads an essay. I have a right to invite you & you can merely ring & walk in." His detailed entreaty attempts to work around what he suspects is Dickinson's reticence not only to meet him face-to-face, but also to engage with his people, the New England literati. If Dickinson had accepted his invitation to "come down to Boston" as "[a]ll ladies do," she would have found herself beside such famous literary "ladies" as Julia Ward Howe, Louisa May Alcott, and Kate Field, as the special guest of one of the most beloved male speakers at the New England Women's Club (NEWC). As NEWC Founder and Director of the Art and Literature Committee, Ednah D. Cheney remembered Higginson, he would "rea[d] to us his glorious essays, and the poems of

his sainted friends, so sacred that they seemed like Isis enshrined behind a veil, and yet giving wisdom to the world” (Sprague 39). The poems she refers to were, in fact, quite likely Dickinson’s, since Higginson, six years later at the last of several readings for the NEWC, read poems by his late sister Louisa and then some that Dickinson sent him, “not giving the name” (Leyda 2:239).¹ Dickinson’s appearance as one of Higginson’s “sainted friends” would have been an affable literary debut.

Dickinson, however, did not accept the invitation. With dramatic assertion, she replied, “I do not cross my Father’s ground to any House or town” (L 330). This apparent refusal, which was directed more toward New England literary ladies (“House”) than Boston (“town”) or the idea of travelling from home (“my Father’s ground”), could not have come as a surprise to Higginson, who was, by then, accustomed to Dickinson’s evasions: “you only enshroud yourself in this fiery mist & I cannot reach you, but only rejoice in the rare sparkles of light” (L 330a). Whether one takes the refusal as earnest or as a calculated feint, alongside her highly elliptical poetics and general avoidance of publication, Dickinson’s reply to Higginson has contributed to the popular conception of the poet as a reclusive and even elitist oddity.

Critical studies and editions of Dickinson’s manuscripts over the last three decades have challenged or complicated this conception by reading Dickinson’s poetry in relation to its historical, cultural, social, and material contexts. Culminating in the recently published extensive compendium *Dickinson In Context* edited by Eliza Richards, this often ground-breaking recovery

¹ The date was November 29, 1875. NEWC’s official historian Julie Sprague records this talk as “Sister’s Poems” (87). We know that Higginson read Dickinson’s poems because he refers to them in his diary and a letter to his sister Anna: “Yesterday afternoon, at the Woman’s Club I talked about ‘Two Unknown Poetesses’ – namely Louisa & Emily Dickinson of Amherst; & read poems by both...Afterward I read some of E Dickinson’s (not giving the name) & their weird & strange power excited much interest” (qtd. in Leyda 2:239).

work has revealed the multiple ways in which Dickinson was culturally situated and in which her poetry reflected and even addressed its historical moment. Nevertheless, Dickinson is still seen as removed from her peers, however situated. Her distinctive poetic practice—its experimental, rhetorical play with language, form, and materiality—and her willful avoidance of publication still suggest, for many readers, a defiant, if quiet, refusal of the gendered coteries of her nineteenth-century literary market. Taking up the question of Dickinson’s relation to her literary culture, “Emily Dickinson, Material Rhetoric, and the Ethos of Nineteenth-Century American Women’s Poetry” rethinks Dickinson’s status as a situated outsider in terms of a strategic alignment with, rather than a refusal of, the gendered coteries of her literary market.

As I demonstrate below and throughout this dissertation, perceiving this strategic alignment depends entirely on how we read the rhetoric of women’s poetry more generally, or—put another way—on what we understand the rhetoric of women’s poetry to be. Scholars who have turned to the rhetoric of poetry to recover the diversity and functions of women’s poetry in the nineteenth century have tended to define poetry’s rhetoric in terms of a suasive tone arising from a poem’s language, content, or form. This definition reduces poetry’s rhetoric to poetics alone and overlooks the material aspects of poetry that shape what rhetorician Carole Blair has called the “most fundamental—arguably, definitive—characteristics” of rhetoric, “its capacity for consequence, and its partisanship” (8). The material aspects of a poem, such as its hand-written or printed quality, formatting, surrounding paratexts, medium of publication, and mode of circulation, are what make it legible and, indeed, what make it “matter” (McGill 7) to a historically- and culturally-situated audience. Together these aspects form a material rhetoric that works to shape a poem’s ethos, that is, its persuasive and often gendered quality of character. As I demonstrate, overlooking material rhetoric and ethos in the study of the rhetoric of nineteenth-century American women’s poetry can lead to a drastic simplification of its

significance throughout the century. Conversely, expanding the definition of poetry's rhetoric to include materiality and ethos can reveal complex interactions among poetry's diverse forms and functions as well as make clear how the gendered stakes of publication and authorship operated for individual women poets. Redressing the critical omission of materiality in the study of the rhetoric of nineteenth-century American women's poetry, this dissertation uses a material rhetoric approach to examine how these stakes operated for Emily Dickinson in relation to her peers, particularly as Dickinson's work became implicated with the ethos of women's poetry as that ethos emerged in the American literary market during early 1860s. As I argue, Dickinson, threatened by this implication, did not refuse it, but instead worked it to her advantage. Rhetorically positioning herself at the threshold of her literary culture's gendered access points, Dickinson paradoxically negotiated an enduring marginality that would indefinitely forestall her entry into public modes of poetic address.

Establishing the methodological framework for my study in what follows, I begin with a brief review of the "rhetorical turn" in critical studies of nineteenth-century American women's poetry, discussing how, in examining the ways women's poetry rhetorically subverted, exploited, and reformed nineteenth-century sentimental conventions, scholars have recovered the socio-cultural and political function of the work. I then explain how a narrow definition of poetry's rhetoric, however, persists in this scholarship and leads scholars to read the significance of women's poetry throughout the century in terms of a progress narrative. In addition to simplifying the development of women's poetry, such a narrative inevitably and problematically positions Emily Dickinson at a remove from her peers. Building on a materialist turn in recent feminist analysis of rhetorical texts, I extend the rhetoric of poetry beyond poetics to include materiality and offer material rhetoric as a way to open up critical narratives to a more nuanced, lateral account of women's poetry as it existed in the nineteenth-century U.S. as well as a deeper

understanding of the gendered alignments between nineteenth-century women poets, inclusive of Dickinson.

Rhetoric and the Historicizing of Women's Poetry

Feminist scholarship on nineteenth-century American literary culture has been fueled by the recovery and revision of a diverse range of poetry by American women writers that was virtually unknown to twentieth-century readers. Although this poetry circulated often and widely in popular nineteenth-century periodicals and gift books, making its authors highly respected household names at the time, after the 1880s, in the face of emergent modernist aesthetics and poetics, much of this earlier poetry was critically devalued as genteel Victorian sentimentalism that lacked aesthetic sophistication or innovation. By the early decades of the twentieth century, many works by early- and mid-nineteenth-century women poets had been systematically excluded from the modern American literary imagination, which valued everything that genteel was not: “linguistic disruption, extreme perceptions, epistemological doubt, and trenchant political critique” (Walker, *American Women Poets* xxvi).² If Ann Douglas's *The Feminization of*

² The question of this exclusion has served as a common point of departure for anthologies and historical studies of nineteenth-century American women's poetry, since the early 1980s. The consensus among these studies is that a decline in female print culture after 1870, coupled with the rising authority and influence of modern poetic form and aesthetic, contributed to the erasure of the nineteenth-century woman poet and her work. There is some debate, however, about the extent to which late nineteenth-century women poets laid the groundwork for this erasure and about how much of it was a systematic ousting by male literary producers. This debate tends to divide cleanly between those concerned with revising literary canons and those concerned with revising history. Anthologist Janet Gray, editor of *She Wields a Pen*, for instance, has argued that although late-nineteenth-century women had a hand in shaping the modernist poetics that would supplant sentimental verse forms, it was “literary critics and scholars [that] used [modern poetics] to eliminate nearly all nineteenth-century women poets

American Culture (1977), which yoked nineteenth-century women writers to what was, in her estimation, a vapid culture of sentiment, served as the last critical bastion of an exclusionary modernist aesthetic, feminist recovery and revision of nineteenth-century American women's poetry since the publication of *The Feminization of American Culture* has served as its correction. Recovery of many unknown nineteenth-century women poets in the late 1970s and early 1980s spurred an enthusiastic call for canon reformation, which led not only to the publication of new and ground-breaking anthologies,³ but also to a sustained inquiry on U.S. women's poetry which has sought to revise the simple equation of nineteenth-century women's verse with a "literary sentimentality" that was "genteelly narcissistic, domestically oriented, and largely apolitical" (Bennett *Poets* xi), by attending to its extensive social and cultural functions.

Building on Jane Tompkins' groundbreaking feminist apologetic of sentimentality in nineteenth-century women's fiction in *Sensational Designs* (1985), which argued that "the work of the sentimental writers is complex and significant in ways other than those that characterize the established masterpieces" (126), feminist literary critics and historians have since shown that women poets wrote in a range of poetic genres that were more politically engaged and publically oriented than the "narcissistic self-engagement of the dominant genteel tradition" (Bennett, *Poets*

from the American literary canon" (xxix). Literary historian Paula Bernat Bennett, on the other hand, argues that "in dismissing earlier nineteenth-century women poets *tout court* as irremediably inferior artists, whose popularity rested in their (feminizing) emotionality, *fin-de-siècle* women poets demonized their own roots, cutting early modernist women off from them also" (*Poets* 13).

³ See Cheryl Walker, *American Women Poets* (1992); Jane R. Sherman, *African-American Poetry of the Nineteenth-Century* (1992); Janet Gray, *She Wields a Pen: American Women Poets of the Nineteenth-Century* (1997); Paula Bennett, *Nineteenth-Century American Women Poets: An Anthology* (1998); Shira Wolosky, *Major Voices: 19th Century American Women's Poetry* (2003).

xi-xii) could possibly explain.⁴ Owing to these discoveries, feminist literary scholar Marion Thain in 2003 even suggested “a translation—at least a mental one—of the term ‘women’s poetry,’ whenever we hear it, into ‘women’s poetries,’” in order to “explicitly acknowledg[e] the multiple, gendered positions which women poets could assume towards the end of the [nineteenth] century” (23). As Shira Wolosky has recently argued, “[p]oetry in fact served as a major avenue for women’s emergence into and participation in public issues” (*Poetry and Public Discourse* xi). The recovery of “multiple, gendered positions” for women poets occurred through two divergent but not incompatible lines of feminist analysis. The first line, defined by the work of Cheryl Walker, Yopie Prins, Virginia Jackson, and Eliza Richards, reads women poets, such as Lydia Huntley Sigourney, Emily Dickinson, Frances Sargent Osgood, and Elizabeth Oakes Smith, in relation to a rhetorically complex sentimental Poetess tradition. The second, defined by the work of Nina Baym, Shira Wolosky, Paula Bennett, and Mary Loeffelholz, reads women poets, such as Sigourney, Dickinson, Helen Hunt Jackson, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, and Sarah Piatt, outside of the sentimental Poetess tradition, in order to recover rather than reduce what literary

⁴ Book-length studies devoted to feminist recovery and revision of nineteenth-century American women’s poetry include: Emily Stipes Watts, *The Poetry of American Women from 1632 to 1945* (1977); Cheryl Walker, *The Nightingale’s Burden: Women Poets and American Culture before 1900* (1982); Alicia Ostriker, *Stealing the Language: The Emergence of Women’s Poetry in America* (1986); Joanne Dobson, *Dickinson and the Strategies of Reticence: The Woman Writer in Nineteenth-Century America* (1989); Shirley Samuels (ed.), *The Cultures of Sentiment: Race, Gender and Sentimentality in the Nineteenth-Century* (1992); Elizabeth Petrino, *Emily Dickinson and Her Contemporaries: Women’s Verse in America 1820–1885* (1998); Paula Bernat Bennett, *Poets in the Public Sphere: The Emancipatory Project of American Women’s Poetry 1800–1900* (2003); Janet Gray, *Race and Time: American Women’s Poetries from Antislavery to Racial Modernity* (2004); Mary Loeffelholz, *From School to Salon: Reading Nineteenth-Century American Women’s Poetry* (2004); Virginia Jackson, *Dickinson’s Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* (2005); Paula Bernat Bennett, Karen L. Kilcup and Philip Schweighauser, *Teaching Nineteenth-Century American Poetry* (2007); Shira Wolosky, *Poetry and Public Discourse in Nineteenth-Century America* (2010); Cristanne Miller, *Reading in Time: Emily Dickinson in the Nineteenth-Century* (2014).

theorist Shira Wolosky has called “variety and multifocal energies [of nineteenth-century American women’s poetry], which go beyond, although they include, the sentimental” (*Major Voices* 9). What makes these two lines of analysis only loosely differentiated is that both essentially argue toward the same end: American women’s poetry in the nineteenth century was not a homogenous effusion of private feeling and feeble clichés; it was a deeply situated and highly rhetorical discursive practice.

Though all of this work presents an historically informed analysis of the rhetoric of women’s poetry that has been key to its recovery as formally diverse and functionally powerful in the nineteenth century, it also tends, with few exceptions, to rely on a limited conception of poetry’s rhetoric as a suasive tone arising from a poem’s language, content, or form.⁵ In other words, despite an emphasis on the historical situation of nineteenth-century American women’s poetry, these revisionist accounts often define the rhetoric of poetry by poetics alone while sidelining or omitting material aspects of poetry altogether. For instance, Bennett’s *Poets in the Public Sphere* (2003), certainly one of the most comprehensive and historically informed surveys of nineteenth-century American women’s verse to date, tracks the diversity of women’s poetry beyond the genteel lyric after 1820, as it developed across a divide of “vastly different strains of social and political thought as well as rhetorical practice” (42). As Bennett argues, women’s poetry strategically used—and in some cases critiqued—conventions of sentimentality to motivate sympathy and solidarity, to build community cohesion or national identity, to represent minority subjects, and to demystify domestic ideology. Exploring this, Bennett casts the rhetoric of women’s poetry in terms of an increasing ironization and eventual purging of sentimentality

⁵ Most notably, Virginia Jackson’s *Dickinson’s Misery* (2005) presents an illuminating corrective to what I identify as a pervasive narrowing of the rhetoric of women’s poetry to poetics alone. My own corrective is indebted to Jackson’s work.

over the course of the century. Considering the work of Frances Watkins Harper, Emma Lazarus, and Sarah Piatt, among others, Bennett traces the “emancipation” of women’s poetry specifically from witty argument, romanticized subjects, and Christian, affect-laden language, to ironic reversal via gothicization and parody, to ironic observation, personae, and erotic metaphors.⁶ When scholars speak of the rhetoric of poetry, it turns out, they are most often speaking of the strategic use or function of a trope or linguistic pattern, prosody, syntax, or figure of address to persuade an audience or to challenge, subvert or reform a particular discourse, system or medium of representation with which the audience is familiar.⁷ For instance, in *Poetry and Public Discourse in Nineteenth-Century America* (2010) Shira Wolosky defines poetry as “a distinctive formal field on which the rhetorics of nineteenth-century American culture find intensified expression, concentration, reflection, and command” (x). Wolosky then goes on to define “rhetorics” as “*linguistic patterns* that engage and formulate values, attitudes, interests, and cultural directions at large in society,” which in poetry denotes such “structures as voice, imagery, setting, self-representation, and address” (x). This effectively collapses rhetoric and rhetorical effect into poetic structure and linguistic effect.

If this collapse of rhetoric is common to many contemporary readings of the rhetoric of poetry, as rhetorician Carole Blair has demonstrated, yoking rhetoric to a text’s symbolic aspects is typical in the analysis of rhetorical texts broadly speaking. Although “the symbol is,” Blair argues, “neither adequate to rhetoric nor coterminous with it” (20), a reigning liberal humanist bias in the analysis of texts has reduced our understanding of rhetoric from “any partisan,

⁶ Bennett discusses wit, romanticizations, and Christian affect in Chapter 2, use of irony in Chapter 5 and 6, and erotic language in Chapter 7.

⁷ For other recent readings of the rhetoric of nineteenth-century women’s poetry as strategic poetics, see Wolosky, 2004: 147–99; Sorby 2005: xi–xlv; Loeffelholz, 2008: 32–127; and Kelly, 2008: 19–56.

meaningful, consequential text” (18) to “a (symbolic, meaning-ful) instrument under the control of a rhetor” (21). Our reading of rhetoric is capped by a “heuristic of symbolicity” (18) that confines us to the terms of “rhetorical production and an exceptionally narrow understanding of effect” (21). That is, in attending merely to the rhetorical use of language and the aims behind that use, our understanding of rhetorical effect is continually limited to the fulfillment of those aims and little else. Blair’s critique of the study of rhetoric parallels what Jerome McGann has called the “spell” of romantic hermeneutics, in which the social (and thus rhetorical) action of literary texts is “too subjectively (and too abstractly) conceived in its linguistic conditions” (12). Thus, in exploring the rhetoric of poetry we might focus on a set of linguistic codes produced by the poet (e.g., the use of affective irony) aiming to control or subvert poetic convention (e.g., the rhetoric of sentimentality), itself defined as a set of linguistic codes made popular by earlier poets. While this focus may identify significant patterns in the historical development or dismantling of poetic conventions, it tends to overlook a poem’s historical scene of reading (or hearing) as well as how that scene may have rhetorically contributed, enhanced, or even disrupted a poem’s intended rhetorical effect.

Ultimately, this narrowing contributes less to a “historical poetics” and more to fashioning a distinctive and predictable historical narrative. Thus, whether scholars have attempted to recover the significance of a tradition of sentimentality in the lives and works of women poets, or to complicate women poets’ relation to sentimentality and the poetess tradition, or both, a reliance on symbolic rhetoric has contributed to readings that tend to fit nineteenth-century women’s poetry to a progressive historical narrative that looks forward to (proto-) modernist rhetorical modes of poetic voice (such as irony). This model for reading women’s poetry, though it has been instrumental in bringing forward a diverse range of poets, is arguably just as problematic as the homogenization it challenges. Such narratives inevitably read

nineteenth-century American women's poetry as an evolution from the sentimental rhetoric of the genteel lyric to the anti-sentimental rhetoric of the modern lyric, from artificial feminized pathos to authentic female subjectivity, from Anglophilic echo to American original expression, from the "American Poetess" to Emily Dickinson. Meanwhile, the bulk of poetry falling in between these poles, which Bennett and others rightly identify as generically diverse, is often valued implicitly in terms of its progressive mobilization of a proto-modernist irony and aestheticism. Though the reading of the history of women's poetry as an emancipatory project enhances our understanding of the rhetorical turn towards irony and aestheticism in the late-nineteenth century, we must be wary of the premises that this reading takes for granted: first, that irony and aestheticism equals emancipation from the rhetoric of sentimentality and second, that emancipation from the rhetoric of sentimentality is good. Of course, evolutionary narratives are perhaps a necessary evil in any recovery of women's writing as literary history, especially writing aligned with a much-maligned sentimentality. As Linda Hutcheon convincingly argues, evolutionary narratives in the recovery of women's history represent a pragmatic "struggle to articulate a usable past" (417). They provide "a bedrock narrative of development that historically guarantees a sense of cultural legitimacy has to be laid down before competing, correcting, even counter discursive narratives can be articulated" (416). We might be more vigilant, however, as literary historian Margaret Ezell reminds us, about how such narratives are "structured on a 'great woman' or 'turning point' linear model" in relation to which "we have labeled winners and losers; the 'best' examples of women's writing" (61).

Dickinson has served as this "great woman" in the last century of literary criticism, often to the neglect of her nineteenth-century peers and even, as literary historian Zophia Burr has argued, to the circumscription of her twentieth-century literary heirs. Though in the last three decades, scholars have been concerned with reading Dickinson in relation to an ever-growing list

of nineteenth-century women writers, comparisons are routinely limited to nineteenth-century rhetorical motifs and tropes, from the “nightingale” (Walker), to “the language of flowers” (Petrino 129–160), to “generic themes—‘God,’ ‘nature,’ ‘love,’ etc” (Bennett, “Emily Dickinson and Her Peers” 298). On the whole, this criticism has reinforced Dickinson’s ultimate distinction and exceptionality. Thus, Dickinson is read as a uniquely original poet who transforms nineteenth-century tropes and myths (Petrino; St. Armand); as an innovative proto-modernist (Bennett; Loeffelholz); and as a radical poet, rebelling from traditional women’s and women-poet’s roles (Walker; Smith). Though Dickinson’s motifs are squarely mid-nineteenth-century, as Walker maintains, her “strategies of defamiliarization and compression, her playfulness with abstractions, her evocation and revocation of gender constructs, separate her from most of her sisters” (“Dickinson in Context” 197). Growing attention to the rhetoric of nineteenth-century women’s poetry—where rhetoric is linked to poetics alone—has served to reinforce this separation of Dickinson from her contemporaries, aligning Dickinson ultimately with fin de siècle poets whose modern lyric “success” was “predicated on the demise of the very kind of writer who gave them birth” (Bennett 12–3).

In addition to reinforcing Dickinson’s exceptionalism, rather than deepening our understanding of women’s poetry in specific contexts of address, this work has been made, where it diverges from that narrative, more difficult to perceive. This critical move also represents a kind of lyricization of poetry, in that it forgets, ignores, or devalues the complexity of poetry’s rhetorical force beyond its expression of voice. In twentieth- and twenty-first-century critical reception of Dickinson’s poetry, as Virginia Jackson has demonstrated, such lyricization—what she calls “lyric reading”—runs rampant and obscures, especially, the materiality of Dickinson’s poetic address. Jackson sees lyric reading as having consequences for literary history on at least two levels: (1) “the historical transformation of many varied poetic genres into the single

abstraction of the post-Romantic lyric” (“Who Reads Poetry,” 183); and (2) the reduction of poetic voice to an abstracted, autonomous, and authoritative subject.⁸ As Jackson argues, in Dickinson’s case, “that authority is an effect of lyric reading” (*Dickinson’s Misery* 126); that is, it is only an artifact of the post-Romantic critical gaze.

Jackson’s way around the lyricization of Dickinson and other female poets opens up substantial new ground for correcting what I identify as the trouble with critical studies of the rhetoric of women’s poetry: a tendency to reiterate a narrow conception of rhetoric as poetics and overlook the materiality of poetic address. Reading away from lyric voice, Jackson moves our eyes toward the historically contingent materiality of Dickinson’s poetic address. Like *Dickinson’s Misery*, other recent studies in the field of nineteenth-century American poetry are beginning to point the way toward a broader reading of the rhetoric of women’s poetry as situated in material contexts of address and reception, beginning with Meredith McGill’s *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834–1853* (2003), which reveals the lack of control authors had over their circulating texts in the culture of reprinting in the antebellum U.S. and Mary Loeffelholz’s *From School to Salon* (2004), which maps the social locations in which nineteenth-century women’s poetry found reception and had rhetorical impact. More recently, Eliza Richards’ *Gender and the Poetics of Reception in Poe’s Circle* (2011) examines the gendered circulation and reception of women’s poetry in nineteenth-century American print culture. What each of these studies has us do is attend to the situatedness of a text in a material context of address and the rhetorical effects

⁸ This consequence of lyricization on our conception of poetry’s rhetoric is also suggested by studies of classical lyric poetry, including W.R. Johnson’s *The Idea of Lyric: Lyric Modes in Ancient and Modern Poetry* (1982) and more recently, Jeffrey Walker’s *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity* (2000). Whereas Johnson argues that the rise of a lyric aesthetic diminishes the rhetorical dimension of poetry, Walker argues that the classical root of the lyric poem, which has been entirely purged through its modernization, was essentially rhetorical in nature and thoroughly invested in receptivity over expressivity.

modulated by that material context and influenced by (re)producers other than the author (such as the editor, publisher, and even the reader). What such studies suggest is that making sense of the rhetoric of nineteenth-century American women's poetry begins with the material contexts in which it circulated and had purchase. This is precisely where "Emily Dickinson, Material Rhetoric, and the Ethos of Nineteenth-Century American Women's Poetry" begins. Bringing into conversation feminist historiographers of rhetoric who are interested in materiality (i.e., Carole Mattingly, Lindal Buchanan, Carole Blair, and Vicki Tolar Burton), and literary historians interested in nineteenth-century American women's authorship and literary agency (i.e., Patricia Okker, Susan Williams, and Meredith McGill), I develop material rhetoric as a way to analyze the ethos of women's poetry as it was negotiated in mid-nineteenth-century American print contexts, and as a way to read Dickinson's rhetorical use of that ethos to avoid her entry into those very contexts. In doing so, my dissertation makes a substantial contribution to the field in three ways: it redresses the critical omission of materiality in the study of the rhetoric of nineteenth-century American women's poetry; it extends feminist historiography of women's rhetoric to include the materiality of poetic address; and it extends the study of Dickinson in context, by situating her among her peers, deeply and inextricably in the material context of mid-nineteenth-century periodical culture.

Toward a Material Rhetoric of Nineteenth-Century American Women's Poetry

As McGann reminds us, "all texts, like all other things human, are embodied phenomena, and the body of the text is not exclusively linguistic" (*Textual Condition* 13). McGann encourages us to remember that "[e]very literary work that descends to us operates through the deployment of a double helix of perceptual codes: the linguistic codes, on the one hand, and the bibliographic

codes on the other” (77). I would add that in the case of nineteenth-century American poetry, the deployment itself is a crucial factor of embodiment: it marks the context of address in which a given poem is rhetorically delivered and received by an audience, and thus how it takes place among historical materials and agents that shape the poem’s persuasive effect and inevitably gendered quality of character, or ethos.

As the persuasive character of a rhetorical text such as a poem, ethos is not reducible to the figurative voice or persona in the verse, or even the reputation or impression of the poet; rather, it marks the character of the poetic address itself—the whole of that address, which involves its symbolic content and generic form, as well as those material elements that authorize and make legible its symbolic content and genre for a particular audience in a particular literary and cultural context of address, such as its hand-written or printed quality, its degree and context of publication and circulation. In defining ethos as such, I am returning to its broader Aristotelian meaning and thus moving away from the post-romantic whittling of the concept to “voice” that, in Jan Swearingen’s words, “one finds in a text or adopts in speech, that bland ‘style or manner appropriate to audience” (134-5). According to Aristotle, persuasion occurs “through character [ethos] whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence... And this should result from the speech, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person” (*Rhetoric* 1356a). The powerful, persuasive authority that defines ethos in rhetorical speech is established, moreover, in direct proportion to the “good sense, virtue, and good will” (*Rhetoric* 1378a) projected by the speaker during his or her address to the audience, or, in other words, the degree to which the speaker and his or her speech are received as embodying qualities valued by his or her audience. In this sense, ethos is more than persuasive quality of character; it marks the appropriate positionality of the rhetorical address and takes place at the

moment of delivery/reception, and is thus always implicated in the time and material space of its historical, cultural, and gendered context.

That those historical materials and agents shaping the ethos of a poem in a particular context of address go largely unrecognized in the study of the rhetoric of poetry is especially disabling for literary critics and historians of women's poetry, since it is these elements that gender—implicitly or explicitly—inflects and these elements that have particular consequence for the work of women poets in, especially, the nineteenth century. Such blind spots indicate a masculinist bias in our critical reading that cannot adequately account for the differences of women's forms of poetic address or the forces shaping those forms. As rhetoric scholar Carole Mattingly has persuasively argued, we too often overlook important evidence of what counts for women's rhetoric. Studying the rhetoric of public speaking in the nineteenth-century U.S., Mattingly notes that “[d]elivery...was vastly different for women, not just in voice (less forceful, conversational) or in gesture (smaller, more “feminine” movements), but in a consideration of every facet of appearance that might affect their receptivity” (106).⁹ Without broadening our understanding of rhetoric to include its materiality, we ignore this difference and not only unfairly “judge women's rhetoric according to masculine standards” (107), but also overlook its role in altering “the way women—and their claim to a public presence—were perceived”: “[a]s women developed effective means of presenting themselves rhetorically, constructions of a natural gender showed evidence of fracture as well” (106). Though scholars of nineteenth-century American women

⁹ See also Nan Johnson on gender and rhetorical space in women's parlor rhetorics in antebellum America; Lindal Buchanan on the interaction of gender and delivery in the public reception of rhetorical speech and texts; and Roxanne Mountford on the gendered body and delivery in women's rhetorical practice as preachers. Mountford argues that refiguring delivery as a canon of rhetoric “is critically important for feminist transformation of rhetorical theory” (9).

poets have begun to recognize the significance of materiality, we have yet to explicitly read this materiality as evidence of rhetoric, let alone as negotiating the emergence and consequence of ethos for women's poetry.

Like Mattingly and Buchanan, Carole Blair has argued for a greater focus on the materiality of rhetoric and has accordingly developed "material rhetoric" as a concept and methodology for the analysis of rhetorical texts.¹⁰ In doing so, Blair implicitly develops McGann's call for a more complete account of the body of a literary text via its bibliographic codes and extends it to texts broadly conceived "as...legible or readable event[s] or object[s]" (18). According to Blair, "we must ask not just what a text means but, more generally what it does, and we must not understand what it does as adhering strictly to what it was supposed to do" (23). Turning to U.S. memorial installations as her texts in question, Blair asks: "(1) what is the significance of the text's material existence? (2) What are the apparatuses and degrees of durability displayed by the text? (3) What are the text's modes or possibilities of reproduction or preservation? (4) What does the text do to (or with, or against) other texts? (5) How does the text

¹⁰ See also Barbara Dickson and Jordynn Jack on the use of material rhetoric as methodology. Dickson reads material rhetoric as "a mode of interpretation that takes as its object of study the significations of material things and corporal entities – objects that signify not through language but through their spatial organization, mobility, mass, utility, orality, tactility" (297). She continues: "material rhetoric examines...how multiple discourses and material practices collude and collide with one another to produce an object that momentarily *destabilizes* common understandings and makes available multiple readings. It seeks to know how this object can be read as providing for or constraining agency, the ability of persons singly and collectively to produce change" (298). Jordynn Jack demonstrates that material rhetoric is useful for reading the effect of material practices on gendered bodies in particular times and spaces, and how such material practices (re)produce "rhetorics of gender difference" that directly impact the daily lives women's lives, shaping, for instance, "bodily practices, workplace arrangements, and even the schedules for women workers" (300 n.2).

act on people?” (30).¹¹ In each of these questions, Blair shifts attention from the symbolic elements of a text, to the “material force beyond the goals, intentions, and motivations of its producers” (22).

Both Mattingly’s and Blair’s foci on the materiality of rhetorical texts come together in in feminist rhetoric scholar Vicki Tolar Burton’s development of material rhetoric as a method for the analysis of women’s written rhetorical texts. Burton reads the “embodied content” of women’s rhetorical texts in order to “expand feminist analysis of texts and textuality into the material world” (550). Taking as her example a spiritual journal published in 1793 by a female British Methodist leader, Burton maps how a “core text” gains new materiality through “rhetorical accretion” or “the layering of additional texts over and around the original” (547) during its production and distribution and how that new materiality “respeaks,” as she calls it, the original “voice” of the “core text” (548).¹² For Burton, “the task of material rhetoric as a methodology is to penetrate and examine the layers of rhetorical accretion,” since “with each accretion to a text, the speaker of the core text is respoken” (548), and thus “the rhetorical aims and functions of the initial text” (547) change. Burton’s work importantly accounts for the many historical instances when women rhetors do not function as the “production authorities” for their texts. In such cases, material rhetoric reveals disparities and practices that function “as

¹¹ Blair uses memorial sites in the U.S. as a base for theorizing the materiality of rhetoric, which she develops from reading de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*; Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*; and Lyotard, *The Differend*.

¹² Burton makes a point to distinguish the “accretions” of material rhetoric from “concretizations” in the reception theory of Hans Robert Jauss. Whereas reception theory is concerned with “aesthetic receptions of a linguistic structure”—that is, with how readers concretize or flesh-out the meaning of a received text—Burton’s material rhetoric is concerned with “actual physical additions or changes to a text, material alterations which are not primarily aesthetic but instead link material/linguistic change to rhetorical significance” (549).

mechanisms for controlling women's discourse and shaping representations of gender" (548), and especially for controlling ethos: as Burton makes evident, "[r]espeaking can be a way for the production authority to modify the ethos of the original speaker or call into question something in her text" (548).

While Burton's discussion of "rhetorical accretion" as "ethos-revision" (552) helpfully elaborates on how one might examine the material rhetoric of written texts and, moreover, recognizes how material forces outside the control of the rhetor accrete to shape the ethos of that rhetor's text, Burton's representation of ethos as the "voice" of the "speaker of the core text" (e.g., female Methodist leader) is problematic. That the authorial "voice" of the text can be respoken by the "production authority" implicitly represents ethos as something given in the text, that is, as an originary kernel of authentic character in the "core text" that can, however, be modified or distorted by the accretion of material layers during reproduction. This understanding of ethos insufficiently accounts for material forces beyond the aims of the text's producers, which, as Blair observes, is necessary for understanding the text's persuasive effect. Suggesting that ethos can be spoken, respoken, or produced for an audience, Burton denies ethos its crucial and dynamic interactivity with the context of address and audience. Ethos is not expressed *per se*; rather it emerges through a negotiation with the audience at the moment of the rhetorical text's delivery and reception, and is best thought of as ethos-as-received, rather than ethos-as-iterated. Defining ethos dynamically allows us to better account for how the rhetoric of a poem can change from one historical moment to the next, from one publication to the next, or from one audience to the next.

While I appreciate Burton's use of material rhetoric as a methodology for reading the rhetoric of women's literature, I revise her assertion that through rhetorical accretion, "publishing decisions and practices affect ethos as it functions in women's texts and women's

reading” (547). If “publishing decisions and practices affect ethos,” as Burton claims, they do so by shaping the particular conditions and context of the text’s material delivery and reception, which in turn shapes or negotiates the emergence of ethos. Rather than asking after the ethos of a “core text,” then—a question which inevitably abstracts ethos from its context of address, its moment of reception, and thus its historical negotiation—I ask how ethos is negotiated for rhetorical texts through their material existence in particular contexts of address. More specifically, I ask how gendered ethos is negotiated for women’s poetry through the material aspects of its printing and reception in nineteenth-century American periodicals, and Dickinson’s rhetorical use of that ethos to negotiate an exclusion from such public modes of poetic address.

My study encompasses the decades roughly corresponding to Dickinson’s lifetime (1830–1886) and comprises four chapters. Chapter 1, “Nineteenth-Century Women’s Poetry and the Matter of Ethos,” examines how the ethos of women’s poetry emerges and transforms in nineteenth-century American literary culture between 1830 and 1864, a period which saw major developments in transportation and communication technologies, as well as women’s access to education, public life, and print culture. Amid competing gender ideologies and shifting cultural discourse on the status of a “literary woman,” publishing women’s writing in the first half of the century was no simple matter. I discuss the roots of the struggle to negotiate an authorized ethos for women’s poetry in antebellum print culture. I then explore how the unique format of the nineteenth-century periodical, including its mass circulation, periodicity, and the contiguity it established between diverse rhetorical texts, contributes to the ethos of women’s poetry. During the years leading up to and including the Civil War, when breaking news, political opinion, and literary work were published side by side, especially in the daily newspapers, women’s poetry suddenly had new ways to matter. In fact, the negotiation of a gendered authorial ethos for women’s poetry became especially charged and powerful during this time. I discuss the *Drum Beat*

as a salient example of how the ethos of women's poetry could take on mythic proportions in newspapers. This short-run daily newspaper of the 1864 Brooklyn Sanitary Fair published 66 poems among its thirteen issues, three of which were Dickinson's poems, surreptitiously obtained and published anonymously. Analyzing how this newspaper helped position women's poetry at the literary front of the Civil War, I offer it as a particularly overt example of Dickinson's inadvertent participation in highly rhetorical contexts of public address.

Chapter 2, "Emily Dickinson and Mrs. F. H. Cooke's *Springfield Republican*," examines how Dickinson's poetry was caught up and used to further the ethos of women's poetry as it was negotiated in her daily newspaper. During the early 1860s, two of Dickinson's poems—"I taste a liquor never brewed -" and "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers"—appeared among the *Springfield Republican*'s literary selections. Printed in the "Original Poetry" section of the newspaper, these poems participated in what I identify as the rhetorical project of the *Republican*'s in-house literary editor Fidelity Hayward Cooke (1816–1897). Cooke's editing practice, particularly from 1861 to 1863, actively fostered a relationship between regional women's poetry and Civil War news, such that the poetry became an active and indispensable source of affective renewal for war-weary *Republican* readers. As I argue, Cooke's material rhetoric transformed the affective quality of Dickinson's poems and embroiled them in the *Republican*'s address to its readers and threatened Dickinson's poetic projects, which sparked Dickinson's decisive and enduring aversion to making her poetic address public.

Chapter 3, "Materializing an Amateur Ethos: Dickinson's Letters to T. W. Higginson" examines Dickinson's efforts against publication through the ethos she negotiated in correspondence with author and literary critic Thomas Wentworth Higginson, from 1862 until her death. Through close readings of the material rhetoric of Dickinson's correspondence with Higginson, including her practice of enclosing poems with her letters, I demonstrate how she

actively cultivated an amateur ethos that insulated her from the professional literary market that he represented. Dickinson did this deliberately, I argue, using her relationship with Higginson to slow her inevitable entry into the print world rather than, as many have argued, to enable this entry. I consider how Dickinson's relationship with Higginson also helped to deflect efforts by others, especially Helen Hunt Jackson, to publish her work. Dickinson's impulse to insert Higginson—the person she made most uncomfortable about her readiness for print—in between herself and those who would align her with an authorial ethos, is telling. Using Higginson as an intermediary, Dickinson tried to forestall and even preclude the publication opportunity that Jackson offered and all it portended: the forces of literary professionalism and publicity knocking at her door.

Chapter 4, “Affectivity and the Material Rhetoric of Dickinson's Addressed Poetry,” builds on recent currents in Dickinson scholarship that investigate the addressivity and materiality of her letters, by mapping the relation between poetic and epistolary address in Dickinson's letters to correspondents other than Higginson. Here, I explore three basic modes in which Dickinson's poems were sent to her correspondents: *as letters* to a correspondent; *set in* letters to a correspondent; and *enclosed with* letters to a correspondent. Along with Dickinson scholar Alexandra Socarides, I understand the various modes in which Dickinson deployed poems as, in, or with letters as “experiments with communication” (74), and not, as others have argued, private forms of publication. Dickinson, I argue, was invested in realizing an interpersonal affectivity with her correspondents through her poetic address, and this affectivity was only possible with a specific, personal—rather than unspecific, public—addressee. Dickinson's strategic alignment with her literary market helped ensure that this remained possible: by rhetorically positioning herself at the edge of its gendered access points, she was able

to forestall her entry into the very public modes of address that threatened her poetry's interpersonal function, as she envisioned it.

Finally, my conclusion, "Portrait of Dickinson's Addressee," reconsiders the question of Dickinson's difference from her nineteenth-century women poet peers, in terms of who is and who is not Dickinson's addressee. To what extent does Dickinson's inadvertent implication and deliberate alignment with the ethos of women's poetry overturn the pervasive conception of Dickinson as a poet indifferent to her literary market? And how might Dickinson's commitment to non-public modes of poetic address bind her poetry to its historical context of reception.

Accounting for the claims of this dissertation in light of these questions, I propose that the choice that most removes Dickinson from her peers and indeed her public readers then and now was motivated by precisely that which gave women's poetry at mid-century cultural legitimacy: faith in the capacity of poetic address to build and affirm loving fellowship.

Chapter 1

Nineteenth-Century Women's Poetry and the Matter of Ethos

"In our hands are the strings which hold the harmonies. Shall we fill the air
with wailing, or wake an under-song so sweet that all who pass will pause to
hear?"

— Susan Elston Wallace, "Another Weak-Minded Woman," 1867.¹³

"It is not strange, but it is sorrowful, to see in what crowds the women, married
and unmarried, flock to the gates of authorship."

— Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, "What Shall They Do?" 1867.¹⁴

In November 1867, *Harper's Monthly* published a personal essay titled "Another Weak-Minded Woman: A Confession," which documents, somewhat satirically, the trials of becoming an authorized woman writer in the American literary market in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. The four-page essay, written by periodical poet, fiction and travel writer Susan Elston Wallace (1830–1907), responds to a Letter to the Editor in the July issue of *Harper's* from "A Weak-Minded Woman," who complains of her difficulty in getting published by the magazine. In her response to the despairing amateur woman writer (and those of her ilk), Wallace provides a catalogue of her personal experience with "authorship" (231). Having only "partly succeeded" herself, she warns others "how straight is the gate and narrow is the

¹³ Susan Elston Wallace (1830–1907). "Another Weak-Minded Woman" was first printed in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (November 1867), and is reprinted in Boyd: 231–8.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (1844–1911). "What Shall They Do?" was first printed in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (June 1867), and is reprinted in Boyd: 239–42.

way...and how few there be that find it” (231). As Wallace wittily describes it, her first publication was a bit of a disappointment: “It was accepted; but the editor could not afford to pay for such articles. At last I saw myself in print. The story seemed wonderfully shrunken, and there were several misprints which drove me nearly crazy. But I was an ‘author’—therein like Shakespeare” (232). She then documents her real moment of glory with the publication of her poem, “My Children,” which she calls “baby-poetry,” noting this type of verse “was not so done to death as now” (233). Emphasizing the sentimental nature of the poem, she recalls how she felt “so keenly in writing that I found tears running down my face.” After this first rejection, she secretly and ashamedly attempts to submit the “rejected poetry” again: “I wrote it out again for a Chicago paper, and without name or date dropped it into the Post-Office at dusk.” When finally accepted, the poem was printed “on the inside” of the paper where “[n]o one noticed the thing,” then was later reprinted in *Harper’s* and “copied” in the newspapers. Sarcastically highlighting the “returns” of this reprinting, Wallace notes that although she was “not a paid contributor,” the poem *was* plagiarized by a Longfellow “some years later”: “I read ‘The Children’s Hour,’ and finding a line in it identical to my own, I exclaimed, ‘The great musician, the sweetest of all singers, he has read my little song’” (234).¹⁵ In documenting the height of her “authorship,” Wallace reveals her spurious claim to that title. Her published words do not make her an author at all; on the contrary, they are only “read” by an author and eventually used to support his own

¹⁵ Wallace’s piece is a veiled account of her experience, which changes details and embellishes for humor. The poem she identifies as “My Children” probably refers to her best known poem, “The Patter of Little Feet,” which was first published in the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* on April 17, 1858. Longfellow’s “The Children’s Hour,” which first appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in September 1860, includes the line “The patter of little feet.” Whereas Wallace was not compensated for her poem, Longfellow was paid for his piece. The irony, however, is that the ostensibly plagiarized line was a sentimental cliché when Wallace used it.

authorship, never her own. Wallace's account also provides an example of how the culture of reprinting that was in full swing at this time affected authorship in gendered ways. Whereas reprinting put authorship, as Meredith McGill notes, "under complex forms of occlusion" (39), this occlusion was all the more complex for women writers, whose claim to authorship was precarious in the first place.

If Wallace's experience is not discouraging enough for her readers, she tells the "weak-minded" would-be literary woman directly that she is misusing her energy and should "bury pen and paper at once" (236). As Wallace goes on to say, "I do not believe the world will ever produce a feminine Shakespeare or Milton, or a woman's hand write grand oratorios or create beauty like the Apollo. We will vote before a great while; we may hold office; we may be angels; but we can never be men" (238). In light of her "experience," however, the idea that women cannot be men suggests not that women do not have the capacity to write literature, but that their "feminine" duty-bound existence (now and in the future) prevents it: "your path is plain; you can not be author and do *your* duty" (236; my emphasis). Wallace makes clear that being an "author" is not a fulfilling use of a woman's energy and that a life of womanly "duty," which she earlier describes as a life "so narrow, so common, so poor" (233), is at least better than authorship. Rather than "fill the air with wailing," the best use of a woman's literary energy may be to support literary men and, in doing so, to "wake an under-song so sweet that all who pass will pause to hear" (238). Wallace, herself, took up this kind of supportive role, helping to edit her husband Lewis Wallace's famous novel, *Ben-Hur, A Tale of the Christ* (1880) and, after his death, finishing and publishing his two-volume autobiography.

But was publishing as a woman really as dire as Wallace suggests? As this piece itself proves, Wallace was a relatively well-published periodical writer. In narrativizing the fraught role of "author" for a women in the 1860s, Wallace is not simply providing a cautionary, if

entertaining, tale for would-be literary women, she is also reacting to what Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, only two months earlier, had observed as “crowds” of women “flock[ing] to the gates of authorship.” As shifting gender ideology and cultural discourse on women’s proper use of and belonging to modes of public address gave way in the 1840s and 50s to an expansive periodical print culture that welcomed women’s writing, publication became a real possibility for amateur and professionally-minded women writers alike. Responding to the same “Weak-Minded” letter writer who prompted Wallace’s piece, Phelps laments in less humorous, more ostensibly sympathetic, terms the vain struggle of amateur women writers to make an impact in an unforgiving literary market. Since both Wallace and Phelps, at the time of this exchange, were published in leading literary journals, they were not exactly struggling in vain, but they nevertheless found it difficult to distinguish themselves from the increasing “flock.” In other words they were threatened by the amateur women writers who flocked to their own “gates of authorship,” not unlike Hawthorne, who ten years prior had vented to his publisher William Ticknor that “America is now wholly given over to a d——d mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash – and should be ashamed of myself if I do succeed” (qtd. in Ticknor 141).¹⁶ Hawthorne’s famous denigration of women writers as a “mob of scribbling women” was, in fact, a common way for male critics to discipline women writers in the mid-nineteenth century and for women writers to distinguish themselves as precisely not one of that “mob.”

¹⁶ In another letter to Ticknor, Hawthorne mentions “scribbling women,” referring specifically to Julia Ward Howe, who he ranks as “the first of American poetesses”: “Those are admirable poems of Mrs. Howe’s, but...What a strange propensity it is in these scribbling women to make a show of their hearts, as well as their heads, upon your counter, for anybody to pry into that chooses! However, I for one, am much obliged to the lady, and esteem her beyond all compare the first of American poetesses. What does he husband think of it?” (qtd. in Ticknor 119).

Already confronted with resistance to their legitimacy as writing women, both Wallace and Phelps warned women to put down their pens not only because they were aware of a dismissive and unforgiving print market but also because they did not want additional competition. Beginning in the late 1850s, many women writers and editors show a concerted effort to define the terms of serious literary vocation for women, in part to legitimize their own professionalization and also to differentiate themselves from the so-called flocks of amateurs flooding the market. As Susan S. Williams notes, “this influx of new voices also created a new struggle for cultural legitimacy,” especially among women writers who sought to make a profession of writing like Wallace and Phelps. This struggle “in turn led to a new need for categories of authorship” (25), so that by the 1860s, Williams observes, the professional “woman author” was distinguishing herself from the amateur “writing woman,” as someone mature and disciplined who exhibited naturally feminine strengths and ethics (36-7). Writing as someone struggling for “cultural legitimacy” and addressing those who were flooding her market, Wallace uses her own story to separate the wheat from the chaff, as it were, and to position herself as the professional woman author who was once a mere “scribbling” woman.

While Wallace’s piece seems to admonish the profession of authorship as troublesome, impoverishing in terms of time, privacy, and pay, and unbecoming of a woman, it also subtly defines its author as more than just a “writing woman.” That she is designated authorial space in a leading journal to speak on authorship is, in itself, telling. Wallace, notably, embeds within her discussion of her trials to become an author how she learned to temper and discipline her “furore scribendi,” or writing fury, which she likens to “an inherent disease, [which] though being concealed... is as sure as death, and will come out” (233). Moreover, she distances the time of her fury as “fifteen years” in the past, hinting that although she was once amateur, she has since matured into a professional writer. The writers whom Wallace admonishes, ultimately, are not

women authors like herself who have, as it were, rooms of their own in which to develop their talents, but those who do not: “I do not address any who can lock themselves in libraries secure from interruption. I speak to those to whom the morning sun brings daily work; my fair countrywomen, who are so like white lilies at sixteen, yellow lilies at thirty, and alas! How many spotted lilies at forty” (231). The suggestion that she is not one of these “countrywomen” remains subtle, and, in fact, the piece as a whole registers a deep ambivalence toward claiming the very authorship it seeks to legitimize. As such, it provides an apt jumping off point for what this chapter will explore in greater detail: the palpable struggle to negotiate a defensible, authorized *ethos* for women’s poetry in mid-nineteenth-century print culture.

In what follows, I discuss the roots of this struggle in antebellum literary culture, with particular focus on Sarah Josepha Hale’s editing of the work of Lydia Huntley Sigourney, a poet known as the “American Poetess.” I then introduce how the struggle to negotiate *ethos* for women’s poetry plays out in periodical culture during the 1860s, particularly how the unique format of the periodical, including its mass circulation, periodicity, and the contiguity it established between diverse rhetorical texts, contributed to a gendered authorial *ethos* for women’s poetry. During the years leading up to and including the Civil War, when breaking news, political opinion, and literary work were published side by side, especially in the daily newspapers, the negotiation of a gendered authorial *ethos* for women’s poetry became especially charged and powerful, as women’s poetry suddenly had new ways to matter. To elaborate on how the *ethos* of women’s poetry could take on mythic proportions in newspapers, I consider the *Drum Beat*, a short-run newspaper circulated daily during the 1864 Brooklyn Sanitary Fair. This paper published 66 poems among its thirteen issues, but most famously printed three of Emily Dickinson’s poems, albeit anonymously and without her knowledge. Analyzing how this newspaper helped position women’s poetry at the literary front of the Civil War, I offer

Dickinson's poems in the *Drum Beat* as an overt example of what Chapter 2 takes up in more detail: Dickinson's inadvertent participation in highly rhetorical contexts of public address, in which the ethos of women's poetry took centre stage.

Negotiating Gendered Ethos in Antebellum Literary Culture

The convergence of growing literacy and access to education in the early Republic and advances in print circulation, crucially expanded opportunities for the public emergence of women's writing and the role women writers and their editors would play in fashioning nineteenth-century American literature and culture. However, even as women's involvement in print culture diversified and became more extensive, by the 1830s the public reception of women's writing, and particularly women's poetry, had become mediated by what Paula Bennett has called the culture of "literary sentimentality" (20). Peaking in Britain between the 1820s and 1840s, and dominating American literary culture from the early 1830s until the Civil War, literary sentimentality was, as Bennett summarizes, a "form of sentimentality [that] became the culturally sanctioned discourse of refined bourgeois sensibility in the United States, as abroad" (*Poets* 11). As literary sentimentality aligned with emergent ideals of domesticity and the "Cult of True Womanhood" that marked the domestic sphere as the proper domain of women and associated femininity with a submissive, affect-laden, domestically-oriented morality, it came to define womanly writing as affective in mode, moral in purpose, and domestic in concern.¹⁷ Though

¹⁷ Barbara Welter's detailed examination of the "Cult of True Womanhood" appears in *Dimity Convictions: The True American Woman in the Nineteenth-Century* (1976): 21–41. See also Shirley Samuels' (ed.) *Culture of Sentiment Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in 19th-Century America* (1994), a collection that investigates further the gendered and racialized culture of sentiment; and Lori Merish's *Sentimental Materialism: Gender, Commodity Culture, and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (2000), which explores how feminine sentiment

heterogeneous in their choice of genre and format, under literary sentimentality antebellum women writers became intrinsically yoked to what Richard Brodhead has called a domestic-tutinary model of authorship, in which writing was expected to be first and foremost “a tutelary activity in support of the domestic ethos” (82).¹⁸ The positive reception of women’s writing, whether published anonymously, pseudonymously, or under their own names, in single-authored volumes, school readers, gift books, anthologies, newspapers, or magazines, increasingly depended on the degree to which it evinced such womanly ethos.

Lydia Huntley Sigourney’s celebrated poem “Death of an Infant” provides an example of popular American women’s verse in the early nineteenth century that defined this ethos. Written in 1827 and reprinted extensively over the next several decades in U.S., British, and European publications, “Death of an Infant” conveys the sentimental crisis of its title, by describing, for the

and domesticity is shaped by and shapes commodity culture. Despite the association of “feminine” with “sentimental” in the antebellum era, as Bennett notes, literary sentimentality was also rooted in an eighteenth-century male imaginary: “qualities which constituted the nineteenth-century female sentimental – ‘depth of feeling,’ ‘grace of expression,’ ‘purity of sentiment,’” were, in fact, Victorian reproductions of sentiments originally associated with “the valorization of home and family by *male* Continental writers publishing in the second half of the eighteenth century, in particular, Goethe and Rousseau” (22). See also Chapman and Hendler (eds.), *Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture* (1999), which challenges the association of sentimentality with femininity in studies of American culture, by discussing masculine sentimentality in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American literary and cultural history. Julie Ellison, *Cato’s Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* (1999) also discusses the sentimental as a legitimate masculine trait in history.

¹⁸ Mary Loefellholz provides an excellent account of how the domestic-tutinary complex worked to authorize women’s poetry in the antebellum U.S. (*From School to Salon* 11–64). Shira Wolosky notes that domesticity is linked more to gendered forms of activity than geographical spheres: “Domesticity, in fact, is only figurally geographic, since many women’s activities took place outside geography of domesticity, so powerful in ascribing women to the private sphere, proves to be a gendered rubric applied to activities not because of their location but exactly because women preformed them” (“Public and Private” 106).

first 12 of 15 lines of blank verse, the visceral effects of Death on a nameless infant: “he touch’d the veins with ice, / And the rose faded...”; “With ruthless haste he bound / The silken fringes of the curtaining lids / For ever....” If we are chilled, as the poem intends, by this “spoiler” who “set / His seal of silence” on the infant, by the last three lines we are pleasantly warmed again, as we learn that Death “dared not steal” the infant’s smile, that “signet-ring of heaven.” Notable here is the closure that the poem attempts to provide for the reader through its sentimentalized description of the scene of death. The poem is focused on presenting death’s effect on the child to affectively move the reader to a new, more comfortable perspective on what death cannot diminish.

Verses similar to “Death of an Infant” in theme, function, and even title, crowd the poetry columns of nineteenth-century American periodicals and dominate gift books and popular anthologies of the day, such as Caroline May’s *The American Female Poets* (1848), Rufus W. Griswold’s definitive work, *The Female Poets of America* (1848), Thomas Buchanan Read’s *The Female Poets of America* (1849). As Elaine Showalter notes, these anthologies, which catered specifically to white, middle-class American readers, “established the genteel lyric as the effortless and natural form of women’s poetic essence” (61). Defining “poetry which is the language of the affections” as the proper mode in which “to express the emotions of woman’s heart” (May v), women’s poetry was viewed as particularly moving for the reader in its seemingly immediate expression of sentiment: “the natural and generally unpremeditated effusions of a nature extremely sensitive, but made strong by experience and knowledge, and elevated into a divine repose by the ever active sense of beauty” (Griswold 232).¹⁹ The “depth of feeling and grace of

¹⁹ This quotation refers specifically to Anne C. Lynch who, like Sigourney, wrote dead child poems and was published around the same time: Lynch’s “Lines on the Death of an Infant,” for example, first appears in *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* in December 1843.

expression” (Griswold 232) that characterized women’s verse mobilized a rhetoric of sentimentality that had its reader, as literary scholar Laura Mandell puts it, “uncritically reiterate cultural values in the form of sobs” (21), while authorizing its writer as a “Poetess.”

As Anne Mellor neatly summarizes, in both the British tradition and its uptake in the U.S., the “Poetess” was defined by “an insistence on the primacy of love and the domestic affections to women’s happiness, the rejection or condemnation of poetic fame, the embracing of Edmund Burke’s aesthetic of the ‘beautiful’ as the goal of female literary desire, and the acceptance of the hegemonic doctrine of separate spheres” (81–2). Cheryl Walker’s delineation in *The Nightingale’s Burden* (1982) of a “nightingale tradition” in women’s poetry links the figure of the “Poetess” to a female literary tradition, in which sentimentality reflects not simply an effusive expression of the “emotions of woman’s heart” but also the rhetorical expression of women’s experience under the weight of nineteenth-century domestic ideology. Defined by popular British Poetesses such as Felicia Hemans (1793–1835), extended through the American literary tradition by Lydia Sigourney (1791–1865) and Elizabeth Oakes Smith (1806–1893), and then employed in more ironic ways by later generations of women poets such as Emily Dickinson and Lizette Woodworth Reese (1856–1935), nightingale poetics, Walker argues, are characterized by representations of secret sorrow, domestic entrapment, and an unattained, passionate longing for freedom. As Walker has more recently argued, such expression registers or inscribes the “divergent positionality of women poets as compared to men” (“Nineteenth-Century American Women Poets Revisited” 234), a positionality gained, that is, from “a density of experience that derives from women’s lives, which were often spent caring for children, either one’s own or those of other people” (235).

Emphasizing the performative rather than experiential basis of Poetess poetry, literary scholar Yopie Prins connects the figure of the Poetess to a distinctly feminine lyric subjectivity

rooted in the lyric aesthetic defined by Ovid's translation of Sappho. Victorian culture fervently absorbed Sappho, Prins notes, as "an ideal lyric persona, a figure that provokes the desire to reclaim an original, perhaps even originary, female voice" (14) through a rhetoric of self-dispossession and unmediated sentiment. As the "proper name for the 'Poetess' in Victorian women's verse" (174), Sappho represented the very opposite of the Romantic Poet, whose lyric comprised a self-expression.²⁰ Where Sapphic authorship and, by extension, the Poetess's sentimental lyric "wor[k] in tension with any individual poet's attempt at self-expression," the "Poetess" functions, according to Virginia Jackson and Prins, as a rhetorical "figure of exchange" (6) transmitting cultural norms in the form of consumable feminine sentiment.²¹ As this rhetoric of sentimentality mobilized *pathos* in a public community of readers, it thus also performed "extremely subtle rhetorical subversions of... the representation of feminine subjectivity as entirely private and domestic" (Mellor 82). As Eliza Richards has put it, poetess poetry was both "completely personal and radically public" (*Gender* 18).

²⁰ Laura Mandell also aligns the poetess with this kind of lyric realism, which stands in contradistinction to Keats's chameleon poet: "The poetess is really not there – the world's intentionality, ideology by any other name, declares itself in her poetry. If what the poetess does in some sense is to quote the world, as it expresses itself (ideologically), poetess poetry is realistic" (46–7). See also Charles Laporte for related analysis of the Poetess as reflecting not herself but the world, not Sappho, but Christian prophet: "As we better understand the problem of classifying women poets of the nineteenth century, we can better account for its frequent characteristics and aims: not just sentimentality, piety, and inter-referentiality, but increasingly also a prophetic investment in crafting a meaningful post-Christian culture" (175).

²¹ However much Sapphic authorship marked women's poetry in the nineteenth-century, as Bennett notes, this kind of authorship was the Victorian marriage of an Ovidian myth of Sappho and an "[e]arly Romantic Wertherian melancholy" (*Poets* 23), and is therefore, properly understood as a *feminized* rather than feminine poetic. As Jackson and Prins acknowledge in "Lyrical Studies," "poetess" is "a useful term to designate a generic mode that is more closely associated with, but is not restricted to, the work of women poets" (5).

In translating an “entirely private” feminine subjectivity as “radically public” consumable sentiment, the figure of the Poetess ultimately sustained nineteenth-century white, middle-class values and Victorian ideals of femininity. No actual rhetorical subversion of gender norms is enacted in such poetry; feminine subjectivity remains domesticated. The epithet “Poetess,” yoked as it was to literary sentimentalism, was successfully used, as Bennett observes, both “as a marketing tool for women’s verse and as a way to keep it under control” (“Was Sigourney” 268). As Richards points out, “[a]s much as women poets and their purveyors insisted that their motivation for sharing their spontaneous effusions with the public was altruistic, many profited financially” (*Gender* 17). Pointing to Lydia Sigourney and Frances Sargent Osgood’s success in selling their poetry to periodicals in the 1830s and 1840s, Richards notes that “the first professional American poets were arguably women” (17). However, such financial gain did not mean that women circulated in the early nineteenth-century literary market as literary producers; instead, Richards insists, they circulated as “literary commodities and consumers” (3). The same genteel conventions that governed this dynamic invariably defined the male poet as a literary producer, no matter “how much women’s poetry he consumed [and co-opted], or how extensively he commodified himself” (3). If the rhetoric of sentimentality performed by Poetesses subverted anything, then, perhaps it subverted the very ground of authorship for women poets.

As Bennett and Richards have shown, women’s use of sentimental rhetoric is more complicated and less defining of an authorial feminized poetic than the epithet Poetess would suggest. American woman poets were themselves wary of the Poetess: unlike their British peers, they rarely embraced the ascribed epithet wholeheartedly and, more often, “resisted the pull of genteel conventions in order to construct subjectivities of their own” (Bennett, *Poets* 27). Lydia Sigourney was one such poet. While Sigourney helped to define the meaning of the American Poetess in her literary market and was dismissed as such by some contemporaries and most

twentieth-century critics, the scope of her work beyond genteel, anti-political domestic concerns makes the epithet “poetess” somewhat simplistic. Criticism since Nina Baym’s article “Reinventing Lydia Sigourney” (1990), which significantly complicated and expanded our approach to Sigourney, reveals that Sigourney’s work, though often trading in an unironic sentimentality is nevertheless aesthetically diverse and shows rhetorical aim that is decidedly anti-poetess. In other words, Sigourney’s poems often aim away from the self-enclosed domestic effusions of the heart that define poetess poetry and instead address political events and express multiple public personae.²² Baym has called Sigourney a “republican public mother”—that is, a woman writer who “aim[s] to enter the public sphere and influence the formation of public opinion” (70). Likewise, Paula Bennett reads Sigourney as “far too committed to evangelical religion and to a poetic of service to have found the self-enclosed aesthetics of Poetess verse appealing” (“Was Sigourney” 271). In fact, Sigourney’s reputation as a Poetess and the reception of her work in the American literary market at mid-century reflect tensions between the categories of female authorship developing at the time, for which a superficial focus on Sigourney’s adherence to the conventions of literary sentimentality cannot account.

Though gender expectations defined by conventions of literary sentimentality were, in a sense, unavoidable to women writers seeking a public audience in the decades before the Civil War, women writers and editors often leveraged these gender conventions to carve out new rhetorical space within their contemporary print culture. As women poets pushed back against the conventions of the genteel lyric, gender became a more or less mobilizing force. Bennett identifies two ends of the spectrum in antebellum women’s poetry. On the one hand is “an explicitly feminist poetry of equal rights” (42) aligned with the development of equality feminism,

²² Some homogenization of Sigourney’s poetry continues, despite Baym and Bennett’s work. See especially Petrino (70–95), and Richards (*Gender* 65–7).

which sought “to demystify domestic ideology” (41).²³ On the other hand is “poetry of high-sentimental sympathy politics,” which called upon “a gender-specific form of female political power from within domestic ideology itself” (42). Though both equality and high-sentimental sympathy poetry served as alternatives to the genteel lyric, the subversive elements inhering in each and defining their rhetorical aims were rationalized differently, as women’s rights and women’s duties, respectively (42). Poets aligned with the sympathy politics end of the spectrum were in the mainstream and embraced separate spheres ideology that preserved for women an exclusive, essentialist way to wield power.

Ideals of sex difference and separate spheres ideology would inform the distinguishing tone of the extremely popular American woman’s magazine of the nineteenth century, *Godey’s Lady’s Book* (1830–1878), which would make literary superstars of numerous women writers including Sigourney. As editor Sarah Josepha Hale made clear in her first editorial for the *Lady’s Book*, in January 1837:

It is our aim to prepare a work which, for our own sex, should be superior to every other periodical. To effect this ours must differ in some important respects from the general mass of monthly literature. It must differ, as do the minds of the sexes. This difference is not strength of intellect, but in the manner of awakening the reason and directing its power...The strength of man’s character is in his

²³ Showalter also discusses women poets on this end of the spectrum as “[e]nlightenment feminists, inspired by Wollstonecraft, who used eighteenth-century techniques of wit and artful structure” (62). Showalter, like Bennett and Loefellholz, tracks the emergence of proto-modern aesthetically-oriented poetics in popular print culture alongside the emergence of the woman’s rights movement and the New Woman artist in the late nineteenth century. Late-nineteenth-century publication and twentieth-century critical reception of Dickinson often aligns her wit and artful poetics with this movement, positioning her as proto-modernist.

physical propensities—the strength of women lies in her moral sentiments. (“The Conversazione” 2)

Women, Hale added, naturally ruled the “empire of the heart” (5) and were, unlike men, naturally proficient at moral guidance. It was thus a woman’s imperative to guide; her unique didactic reach (from the comfort of domestic spaces) could effectively counterbalance or check the cold, rational, and masculine “business of the world” (1). Accordingly, the *Lady’s Book*

will not be polemical, political, philological, philosophical, scientific, or critical—but will aim to draw forth and form into a pleasant, healthy, and happy combination, the moral uses of all these high sounding pursuits; as the bee, (which, by the way, is a *female*,) succeeds in extracting honey as sweet and pure from the thistle as from the rose, and reaches with as sure an instinct the blossoms of the lofty elm as those of the humble clover. (1)

As Patricia Okker notes, “Hale’s particular conception of [the separate spheres] ideology suggests its flexibility. While many of her contemporaries employed separatist rhetoric that depended on a strict and gendered distinction between public and private, Hale manipulated the idea of a women’s culture to argue for a separate public space for women—a space, not coincidentally, occupied by women’s periodicals” (4).²⁴ More than an innovative marketing scheme, Hale’s vision for the *Lady’s Book* describes a new and powerful rhetorical space for the ethos that Victorian ideals of sex difference made possible for antebellum women.

As novelist and fellow women’s magazine editor Ann S. Stephens (1810–1886) argued in her 1839 article “Women of Genius,” preserving the “dignity and delicacy of sex” would

²⁴ Okker goes further to say that Hale “used Victorian ideologies of sexual difference to defend women’s personal fulfillment” (66), beyond motherhood and marriage, particularly in the form of education and literature.

ultimately benefit female writers, protecting them from “unnatural” competition with male writers:

So long as the dignity and delicacy of sex is preserved, there can be no competition between men and women of genius. In literature, as in everything else, the true woman will feel how much better it is to owe something to the protection, generosity, and forbearance of the stronger and sterner sex, than to enter into an unnatural strife in the broad arena which men claim for the trial of intellect. (49)²⁵

For Stephens, it was a woman’s “deep and sensitive feelings” expressed in verse that could “alone give that delicacy and pathos which will ever distinguish the creations of a truly feminine author from those of men” (47).

Though discouraged from speaking in public, and still subject to a convergence of coverture and copyright law that, as Melissa Homestead has shown, denied antebellum women proprietary rights over their own work,²⁶ women writers who stayed true to their “womanhood” could mobilize a powerful didactic force that would find no equal. As Hale suggested in the introduction to her ambitious history, *Women’s Record: or, Sketches of all Distinguished Women* (1853), promoting a gendered ethos was inherently progressive for women’s advancement generally, and specifically for the future of the American literary woman: “when this instinctive perception of women’s mission becomes an acknowledged and sustained mode of moral progress, it will be easy

²⁵ “Women of Genius” was first printed in the monthly magazine, *Ladies Companion* in 1839, while Stephens was serving as editor. It is reprinted in Boyd: 46–50.

²⁶ In *American Women Authors and Literary Property, 1822–1869*, Homestead argues that “the intersection of coverture and copyright proved both limiting *and* productive for women authors, with the same legal limits against which each woman struggled also providing opportunities for success within the system that constrained her” (19).

for the sex to make advances in every branch of literature and science connected with human improvement; and the horizon will be studded with stars” (x).

One star that proved the rule, for Hale, was Lydia Sigourney. In Hale’s sketch of Sigourney, she acknowledges her as “truly an American poetess” (*Women’s Record* 783), a role that is qualified at length in the profile as seamlessly compatible with Sigourney’s idealized domestic life:

Mrs. Sigourney is, in private life, an example to her sex, as well as their admiration in her literary career. She is a good wife and devoted mother; and in domestic knowledge and the scrupulous performance of the household duties, she shows as ready acquaintance and as much skill as though these alone formed her pursuits. Her literary studies are recreation - surely as rational a mode of occupying the leisure of a lady as the morning call or the evening party. (783)

Framing Sigourney’s “private life” as happily duty-bound to children and husband, and her literary pursuits as “studies” that take up only “leisure” time otherwise allocated for domestic recreations and entertainments, Hale showcases her American poetess as a “true woman” at heart: essentially other-directed, largely unconcerned with fame, and moving from and to the domestic sphere in all her literary pursuits. The excerpts that Hale chooses from the diversity of Sigourney’s oeuvre support this representation: four prose selections from *Letters to Mothers* (1838); and five poems from *Poems* (1848), entitled “The Mother of Washington,” “Prayer for Missions,” “A Butterfly on a Child’s Grave,” “The Thriving Family,” and “The Alpine Flowers.” If, among these poems of high domestic femininity, “The Alpine Flowers” seems an odd choice—it directs the reader, for instance, away from the home and domestic cares to the freezing, “drear atmosphere” (9) of a mountain summit—its fit soon becomes clear; the “terror-stricken cliffs” (1) make the alpine flowers and their “placid loveliness - / Fearless, yet frail” (18; 19) uniquely

marked. For “Man who, panting, toils / O’er slippery steep, or, trembling treads the verge / Of yawning gulfs...” (14–16), the alpine flowers, which he clasps, blesses, and binds “dropping to his breast,” represent the feminine “spirit” that inspires his “freer dreams of heaven” (25). The poem plays out, quite neatly in fact, the Victorian discourse of domesticity that positions women—“meek dwellers... / With brows so pure...” (1–2)—as the dignified and delicate moral teachers of the harsh masculine world.

Hale’s profile and selections distill a common representation of Sigourney’s work throughout the nineteenth century and reflect the extent to which Sigourney dutifully remained, in Mary Loeffelholz’s words, “the central fashioner of the domestic-tutinary complex” (4). Sigourney’s story of success provided editors like Hale, and indeed the poet herself, with a way to sustain “the pedagogical as the foundation of women’s cultural authority” (Loeffelholz 37). If, as Mary Kelley notes, such gender codes meant that “women who envisioned themselves as writers had to be more circumspect” (348), remaining circumspect and duty-bound nevertheless afforded a certain, if narrow, cultural legitimacy that not only sustained successful careers at least through the 1850s, but also wooed a powerful and unprecedented market of white, middle-class female readers. Though the idea of radically equalizing women’s access to the public sphere was heartily promoted by writers like Margaret Fuller, who would “have every path laid open to Woman as freely as to Man” (*Woman* 260), it found little resonance with the majority of antebellum women writers, like Sigourney, for whom a domestic-tutinary ethos readily justified female belongingness in (contained print portals of) the public sphere.

Hale’s profile and selections, however, did more than declaim this gendered domestic-tutinary ethos for the “American poetess,” and by extension her own *Lady’s Book*, which claimed Sigourney as its star contributor. In fact, Hale actively negotiated the reception of Sigourney’s work in this way, even when “old mother Sigourney,” as she was referred to by 1853,

was well-respected on both sides of the Atlantic, and the popularity of her domestic elegies made her one of the most highly paid women of her generation. Hale's profile attempts to buffer Sigourney from some of the negative response to this fame, including that of "British critics" who "have attempted to disparage [Sigourney's] genius by accusing her of imitating Mrs. Hemans" (*Woman's Record* 783), the most highly regarded of sentimental British Poetesses. Throughout the middle decades of the nineteenth century, the accusation that Sigourney was a mere imitator of the original and professional Hemans became an especially sticky point that unfavorably aligned Sigourney with imitative amateur genteel women poets, whose effusions even nineteenth-century anthologist Caroline May had to admit "poured forth through our newspapers and periodicals, with the utmost profusion...[leading] many to underrate the genuine value" (v).

As Hale's profile sought to claim Sigourney as an "American Poetess" in her own right, by negotiating the terms of her distinction (and that of the *Lady's Book*), it also anticipates the "struggle for cultural legitimacy," that women writers like Wallace and Phelps would come to face in the late 1850s and early 1860s. Unfortunately, the domestic-tutinary ethos that Hale continued to negotiate on Sigourney's behalf was enmeshed with a poetry of high-sentimental sympathy politics which, due to a now decades-old association with intrinsic womanly sentiment, was practically an any-woman's verse, especially in its most "natural" form: the untutored effusions of an amateur, house-bound scribbling woman. By the 1850s, this association had become so overdrawn and subject to parody that it extended little tractable value to women poets trying to carve out a distinguished profession. In the midst of all of this, Sigourney's domestic-tutinary ethos would eventually exempt her from new hierarchized categories of female authorship that sought to provide women writers with new forms cultural legitimacy in the 1860s and 1870s.

Professionalizing the Woman Poet in the 1860s

Negotiating an authorial ethos for women's writing after 1860 meant placing greater emphasis on "professional experience" than on "ontological difference" (Williams 28), but it nevertheless remained invested in emphasizing gendered experience. Thus the professional woman author of the 1860s distinguished herself by: (1) having a cultivated genius, both talent and self-discipline, that keeps her from the grip of *cacoethes scribendi* or the "writing itch"; (2) exhibiting "'natural' strengths of female observation"; and (3) employing an "ethical technique," concerned with "obligations as well as rights and creating opportunities for readers as much as protection for authors" (36–37). The most professional of women's poetry, rather than expressing an untutored and spontaneous feminine affect, now increasingly demonstrated a feminine perceptivity, channeled through a keen and disciplined attention to craft that was primarily concerned with giving voice to others. Addressing the wrongs of slavery, responding to the progress of the Civil War, or highlighting women's relationship to broad civic matters, such poetry enacted what Paula Bernat Bennett has called a "high-sentimental rhetoric of reform," which mobilized a politics of reform "on behalf of those whom they identified as their 'race,' 'people,' or 'nation'" (86). Like earlier "poetry of high-sentimental sympathy politics," poetry of high-sentimental reform politics mobilized a feminine political power that negotiated a gendered authorial ethos; however, unlike "poetry of high-sentimental sympathy politics" women poets and their editors made use of aesthetic distance and a politically provocative rhetoric that addressed social obligations beyond the domestic sphere, though ultimately still representing issues concerning women.

An 1836 poem written by Eliza Earle (1807–1846) will illustrate this distinction. Published in the abolitionist weekly *The Liberator* (1831–1865), the poem provides an interesting response to Angelina E. Grimké’s (1805–1879) “Appeal to the Christian Women of the South,” which was printed earlier that year by the American Anti-Slavery Society.²⁷ Earle’s response is essentially a poetic adaptation of Grimké’s appeal—a call for Southern women to act against the system of slavery in which they are embroiled. In the adaptation, however, Earle ignores much of Grimké’s radical and multifaceted list of women’s possible actions against slavery, in favor of that which is “natural” to the genteel woman’s “own appropriate sphere” (36): reposing Christ-like in the “mercy seat” (37) of her parlor writing desk, where she may put her “woman’s melting voice” (54) to good work.

There’s much in woman’s influence, ay much,
To swell the rolling tide of sympathy,
And aid those champions of a fettered race,
Now laboring arduous in the moral field.
We may not ‘cry aloud,’ as they are bid,
And lift our voices in the public ear;
Nor yet be mute. The pen is ours to wield,
The heart to will, and hands to execute. (12–18)

Selectively responding to Grimké’s suggestion to petition the government with letters, Earle sentimentalizes a woman’s power “to swell the ... tide of sympathy” and attaches that power to her pen, at once empowering women as directors of an existing tide and deflating Grimké’s

²⁷ *The Liberator* was founded by William Lloyd Garrison. Earle’s poem, “Lines: Suggested on Reading ‘An Appeal to Christian Women of the South,’ by A.E. Grimké,” appears over the byline ‘Ada.’ It is reprinted in Boyd: 41–3.

suggestion that women could generate a championing tidal force of their own. In doing so, Earle aligns Grimké's appeal with the heart of the female domestic lyric and recasts the female abolitionist as, in Mary Loeffelholz's phrase, a "permissible female subjectivity" (30) within a domestic-tutelary context.

There is no hint in Earle's 1836 poem, nor in its appearance in *The Liberator*, of the anxiety around the terms of women's literary labor that we see, for instance, almost two decades later in Hale's profile of Sigourney as a true American poetess, let alone Wallace's 1867 piece on the "Weak-Minded Woman." In fact, there is no hint whatsoever of a hierarchy in women's writing. Earle does not differentiate herself from other writing women and counts them all as persuasive amateurs. Though her poem may address and stand behind the same political issues that we see in women's poetry of the 1860s and 1870s, it stops short of aligning women with more direct or interventionist political reform. Whereas women's poetry after the Civil War, as Loeffelholz puts it, "conducts its political arguments in the context of both implicit and explicit questions about cultural capital and aesthetic, as well as moral, education" (5), Earle's poetry, like that of many of her antebellum peers, conducts its political arguments (when it has them) in the context of moral education within or through a sentimentalized domestic sphere.

Though poetry of high-sentimental reform politics certainly existed before the 1860s, it appears almost exclusively in special-interest publications on the margins of mainstream print culture. In the 1860s, the mainstreaming of women's poetry that exhibits high-sentimental reform politics coincides with the struggle to distinguish an authorial ethos for women's poetry through expressions of a cultivated feminine perceptivity and "ethical technique." This suggests a certain degree of interaction, such that poetry of high-sentimental reform politics provided a discourse to mark an authorial femininity and ethics which, in turn, shaped a gendered ethos for women's poetry that positioned the woman poet as a more explicitly ethical and active

professional. Working in the public sphere with a cultivated womanly perspective, this authorial woman poet sold poetry and moved her readers to ethical action. Not necessarily the “more self-consciously artistic” (“The American Renaissance Reenvisioned” 177) author that Dobson identifies, and not anticipating the “woman artist” model that Boyd identifies for women’s engagement in fin de siècle high literary culture (*Writing for Immortality*), this woman poet took “authorship,” as Baym has said, “as a profession rather than a calling, as work and not art” (*Woman’s Fiction* 32).²⁸ Indeed, she worked for a living, her own and others’.

Rose Terry Cooke’s (1827–1892) representation of the grievances of “a literary woman,” in her fictional piece “The Memorial of A.B., or Matilda Muffin” (1860),²⁹ captures quite humorously the complicated negotiation of a professionalizing woman author in the American literary market at mid-century. Cooke’s piece is a memorial penned by fictional poet Matilda Muffin, on the disavowal of her literary pseudonym, A.B., and all the trouble that came with it. To “earn my living by writing” (167), Matilda Muffin admits to her readers tongue-in-cheek, is a calling at once idealized and abject: “I wish to state, with all humility and self-disgust, that I am what is popularly called a literary woman.” The troubles of “what is popularly called a literary woman” are numerous: “being known, and talked about, and commented on” (168); being “delivered over to be the prey of tongues and the spoil of eyes” (169); receiving letters “exhorting

²⁸ Bennett argues that following the Civil War, in the wake of emancipation and in response to a developing women’s rights movement that preached equality of the sexes, orthodox high-sentimental poetry, which traded in a separate-spheres gender ideology, became increasingly irrelevant and less apparent in women’s poetry. The turn against the high-sentimental rhetoric progressed, Bennett argues, until “late-nineteenth century mainstream and minority *fin-de-siècle* poets made control of affect, or... ‘affective irony,’ the signature of their modernity. That is, they made *antisentimentality* a defining feature of themselves as ‘New Women’ and as artists of the ‘New’” (12).

²⁹ First printed in the *Atlantic Monthly* (Feb. 1860), and reprinted in Boyd: 167–175.

me to all kinds of moral improvement, or indulging in idle impertinences about my private affairs” (169); and hearing “the world-old cry of all literary women being, in virtue of their calling, unfeminine” (172). While being known and gossiped about is annoying, it is unavoidable, and Matilda accepts these as the necessary evils of being a literary woman. Shrugging these off as so many toothaches, Matilda identifies her “special grievance” (168) and the reason behind her “Memorial”: that “every new poem or fresh story I write and print should be supposed and declared to be part and parcel of my autobiography” (172). “My dear creatures,” Matilda continues, “do just look at the common sense of the thing! Can I have been, by any dexterity known to man, of mind or body, such a various creature, such a polycorporate animal, as you make me to be?” (172). In calling this her special grievance, Matilda is reacting to her fate as not simply a “literary woman” but a Poetess, whose supposedly “natural and generally unpremeditated effusions,” as Griswold tells us, were an immediate reflection of her “extremely sensitive” nature, “made strong by and experience and knowledge” (232).

Ironically, Matilda originally adopted “A.B.” “as a species of veil,” not to cover her identity but to avoid the literary ranks that her “sentimental name” might align her with: “I have a sentimental name, by the religious and customary ordinance of baptism...and at first, being rather loath to enter the great alliterative ranks of female writers by my lawful title of Matilda Muffin, I signed my writings ‘A. B.’” (169). Here Matilda is playing on the alignment of sentimental with *female* writer: her name is “sentimental” because it is “feminine,” and in shaking off the feminine she might not be yoked to the sentimental and its great resounding echo among “the great alliterative ranks of female writers.” She might, in fact, be received differently: as an author in her own right, and no imitator. As “A.B.,” however, Matilda found little peace. In fact, the mystery that shrouded “A.B.” only prompted readers to look to the poetry more for

affirmation of the Poetess. Now, letting “A.B.” die as merely “the first two letters of the alphabet. Peace to their ashes!—let them rest!” (172), Matilda hopes to finally “quash the romances” (171). Addressed to *Atlantic Monthly* readers, the memorial is rather more of a complaint about a literary woman’s struggle for professionalization, which as Susan Williams notes was marked by “a desire to make clear that although writing was a ‘universal’ middle-class act, authorship was an earned privilege” (28). For Matilda, professionalization means being more than a “literary” woman or an echoing sentiment. It means to have an identity beyond and in excess of her poetic effusions, to be received as doing hard *work* (“it is so easy to read, it is hard work to write” [168]), mindfully combining “experience as well as observation” in representing not just high female sentiment, but “the common joys and sorrows of life”:

I am happy to state that in the allotments of this life authoresses are not looked upon as “literary,” but simply as women, and have the same general dispensations with the just and the unjust; therefore, in attempting to excite other people’s sympathies, I have certainly touched and told many stories that were not strange to my own consciousness; I do not know very well how I could do otherwise. And in trying to draw the common joys and sorrows of life, I certainly have availed myself of experience as well as observation; but I should seem to myself singularly wanting in many traits which I believe I possess, were I to obtrude the details of my own personal and private affairs upon the public. (173)

Since “Matilda’s” readers are also the readers of Rose Terry Cooke, a popular periodical poet and short story writer in the 1850s through the 1870s, there is a little meta-rhetorical play going on here. As in Matilda’s case, Cooke’s story may be presumed by her readers to be part and parcel of her autobiography. Indeed, it is an easy leap for readers today to presume that Cooke is the literary woman she fictionalizes. And yet Cooke has already set this presumption to

self-destruct in readers' minds, if they follow the logic of Matilda's argument that identifying authors with their characters is simply making "polycorporate animals," and thus a whole lot of nonsense. Cooke indirectly reminds her own readers to stop such nonsensical identifications and, by extension, any identification of herself with Matilda, literary woman. She also declares outright the impossibility of such an identification, in case we hear Cooke in Matilda's declaration, as she expects us to:

I hereby declare, asseverate, affirm, and whatever else means to swear, that I never have offered and never intend to offer any history whatever of my personal experience, social, literary, or emotional, to the readers of any magazine, newspaper, novel, or correspondence whatever. Nor is there any one human being who has ever heard or ever will hear the whole of that experience. (173)

While effectively enumerating on the struggle of being "a literary woman" in 1860 with this piece, Cooke's choice to do so at one remove from herself through a character we are implicitly asked to see as separate from Cooke, also registers Cooke's ambiguous identification with the epithet and the company it aligns her with.

As I have been suggesting, the 1860s marks a crucial point of reckoning in American women's poetry—a point when the negotiation of an authorial gendered ethos took on new and myriad public forms. If a cultivated feminine perceptivity and "ethical technique" were increasingly signaled by more overtly interventionist modes of public address, it was signaled just as strongly, and perhaps more crucially, by the particularities of poetry's material delivery and reception in the public sphere. While the impact of print culture as a whole on the ethos of women's poetry is more complex than can be explored in this dissertation, I focus here on what I take to be a turning point for women poets in their negotiation for ethos: the timely and diverse material context of periodicals, particularly in the middle decades of the nineteenth century.

During 1860s, the struggle to distinguish a gendered authorial ethos for women's poetry in the literary marketplace converged with an increasingly affectively charged Civil-War era periodical culture. In this crucible, women's poetry found new ways to matter in the mainstream, particularly through high-sentimental reformist interventions in the midst of the periodical page. This makes the mid-nineteenth-century periodical especially crucial for a genealogy of nineteenth-century women's poetry and, as this dissertation will demonstrate, for the study of Dickinson in context. It is to the shifting material context of the periodical that I now turn.

Women's Poetry in American Periodicals at Mid-Century

The periodical has always functioned as a dynamic site for the development of literary culture at both the regional and national level. Whereas, prior to its boom in the nineteenth century on both sides of the Atlantic, the periodical, according to cultural historian James Wald, held a "liminal place between the elite and the popular, a site of continual contest between groups that valued reading for different reasons" (425), by the 1830s, this mass medium was the instrumental force in the commodification and democratization of literature and art, appealing especially to a burgeoning middle-class readership.³⁰ In antebellum America, innovations in mass printing through the use of steam power, and the invention of inexpensive reproduction technologies, such as chromolithography and the rotary press, created a more accessible and profit-driven print culture that gave rise to both the sensationalistic Penny Press, which would

³⁰ The rise of the periodical in America parallels the rise of middle class: the number of U.S. journals rose from about 100 in 1825 to 3,300 by 1885, while the number of newspapers rose from 200 in 1801 to 7,000 in 1880 (Wald 425). See also Cynthia Patterson's *Art for the Middle Classes: America's Illustrated Magazines of the 1840s* (2010), which argues that the consumption of illustrated magazines, especially "Philadelphia pictorials" (*Godey's*, *Graham's*, *Peterson's*, *Miss Leslie's*, and *Sartain's Union Magazine*), was a marker of upward social mobility for the middle class.

revolutionize the nineteenth-century newspaper, and the elaborately illustrated literary monthlies, such as *Godey's Lady's Book* and *Sartain's*, which became centrepieces of literary and cultural exchange in the middle-class parlor or, rather, made the middle-class parlor the centre of literary and cultural exchange.³¹ Given the wide and intimate reach of magazines and newspapers, marginalized people and advocates for abolition, temperance, Native American and women's rights found them highly effective mediums for activism, and used them to generate presence and purchase in literary, social, political, and domestic realms. As Aleta Feinsod Cane and Susan Alves note, "writing women employ the periodical, both as newspaper and as magazine, concurrently in three ways: for social and political advocacy, for the critique of gender roles and social expectations, and for refashioning the periodical as a more inclusive genre that both articulates and obscures such distinctions as class, race, and gender" (1). Throughout the nineteenth century the periodical served as the public medium for the struggle to negotiate ethos for women's writing.

What distinguishes the periodical medium as such—what makes it specially impact the terms of women's authorship and the ethos of women's poetry—is not simply its mass publicity, but, rather, its unique format: its periodicity and its contiguous positioning of diverse texts. Wald manages to capture both of these aspects of format in his inclusive definition of the periodical as a "nonlinear assemblage of parcels of text, the unity of which derives from a common program cumulatively implemented through repetition" (422). It is the periodical's repetitive "nonlinear

³¹ Wald notes that "paradoxically, democratization reinforced hierarchy, establishing a periodical great chain of being descending from lofty quarterlies (*Edinburgh Review* 1802, *North American Review* 1815), via "high-quality" illustrated magazines (*Scribner's Magazine* 1887, *Strand* 1891), related family publications (*Harper's Weekly* 1857, *Gartenlaube* 1853), and cheap, mass-circulation magazines (*Munsey's* 1889, *Collier's* 1888) to fare for the newly or semi-literate (*Tit-Bits* 1881)" (426).

assemblage of parcels of texts”—that is, its continual and contiguous positioning of various texts selected for their probable resonance with a certain readership, and meant to be carried, distributed, and read together—that lends the periodical its unique format and its unique material rhetoric. As Wald notes, the periodical sustained a “communications circuit” that “allowed for continual intellectual or material response, whose virtual intimacy compensated for the anonymity of the market” (429). No one, perhaps, understood the value of this “virtual intimacy” better than Sarah J. Hale, whose editorial choices made *Godey’s Lady’s Book* feel as intimate as a letter, and who took keen notice of the relations periodicals establish beyond the text: “One very gratifying result of periodical literature is the relations it establishes between those who sustain it. It brings editors and readers into a closer companionship with each other than is ever felt by the authors and buyers of books. We are the confidential friends of our subscribers; we feel sure that those who, every month in the year, gather to our ‘Table,’ and press around our ‘Arm-Chair,’ would welcome us with heart and hand to their own happy home” (“Editor’s Table” 79). Not confined to magazines, the “virtual intimacy” established and sustained between texts, authors, editors, and communities of readers in literary monthlies, was also an aspect of weekly and daily newspapers, especially in smaller, politically motivated papers such as William Lloyd Garrison’s *The Liberator*, and provincial dailies like Samuel Bowles’ *Springfield Republican*, where readers turned for special-interest culture or regional fare. In addition to the newspaper’s timeliness in reader’s lives, regularly featured sections such as editorial opinion and correspondence from beloved editors or columnists, as well as literary news and reviews from popular books editors, allowed a virtual intimacy to flourish.

The periodicity and contiguous positioning that define the unique material rhetoric of periodical literature are especially evident in weekly and daily newspapers. The daily subscription paper in the nineteenth century, where timeliness was all important and in which diverse texts

such as telegraphed news, editorial reviews, advertisements, and poetry appeared side by side, was especially poised not only to establish myriad relations and virtual intimacies, but to continuously strengthen these relations by reconnecting to their largely white, middle-class readership on a daily basis. Editors of such dailies as the *Springfield Republican*, which Chapter 2 discusses in detail, were keen to draw attention to the topical nature of their content as well as to distinguish it from the usual lag in the content of literary monthlies. For instance, the “Books, Authors, and Art” review section of the *Republican* on Saturday June 16, 1860, in signaling its own timely delivery of news, reviews, and poetry, had this to say of even that most respected of literary monthlies, *The Atlantic Monthly*: “It is a growing evil, this tendency of magazine literature to accumulate on the editor’s hands in supplies for a year in advance. A fresh and timely article can never appear. We have Christmas Odes in July, and lyrics to the dog-star in January” (2). Daily and weekly newspapers that featured poetry were less likely to have a back-log of submissions; they printed contributions as they arrived or as they suited the day’s news.

Appearing alongside texts that were inevitably topical and often provocative, newspaper poetry was positioned to participate directly in the day-to-day experience of the newspaper’s readers and, as such, it became a part of the newspaper’s “intellectual or material response” to its readers. This was especially the case during the Civil War, when newspapers became a kind of daily bread for Americans. As literary historian Ellen Gruber Garvey notes, “[t]he war set off a frenzy of newspaper reading in the United States, given urgency by the new telegraphed battlefield reports in the newspapers” (87). As Alice Fahs has observed,

at the start of the war, it was widely assumed that poetry and song had an important patriotic part to play in the war. Numerous writers—both obscure and well known—produced poetry that asserted the communicative power of poetry in wartime . . . they sent hundreds of verses to newspapers . . . they treated poems

as imaginative acts that not only reflected a new nationhood but actively called it into being. (62)³²

Since poetry was regularly featured alongside the day's most troubling political and military news, the newspaper served as a particularly active site for expanding poetry's use and function and broadening its ground for public address or political response. As Faith Barrett notes, "[t]he growth in periodical readership during this time combined with the history-making events of the war itself to fan the flames of poetic ambition for many writers" (8); "what resulted," Barrett continues, "was not only an increase in amateur authorship but also a simultaneous interest in collecting and circulating poetry (as well as letters, stories, and photographs) among family and friends" (9). In other words, poetry mattered more than ever but the stakes were also higher for the professionally-minded woman poet who sought to be both timely and cultivated in her ethical poetic approach. Where the very timeliness and contiguous positioning of poetry among diverse forms of public address in the newspaper gave it new ways to function extensively, the struggle to negotiate professional ethos for women's poetry most visibly played out. Nineteenth-century newspapers are a fascinating though largely under-utilized resource for exploring how an authorial ethos of women's poetry is rhetorically shaped in the mid-nineteenth century.

The Function of Women's Poetry in the *Drum Beat*

In preparation for my discussion in Chapter 2 of the positioning of women's poetry during the 1860s in Dickinson's daily newspaper, the *Springfield Republican*, I will briefly turn to the daily newspaper of the Brooklyn and Long Island Sanitary Fair, the *Drum Beat*, which offers a small yet

³² For a recent extended study of the turn to poetry during the Civil War see Faith Barrett, *To Fight Aloud Is Very Brave: American Poetry and the Civil War* (2012).

powerful case study of how women's poetry functioned in newspapers during the extreme and bloody Civil War. Although it ran 13 issues over two weeks in the winter of 1864 (Feb. 22-Mar. 5, 1864), the *Drum Beat* helped position women's poetry at the literary front of the Civil War. This paper has the added significance of being, like the *Springfield Republican*, an overt example of the uptake of Emily Dickinson's poetry in mid-century periodicals invested in negotiating a gendered authorial ethos for women's poetry. Three of the ten Dickinson poems known to have been published during her life—"Blazing in Gold and quenching in Purple" (F 321), "Flowers - Well - if anybody" (F 92), and "These are the days when the birds come back" (F 122)—appeared in *Drum Beat*.³³

On February 22, 1864, Long Island NY became host to the Brooklyn and Long Island Sanitary Fair, a rousing two-week fundraiser organized largely by the Women's Relief Association of Brooklyn, an auxiliary branch for the US Sanitary Commission. The Sanitary Commission, which itself grew out of the Women's Central Relief Association of New York, was a federally sanctioned agency formed in June 1861 to support and oversee all medical care for sick and wounded soldiers at the battlefronts of the Civil War. All proceeds from the Sanitary Fair were to be converted into material supplies for field hospitals, which the Commission would

³³ A variant of Dickinson's poem beginning "Blazing in Gold and quenching in Purple" (F 321), written about 1862, was published in the *Drum Beat* on Feb. 29, 1864, under the title "Sunset." It was reprinted under the byline, "From the Drum Beat," in the "Selected Poetry" section of the *Springfield Republican* on March 30, 1864 and the weekly edition of the paper on April 2, 1864. A variant of Dickinson's poem beginning "Flowers - Well - if anybody" (F 95), written about 1859, was printed on page 2 of the *Drum Beat* under the title "Flowers" on March 2, 1864, then reprinted in the *Republican* on March 9, 1864 under the "Selected Miscellany" section, with the byline "Brooklyn Drum Beat," and then reprinted again in the *Boston Post* on March 16, 1864. Finally, a variant of Dickinson's poem beginning, "These are the days when Birds come back -" (F 122), also written about 1859, was printed under the title "October" in the *Drum Beat* supplement on March 11, 1864.

distribute. One of a handful of Sanitary Commission Fairs held in major northeastern cities, the Brooklyn and Long Island Fair is most notable for its resounding financial success: all told, the Fair pulled in over \$400,000, which was more than that raised at the Boston and New York Sanitary Fairs combined.

Also notable about the Brooklyn Fair is its production of the *Drum Beat* (Fig. 1.1). Unlike the broadsides, pamphlets, and newsletters circulated at other Sanitary Fairs, the *Drum Beat* was a full-fledged daily paper reporting on the day-to-day news of the Fair, as though it were a town itself, complete with original and selected articles and editorials, poetry and short fiction, humorous miscellany and illustrations, event reviews, and a daily record of notable happenings. Edited by Rev. Richard Salter Storrs (1821–1900), a well-known Congregationalist pastor and editor of the weekly magazine the *New York Independent*, the *Drum Beat* became a major feature within and beyond the Fair: it issued around 5000 copies to subscribers and fair patrons on the first day, and 6000 on each succeeding day. The paper “intended to be, and was, a vigorous and earnest *lay preacher* in behalf of the Sanitary Commission, and the great work in hand” (*History of the Brooklyn and Long Island Fair* 92). Ensuring this, “its editorial and selected articles...[were] aim[ed] to present the claims of our soldiers upon the sympathy and support of the nation in the strongest possible light” (92). The *Drum Beat* relied heavily on women’s poetry, especially, to present such claims in “the strongest possible light.”

Poetic contributions had been personally invited ahead of time by Storrs himself, sent in by Sanitary Commission nurses or *Drum Beat* subscribers, or lifted from interesting letters sent (quite publically) through the Fair’s “Post-Office.” The “Post-Office” was one of the most popular features of the Fair. For a few cents (all proceeds donated) one could post a letter to anyone at the Fair through this office, which would post a list of recipients and also print the list daily in the *Drum Beat*. As the official published retrospective of the Fair reports: “Many of the

letters were in poetry, and not a few of high order of merit” (*History of the Brooklyn and Long Island Fair* 39). The *Drum Beat* got wind of these letters in one of two ways: either Storrs or the *Drum Beat* were addressed directly by eager letter-writers, or the Manager of the Fair Post-Office, who was privy to all that passed through it, would slip Storrs copies of the most poetry-laden, publication-worthy letters (“The Fair Post Office”).

By numbers alone, it seems that Storrs was quite committed to maintaining an equal representation of women’s and men’s poetry. Of the 66 poems that appear in the *Drum Beat*’s 13 issues, 24 can be identified as women’s contributions, and 15 of those are explicitly signaled as such either through the byline or editor’s comment, whereas 22 poems can be identified as men’s contributions, and 11 are explicitly signaled as such. The remaining 20 are unidentifiable in terms of gender. The vast majority of these poems, however, take as their subject the Fair itself, or people at the Fair, and so were likely culled from letters sent through the Fair Post Office from unknown, anonymous Fair-goers. In other words, Storrs may not even have known anything about their authors. While there are no significant differences in gender representation, there are some thematic differences between men’s and women’s contributions, with women’s poetry exhibiting more of the high-sentimental reform politics I have been linking to an authorial ethos for women’s poetry developing at this time. While men’s contributions lean more toward humorous poems, Civil War camp songs, and hero ballads that, notably, take up soldiers and nurses as heroes in equal measure, women’s contributions lean more toward patriotic Union

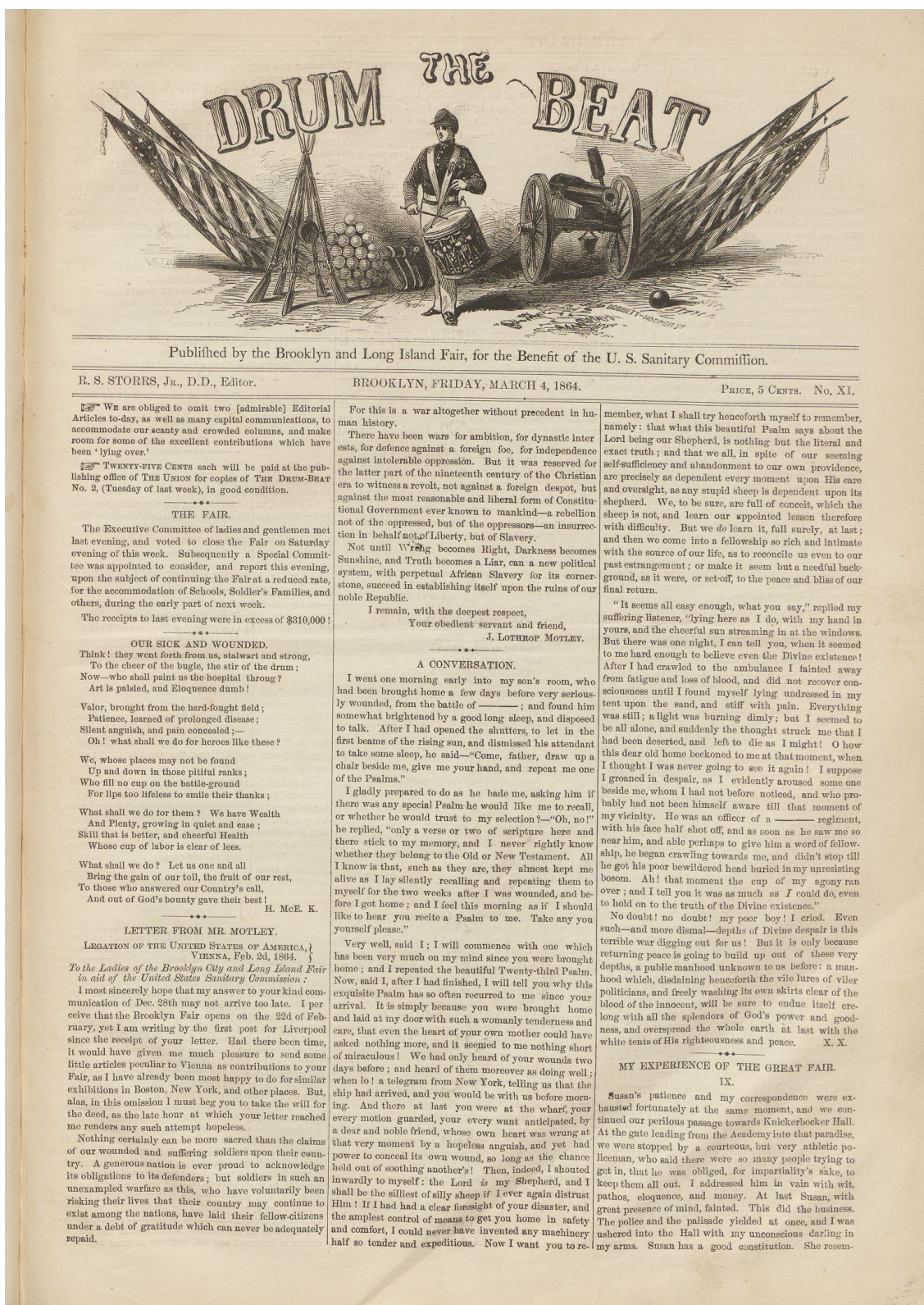


Figure 1.1 *The Drum Beat* 4 March 1864: 1. By permission of The Houghton Library, Harvard University, © The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

battle calls, sentimental accounts of the experience of war from the perspective of a non-combatants, and what Alice Fahs has called “dying soldier” poems.³⁴

That female Fair patrons and *Drum Beat* subscribers were sending such poetry in droves to the paper directly or indirectly was, in fact, mocked in the final issue by touring reporter “Augustus Watts” (pseudonym for Capt. R. W. Raymond), whose regular column humorously detailed his “Experience of the Great Fair”—or rather, the Fair’s experience of the great Watts. His final piece is a boastful open letter to the throngs of Fair-goers who addressed letters to him through the post office that he had yet to reply to. Clearly satirizing the kinds of letter that passed through the post office but also his own importance, Watts addresses the letter-writers in batches, by type. He eventually turns to the amateur women poets who have written to him:

Ten Young ladies, of the Female Institute, wish to know why their poems, on
“Moonlight Musing,” / “Speak Gently,” / “Home,” / “The Robin,” /
“America,” / “Columbia,” / “The Flag,” / “The Dying Drummer,” / “The
Dying Hero” and... “The Hero’s Death” have never appeared in the *Drum Beat*.
I will give them the explanation in private. In regard to some of them, it is
sufficient to say, that the *Drum-Beat* [sic] has run the subject of the Dying Hero as
much as it will bear. All the sick soldiers, all the fine Christians, all the strong
characters depicted in these sheets have, with one or two exceptions, been devoted
to immediate death. From Mr. Tilton’s Sailor’s Bride to Mr. Street’s Mother’s

³⁴As Fahs notes, dying soldier poems were highly popular at the time: “During the Civil War this sentimental poetry exploded in popularity. Published throughout the war in both the North and the South, these poems and songs were ubiquitous, with songs in particular sometimes selling hundreds of thousands of copies” (100). For an extended discussion of the trope of the dying soldier, see Fahs 93–119.

Son, they all expire. Now, the Drum Beat cannot be confined in this way to funeral marches. (“Experience of the Great Fair: Postscript”)

Marking the range of “funeral marches” from “*Mr. Tilton’s Sailor’s Bride* to *Mr. Street’s Mother’s Son*,” suggests that not only were there enough on that subject already, but that only those written by men were printed. Mapping the literary selections (both poetry and prose) printed in the *Drum Beat* during its two-week run, however, reveals that though the paper ran the subject of the “Dying Hero” often, pieces on this subject were, in fact, mostly written by women. In fact, of the 7 poems explicitly about a “Dying Hero,” 6 of these are by women and one is even about a dying nurse, not a dying soldier. The only “Dying Hero” poem contributed by a man is Alfred B. Street’s “The Drummer Boy” (what Watts refers to as “*Mr. Street’s Mother’s Son*”).³⁵ The spread of dying soldier or “Dying Hero” poems among mostly women poets demonstrates an interesting trend in women’s contributions to the paper and begs the question: do such thematic differences reflect the real difference in what men and women contributed or—and this is an important distinction—do they reflect differences in how men’s and women’s poetry were edited in the *Drum Beat*? The fact that we will never see all the submissions that did not make it into the paper means there can never be a definitive answer to this question; however, a closer look at material rhetoric in the *Drum Beat* suggests the latter explanation.

The second page of the *Drum Beat* for February 24, 1864 (Fig. 2) features, among a few miscellaneous items, two war poems, the first of two installments of a short story by Louisa May Alcott (written exclusively for the *Drum Beat*) entitled “The Hospital Lamp,” and a camp letter

³⁵ Watts’ mention of “*Mr. Tilton’s Sailor’s Bride*” refers to Theodore Tilton’s poem “The Sailor’s Wedding,” which is not, in fact, a dying soldier or “Dying Hero” poem. In this poem, which is slightly humorous in tone, a generic sailor returns home after a long journey and finds his bride has died waiting for him.

signed by William Hurt, purported to be an “[a]n exact copy of a letter written by a colored soldier of the Second South Carolina Regiment.” The first of the two poems entitled, “In The Hospital,” was written by poet and volunteer nurse Mary Woolsey Howland (1832–1864), but was signed “by the author of ‘A Rainy Day In Camp’”; the second poem, “The Gentle Soldier” was written by Edward D. Washburn, signed “W.” Thematically, there are notable differences between these two poems: Howland’s is highly topical—inspired presumably by a recent incident in an existing army hospital and written in the voice of an angelic dying Union soldier.³⁶ Washburn’s poem is not topical though it features a soldier: it retells an ancient Spanish ballad about a noble soldier’s caring for a lowly leper. Whereas Washburn’s poem relays, through the single perspective of a poet-narrator, the story of a legendary soldier in regular trochaic tetrameter, Howland’s poem presents readers with the witnessed final words of a recently dying Union Sergeant, prefaced by a sentimental note:

S.S ---, a Massachusetts Sergeant worn out with heavy marches, wounds, and camp-disease, died in --- General Hospital in November 1863, in “perfect peace.” Some, who witnessed daily his wonderful sweet patience and content, through great languor and weariness, fancied sometimes they “could already see the brilliant particles of a halo in the air about his head.”

In the context of its accompanying preface and byline, what Vicki Burton would call “rhetorical accretions,” the poem represents three different perspectives—the author of the war poem, the soldier’s witnesses, and the soldier himself, as he lies dying—that tend to collapse into one

³⁶ An account of the first publication of this poem appears in the Woolsey Howland family’s collection of letters and reminiscences on their Civil War experience, *Letters of a Family* (1899): 278–282. See also, Ellen Gruber Garvey’s discussion of the Mary Woolsey Howland in *Writing with Scissors* (2012): 42–46.

IN THE HOSPITAL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "A RAINY DAY IN CAMP."
S. S. — a Massachusetts Sergeant, worn out with heavy marches, wounds, and camp disease, died in — General Hospital in November, 1863, in "perfect peace." Some, who witnessed daily his wonderful, sweet patience and content, through great languor and weariness, fancied sometimes they "could already see the brilliant particles of a halo in the air about his head."

I lay me down to sleep,
With little thought or care
Whether my waking find
Me here — or There!

A bowing, burdened head,
That only asks to rest,
Unquestioning, upon
A loving breast.

My good right hand forgets
Its cunning now —
To march the weary march
I know not how.

I am not eager, bold,
Or strong — all that is past:
I am ready not to do
At last — at last!

My half-day's work is done,
And this is all my part;
I give a patient God
My patient heart.

And grasp His banner still,
Though all its blue be dim;
These stripes, no less than stars,
Lead after Him.

THE HOSPITAL LAMP.

BY MISS L. M. ALCOTT.

It was a very dull lamp; the only one that burned in that sad place. The others were extinguished as the bell rung nine, and this central one was lowered till it became a pale star in the twilight of the room. All night it burned above the motley sleepers, showing the sights only to be seen in a hospital ward; and all night one pair of eyes seemed to watch it, with a wistful constancy which caused me to wonder what thought or purpose was illuminated by that feeble ray.

Wearied with a long watch by a fever-patient's bed, I took advantage of the heavy sleep that fell upon him to rest and refresh myself by pacing, noiselessly, up and down the aisle, on either side of which stretched the long rows of beds covered with grey army-blankets, and looking in the dusk as narrow, dark, and still, as new-made graves. On one of these beds lay the watcher of the light — a rough, dark man, with keen eyes, and a mane of long black hair, which he never would have cut, although it caused him to be christened "Absalom Tonsor" by his mates. Stern and silent was this Hunt, showing a grim sort of fortitude and patience under great suffering, which won respect but not affection; for he also possessed gruff manners, and a decidedly "let-me-alone" expression of countenance. Very short answers were all any questioner received, and an absent "Thanky, ma'am" was the only acknowledgment of the daily cares it was my duty to bestow upon him.

Though the most ungracious and unpromising of all my boys, that one habit of his made him interesting to me, and for several days I had been taking reconnaissance and preparing to steal a march upon him, fancying that he had something on his mind, and would be the easier for telling it. By day he slept much, or appeared to do so, for turning his face to the wall he drew his long hair over his eyes, and either shut out the world entirely or viewed it stealthily from behind that screen. But at night, when the room was still, and no one stirring but myself, he emerged from his covert, folded his arms under his head, and lay staring fixedly at the light as if it had some irresistible fascination for him. He took no heed of me, and I seldom spoke; but while apparently unmindful of him, I watched the varying expression of his face; sometimes gloomy and despondent, sometimes restless and eager, but of late grave and steady, as if the dull lamp had shed a comfortable gleam upon some anxious thought of his. His face wore that expression then, and as I paused to wet the stamp of the leg left at Fredericksburg, I could not resist speaking to him, though I only put the question often asked:

"Are you in pain, Hunt?"

He slowly turned his glance from the lamp to me, paused a moment to recall and comprehend the half-heard words, then answered with his usual brevity:

"Not more'n common."

"Doesn't the light trouble you?"

"No, ma'am; I like it."

"I am afraid it keeps you awake. Your bed can be turned, or the lamp shaded, if it is so."

"Don't put out the light, or move me anywhere; I'm easiest so."

He spoke eagerly; and curious to discover the cause of his whim, I said:

"But you don't sleep, and you need all that you can get."

"Time enough for that, by and by. I get something better'n sleep these times."

"What are you so busy about all night, when the other men are dreaming?"

"Thinking, ma'am."

"Well, don't think too much; and if there is anything you wish to have written or attended to, remember I am here, and glad to do it for you."

"Thank ye, ma'am. I guess I shall have to study this out single-handed; if I can't, I'll let you know."

Still hoping to win the confidence which sooner or later was pretty sure to be bestowed, I dropped that subject and took up another, which usually proved an agreeable one to the boys, because so full of personal interest, anxiety, or pride.

"Your wound is getting on bravely. Do you know Dr. Cutter says you won't have to lose the knee joint after all, you have kept so quiet and been so patient."

There was a flash of pleasure in Hunt's face, but he seemed more intent upon some happier fact than the preservation of the joint, the loss of which would have entailed greater suffering, danger and helplessness. "He thinks it's owing to my being still and so on, does he?" was all the answer Hunt made me.

"Yes, he says that when you came he was afraid you were going to have a bad time of it, because your leg was not well amputated and you were a restless, excitable person. But you very pleasantly disappointed him; and here you are doing well, thanks to your self-control, or to the subject that seems to absorb your mind, and keep your thoughts from your wound."

He drew a long breath, gave a satisfied little nod, and said as if to himself:

"I guess the thinking did it."

Seeing signs of promise in the half smile that seemed to break out against his will, and the nod, so strongly suggestive of contentment and relief, I pursued the propitious topic.

"I like to hear the men tell about their wounds, but you never told me how you lost your leg."

"Shouldn't think that sort of thing would be interesting to a lady."

He looked gratified, for all his gruff way of speaking, and I replied with as much enthusiasm as a very drowsy voice and countenance could express.

"It is very interesting to me; and as we are the only wakeful ones, let us have a sensible little chat about it."

"I ain't much given to that kind of thing, by nature or by grace neither. Must be lonesome here for you, though."

He seemed to add the last sentence, as if to atone for the bluntness of the preceding one, and looked as if he would like to be sociable if he only knew how.

"Yes, it is lonely sometimes; but you can make it pleasant by talking a little, and perhaps the sound of your own voice, and the cool trickle of the water will make you sleepy after a while."

"Don't the water make your hands dreadful cold, ma'am?" he asked, as I began on a fresh basinful.

It did; but I could have clapped them both warm again at that speech, for it was the first sign of friendliness the man had ever shown. I only gave the big sponge a grateful squeeze, however, and answered soberly:

"I rather like to splash about in this way, particularly if I have stories told me at the same time."

"There isn't much to tell, any way," he began, after a pause of recollection. "You've heard enough about our battle to know how things were, so I needn't stop for that."

We were doing our best, after we got over the bridge, when there came a shell and scattered half a dozen of us pretty lively. I was pitched flat, but I didn't feel hurt — only mad — and jumped up to hit 'em again, but just tumbled over with an awful wrench, and a still awfuller feeling that both my legs were gone."

"Did no one stop to help you?"

"Too busy for that, ma'am; the boys can't stop to pick up their mates when there are Rebs ahead to be knocked down. I knew there was no more fighting for me, and just laid still with the balls singing round me, wondering where they'd hit next."

"How did you feel?"

"Dreadful busy, at first; for everything I'd ever said, seen, or done, seemed to go spinning through my head, till I got so dizzy trying to keep my wits steady that I lost 'em altogether. I didn't find 'em again till somebody laid hold of me. Two of our boys were lugging me along back, but they had to dodge behind walls, and cut up and down, for the scrimmage was going on all round us. One of 'em was hit in the side, the other in the face, but not sort of a place, out of danger. There I begged 'em to lay me down and let me be, for I couldn't go any further. Believed I was bleeding to death, rapid, but it wasn't hard, and I only wanted to drop off easy, if I could."

[CONCLUDED IN NEXT NUMBER.]

THE GENTLE SOLDIER.

Dawn on castled hilltop glances;
Rides Rodrigo of liver,
Midst the gleam of twenty lances
Flashing as the morning star,
To the shrine of Compostella
Rides he, Mary's grace to gain;
Gentlest heart in stoutest corset,
Soul of chivalry and Spain!

See! a lothly leper lying,
Whelmed within the miry road;
"Help, good Christian man, the dying,
Help me for the love of God!"
Spur the knights with idle jeering,
But Rodrigo stoopeth low;
And the hapless beggar nearing,
Lifts him to his saddle bow.

At the hostel board he seats him,
Crowned with meats and amber wine;
And with kindly welcome greets him;
"Taste, my brother, all is thine."
Chafing as an angry billow,
From the hall each lordling fumes;
But Rodrigo spreads the pillow,
And the beggar's bed he shares.

Sleep thou sweetly, child pure hearted!
Lo! in holy dead of night
Blew a piercing wind: he started,
And he saw a form in white;
Lifts it o'er his hands caressing,
Bends a face with winsome smile,
"Take thou saintly Lazarus' blessing;
I am he, you leper vile."

"When this wind blows on thy shoulder,
Strike, for God shall wield thine arm;
Bold Titiana's blade, but bolder
Edged by me with saintly charm,
Thine, my old, the battle holy,
Thine the Christian psalm and song;
For the gentle hunt and lowly
Is the comrade of the strong."

W.

AN exact copy of a letter written by a colored soldier of the Second South Carolina Regiment:
MORRIS ISLAND, Oct. 14, 1863.

Momego

Mrs. — My Dear Maddam

A
It is with a feeling of sorrow that I set to write to you the sad news of the death of your beloved husband to-day another grave is made in Yonder graveyard one who has walked and talked and sung with us. Who has shared our joys and been the partners of our sorrows is now no more all that remains is the cold clay and that we must quickly bury out of our sight but while the flesh has gone the Spirit still lingers and hovers over the Surviving Friend though the body is not here the Sweet & Precious Memory of virtue and goodness is left for us to cherish the one who has descended to the tomb was loved in Life he is Remembered in Death he was prized and Honored on earth he will be sanctified in Heaven, these words is from his brother Soldier who are now weeping over his coffin and will continue as long as the Memory of his virtue and unaffected goodness and kindness shall be appreciated I cannot linger to long over the grave or shed to many tears for the bereaved affection the departed one does not need our lamentations he wears a crown of glory Now and a Robe of light his companions are the pure Spirits of the upper world and his cup of joy is full Let us instead of spending our time in weak & unavailing complaints lift our hearts to the great God that the Bereaved May be Sanctified to us let it teach us to purify Our Spirits and prepare us for the hour of our own departure and the end of all things blessed are they that die in the lord for there is the Kingdom of heaven

this if from his friend

WILLIAM HART.

2nd S. C. regiment.

LORD BACON not long before his death, being reduced to poverty, wrote a pitiful letter to King James, craving his assistance, concluding thus: "That I, who desire to live to study, may not be driven to study to live."

BRETON, the author of *Telemachus*, and Archbishop of Cambray, was above the little distinctions of country and religion, and used to entertain Protestants as readily as Papists. He said "that he loved his family better than himself, his country better than his family, and mankind better than his country," for he added, "I am more a Frenchman than a Fenelon, and more a man than a Frenchman."

ACIDITY.—Martin Burney, while earnestly explaining the different kinds of acids, was stopped by Charles Lamb's saying: "The best of all acids, however, you know, Martin, is assiduity."

Figure 1.2 The *Drum Beat* 24 February 1864: 2. By permission of The Houghton Library, Harvard University, © The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

another as they mediate the same dying soldier scene. Even as the poem proceeds from the pen of the author of “A Rainy Day In Camp,” it also proceeds as the fancy of these witnesses and as the dying soldier’s final prayer. In the context of the page of the newspaper for which this piece functions as leading text, the poem becomes even clearer as a kind of performance piece. The mediating force that is evoked in this particular printing of the poem seems to perform what each of the other texts on the page point to: the perspective not of a dying male soldier, but of a female sanitary nurse.

In Washburn’s poem, for instance, the soldier is really a nurse in disguise. The noble soldier’s identification as a nurse for the leper, which comprises the entire poem, produces a special category of nurse—one with noble, heroic qualities. When we get to the “exact copy of a letter written by a colored soldier of the Second South Carolina Regiment,” we encounter yet another nurse. This letter is, in fact, written by one soldier to the wife of a fallen fellow soldier, providing her with an account of the fallen soldier’s good death, and thus reflects quite directly what Civil War nurses so often did: write to the families on behalf of their dead or dying sons, husbands, and fathers. Alcott’s story on the same page tells us as much:

What are you so busy about at night, when the other men are dreaming?”
the nurse asks her patient. “Thinking, ma’am” he says. “Well,” she returns
“don’t think too much; and if there is anything you wish to have written or
attended to, remember I am here, and glad to do it for you.

The nurse in Alcott’s story offers to provide total mediation for her patient, especially cognitive and written meditation, and she even does so by getting the otherwise silent soldier to speak through her prompts, while she washes his wounds. The Sanitary nurse’s role—and particularly her mediating role with soldiers—is on display here in disguised, mythologized, and materialized form.

Howland's poem in the *Drum Beat* is, notably, one of several versions that had been circulating around camps and in print media since 1863 under a different title, "Mortally Wounded," and lacking the attribution "by the author of a 'Rainy Day in Camp.'" Instead, as Ellen Gruber Garvey notes in her discussion of the poem's early reprintings, earlier versions of the poem "often carried the heading, 'The following lines were found under the pillow of a soldier who was lying dead in a hospital near Port Royal, South Carolina'" (44). Framed by this suggestive preface, the poem, which voices the perspective of a dying soldier, registers as composed by a soldier. Though originally composed by Howland, in its anonymous (and edited) reprinting during the war and well beyond the war's end, the poem accrued "[t]he powerful implication that the dying soldier had actually inscribed the words and left them under his pillow tenaciously adhered to the poem" (Garvey 44). This clinging provenance "adhered" (even after Howland's name became publically associated with the poem) because it continued to meet the direct "need to hear the voice of the dead, to believe that they are at peace with their death and agree that the sacrifice was worth it" (45). If "[n]ewspaper recirculation created and reinforced the belief that the poem was written by a soldier," the version published in the *Drum Beat* expressly interrupts this belief. It does not, however, destroy its comfort value in the process; instead, by titling it "In the Hospital," by attributing it to "the author of 'A Rainy Day in Camp,'" thereby allowing readers to distinguish between the dying soldier and the author of the poem, and by prefacing it with an eye-witness account of the soldier's final days, the *Drum Beat* repositions the soldier's death within the broader experience of his nurses. In doing so, the *Drum Beat* reshapes the origin and function of the poem, highlighting not the soldier but soldier relief, and ultimately the virtues of the female nurse, whose job was to comfort both the dying soldier and his family through the written assurance that his good death away from home, on the battlefield, was possible. As Fahs notes, "[i]t was precisely the powerless condition of soldiers in the hospital that many sentimental writers

celebrated as the essence of American manhood” (110). I would add that these celebrations were two-pronged, particularly in this context: on the one hand, the good death of the dying soldier is celebrated as the essence of manhood and, on the other hand, the witnessing agency of the nurse, through which the soldier’s good death and “manhood” is made known, is celebrated as the essence of womanhood. Here, even when women’s poetry is not explicitly presented as written by a woman, it is nevertheless positioned through a material rhetoric to stand in as womanly mediation. For the *Drum Beat*’s purposes, it was important to showcase not only the wounded or dying soldier, but also those indispensable mediators between home front and battlefield—Women’s Relief Societies, the Sanitary Commission, nurses—and integral to this effort was the positioning of women’s poetry as a key part of this mediation. An article published in the *Drum Beat*’s March 11th supplement draws out the connection explicitly. Describing the work of the Sanitary Commission, it specifically highlights not only how indispensable woman’s mediation was to war relief efforts but how women’s writing functions as one of the highest forms of this mediation: The Commission “follows the army to the BATTLEFIELD,” “follows the soldier to the HOSPITAL,” and “puts a cultivated and consecrated WOMAN in the Hospital... to make it a cheerful and home-like place; to bring into it books, music, flowers, birds, prints, etc; to write letters for those who cannot write for themselves; and [thus] to diffuse, through the otherwise gloomy apartment, an atmosphere of womanly sympathy and serenity” (1).

It was in midst of the *Drum Beat*’s celebration of womanly sentimental mediation that three of Dickinson’s poems were printed. Their appearance in the *Drum Beat* was either brought about surreptitiously by friends of the poet, as was the case with one valentine letter and six of the

ten poems published during her lifetime,³⁷ or, as Karen Dandurand has argued, was published “because she acquiesced to an appeal for aid to the sick and wounded Union soldiers” (27). Supporting both possibilities is the fact that Dickinson is known to have previously addressed poems in letters to *Drum Beat* editor Rev. Richard Salter Storrs, who was a long time acquaintance of the Dickinson family, though no manuscripts survive from this correspondence. Another possible avenue was historian and Dickinson family friend Gertrude Lefferts Vanderbilt, to whom Dickinson also addressed poems, and who contributed one of the Fair’s most coveted auction items, a “superb album of autographs, from eminent authors” (“Our Daily Record”) collected and bound specifically for the auction.³⁸ In any case, it seems likely that Dickinson did not intend these poems to define her as an author and almost certainly would not have invited what was to be their subsequent reprinting in, of all places, the *Springfield Republican*, where readers might guess the anonymous author. Whatever happened between Dickinson’s composition of the poems and their appearance in the *Drum Beat*, it is nevertheless a fact that

³⁷ Chapter 2 takes up the publication of four of Dickinson’s poems in her daily newspaper, the *Springfield Republican*, during the 1860s, arguing that her uptake in that paper’s rhetorical negotiation of the ethos of women’s poetry prompted Dickinson’s decisive avoidance of public modes of poetic address. Chapter 3 discusses the publication of one of Dickinson’s poems in the collective *A Masque of Poets* (1878).

³⁸ The February 24 edition of the *Drum Beat* reports on the display of the autograph album at the Fair: “To this album, every author contributing sends not merely his written name, but a page written in his own hand, and consisting usually of some extracts from his works... In all cases of living writers the autographs in this superb album are written expressly for the Fair, on large white sheets of paper, and exhibit the respective authors’ calligraphy to the best possible advantage, while at the same time the individuality of each writer is fully preserved. We doubt if there exists a more interesting and valuable autograph collection, at least so far as relates to American literary celebrities” (“Our Daily Record”). The book, which now resides in the Brooklyn Historical Society, has only the work of male authors, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Edward Everett, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Henry W. Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, Edmond C. Stedman, John G. Whittier, and Nathaniel P. Willis.

these poems participate in the paper's highly rhetorical context of public address, as one of the choice selections that helped to sell the paper and the paper's aim to the public.

Each of Dickinson's poems ("Blazing in Gold and quenching in Purple" [F 321]; "Flowers - Well - if anybody" [F 95]; "These are the days when Birds come back -"[F 122]) as they are printed here can be classified among the least topical of the literary selections or those most indirectly related to war. All three poems are focused on nature (sunset, flowers, seasonal change) and the express a desire to articulate the ineffable. The poem beginning "Flowers - Well - if anybody," written three years before the war, considers the indefinable ecstasy that flowers inspire. Beginning in defeat, the speaker can only wonder if it is possible for "anybody" to "define" "the ecstasy... / With which flowers humble men." If so, the speaker bribes, "I will give him all the Daisies, / Which upon hillside blow!" Having "[t]oo much pathos in their faces" for the speaker's "simple breast" to contain and describe, she is unlike the exotic "Butterflies from San Domingo," who in "Cruising round the purple line," easily define the flower's face. Simpler and too affected by "floods" of feeling, the speaker has neither the physical capacity nor the "system of esthetics [sic]" for such an encounter, suggesting the butterflies have a poetry in their effortless "cruising" (ADEL: "To sail back and forth...to rove for plunder as a pirate"). If only the speaker could plunder the definitive line, she too might capture "the Daisies" in her poetry.



Figure 1.3 "Flowers," *Drum Beat* 2 March 1864: 2. Courtesy, Archives & Special Collections, Amherst College.

Printed under the title "Flowers" (Fig. 1.3), the poem appears among in the midst of a page of highly topical selections, including a humorous "Augustus Watts" article about his experience buying goods at the Fair, two short uplifting tales involving the life of a soldier, a poem sentimentalizing a nurse's sacrifice and death, by a nurse stationed at Camp Parole. Less obviously topical than any of these selections, Dickinson's poem does not contribute to the paper's aims in the same way; however, its light and airy presentation of the ineffable is broadly applicable. In this context the poem resonates with the ineffability of the war and the immense

need which the Sanitary Commission was founded to fill: if even the beauty of a flower has “too much pathos” to absorb and represent, how then can the immense toll of war be absorbed and represented? The texts that surround this poem take up the very effort of absorbing and representing this pathos. As Barrett and Miller observe, sentimental Civil War poetry (which this page includes) operates as “a kind of release valve for the pressures of an otherwise unbearable loss: the weeping and grieving that the poem permits and indeed encourages are often contained by the poem’s conclusion, which offers reassurance that the soldier’s death supports the ideologies of his nation” (7). The Dickinson poem included here, while not providing the same kind of release valve for grief, does articulate the founding question of the Fair within a rich vision of beauty.

The fit of Dickinson’s poem on this particular page should also be noted. Though it does not have an obvious fit here, there is minor intertextual resonance between Dickinson’s poem and the Watts piece, which begins, “I had heard a great deal about the system of classification which was to pervade the entire Fair” (“Experience of the Great Fair. VII”). Referring to the organization of goods at the Fair, Watts then relates his adventures in navigating the various tables of resplendent clothing and artwork, while his wife shops. The “system of classification” eventually refers to the difference in aesthetic taste between Watts and his wife, whose idea of beauty (a painting of General McClellan) he cannot fathom, and unable to toss it into the “fireplace in the New England Kitchen” installation, promptly disposes of it “in the East river.” Though very different in tone, it is hard not to read the “system of esthetics” that can define the beauty Dickinson’s poem seeks to define, in light of Watts’ “system of classification” which he finds pervasive at the Fair and entirely defined by the eye of the beholder. Reading Dickinson’s poem directly after the Watts piece even subtly calls into question the speaker’s aesthetic taste in flowers. At the very least this resonance probably explains the poem’s positioning on the page by

the editor. It may also explain why of the three Dickinson poems presumably on the table, Storrs chose “Flowers” for this issue. The last of Dickinson’s poems to appear in the *Drum Beat* (“These are the days when Birds come back -” [F 122]) ran in the supplementary edition, which was produced after the Fair had ended, due to popular demand and because many poetic contributions either had arrived late or could not be included in the regular run of the paper due to limits of space. Her poems as a group thus do not seem to have been guaranteed a position in the paper, but given place as they fit.

While we do not know what Dickinson thought of these three instances of publication, we can be certain she knew about two of them whether or not she had a copy of the paper: both “Blazing in Gold and quenching in Purple” and “Flowers - Well - if anybody” were reprinted in her daily newspaper, the *Springfield Republican*, where she surely encountered them. By 1864 Dickinson had already seen her poetry a number of times in the pages of the *Republican*. To a much greater and more impactful extent than the *Drum Beat* example, the positioning of Dickinson’s poetry in the *Republican* implicated her in the ethos of women’s poetry as it was being negotiated in periodical print culture during the 1860s. It is to the pages of the *Republican* that I now turn.

Chapter 2

Emily Dickinson and Mrs. F. H. Cooke's *Springfield Republican*

...I thought of you all last week, until the world grew rounder than it sometimes is, and I broke several dishes.... One glimpse of The Republican makes me break things again - I read in it every night. Who writes those funny accidents, where railroads meet each other unexpectedly, and gentlemen in factories get their heads cut off quite informally? The author[,] too, relates them in such a sprightly way, that they are quite attractive. Vinnie was disappointed to-night, that there were not more accidents - I read the news aloud, while Vinnie was sewing. The Republican seems to us like a letter from you, and we break the seal and read it eagerly.

— Emily Dickinson to Dr. Josiah and Elizabeth Holland, 1853 (L 133)

This is my letter to the World
That never wrote to Me -
The simple News that Nature told -
With tender Majesty

Her Message is committed
To Hands I cannot see -
For love of Her - Sweet - country -
men -
Judge tenderly - of Me

— Emily Dickinson, 1863 (F 519)

Emily Dickinson's first known letter to New England author and editor Dr. Josiah Gilbert Holland (1819–1881) and his wife Elizabeth (1823–1896), which she sent in the fall of 1853 and from which the first of the two epigraphs above is taken, is not unusual in either its jocularity or

its intimacy, even if Dickinson and the Hollands had only met a few months before this letter was penned. Nor is the letter unusual in the extent to which it functions as a response, not to a private letter from the Hollands, but to that most public of communiqués: the daily newspaper. As New England's daily provincial newspaper, based in Springfield, Massachusetts, the *Republican* had been delivered to the Dickinson home for many years, along with weekly newspapers such as *The Hampshire and Franklin Express* and *The Amherst Record*, and the popular literary monthly, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. Between the Dickinsons and their friends, the contents of these periodicals provided regular points of reference and exchange. What is notable about her letter to the Hollands is its suggestion that Dickinson's friendship with Dr. Holland, who was co-proprietor and associate editor of the *Springfield Republican* at the time, made the newspaper more than just an impersonal record circulated en masse to no one in particular. It now seemed, to Dickinson, "like a letter" from her friend.

By the summer of 1858, the *Republican* would seem like a letter from more than just Holland. During a trip to Amherst in June to cover an agricultural event for the paper, *Republican* editor-in-chief Samuel Bowles III (1826–1878) became fast friends with Dickinson's brother, Austin, and his wife Susan, and shortly thereafter began a lively correspondence with the couple and, eventually, Emily (Habegger 376). As in her first letter to the Hollands, the letters and poems Dickinson sent to both Samuel Bowles and his wife Mary often respond or refer to recent news from the *Republican*, as though the newspaper itself formed part of their correspondence. Among the "sprightly," "quite attractive" local news, the *Republican* provided Dickinson with diverse material from which to draw, including political editorials, scientific, religious, and agricultural reports, humorous miscellanies, and original and reprinted fiction and poetry. One

poem Dickinson embeds in a letter to Bowles in February 1862,³⁹ “Would you like Summer? Taste of our’s” (F 272; L 229), takes its form, as Shannon Thomas observes, from a *Republican* advertisement for Bliss Dyspeptic Remedy, but “alters what is for sale” by offering Dickinson’s own brand of “rest (‘Furloughs of Down’), serenity (‘Estates of Violet’), beauty (‘Reprieve of Roses’), and breath (‘Flasks of Air’)” (66). By incorporating the paper’s contents into her letters to Bowles, Dickinson positions the paper as part of his side of the correspondence and herself as both a reader of the paper and a recipient of a personal communication from Bowles.

Even before Dickinson knew either Bowles or Holland, the *Republican* had served as an extension of her epistolary exchanges: on February 20, 1852, a valentine written by Dickinson for William Howland (1822–1880), beginning “‘Sic transit gloria mundi’” (F 2), was published in the paper as “A Valentine.” In printing the poem, Bowles prefaced it with the following note: “[t]he hand that wrote the following amusing medley to a gentleman friend of ours, as ‘a valentine,’ is capable of writing very fine things, and there is certainly no presumption in entertaining a private wish that a correspondence, more direct than this, may be established between it and the *Republican*” The “gentleman friend” was William Howland (1822–1880) who was studying and working at the law office of Edward Dickinson, Emily’s father, that year. No one in the Dickinson family was familiar enough with either editor at the time to have facilitated this exchange, and it is likely neither editor knew anything about Dickinson (who was 22 at the time) beyond what Howland might have communicated to them and what they gleaned from the witty valentine itself. Thomas Johnson surmises that the publication was meant “to surprise the sender by a *riposte* and to keep up the badinage [of the valentine exchange] as long as possible” (*Letters of Emily Dickinson* 5). Though it is not known how Dickinson responded to this, we can be reasonably

³⁹ Franklin corrects Thomas Johnson’s dating of this letter from February 1861 to February 1862.

certain she read it and that “the world grew rounder” to her then, as her own words returned to her through the medium of the regional daily newspaper, along with a personal note addressed indirectly to her, teasing her to up the ante and address the *Republican* in reply. Dickinson did not reply as far as we know, but it is probable that this exchange provided a conversation piece when she met Holland a year later, and informed her understanding of the paper as an extension of her epistolary exchanges.

This extension would happen again on August 2, 1858, when the *Republican* printed Dickinson’s poem beginning “Nobody knows this little rose - “ (F 11), under the title “To Mrs.— —, with a Rose.”⁴⁰ Like the earlier publication of the valentine, the poem is prefaced by an editorial note: “[Surreptitiously communicated to The Republican.]” The lack of byline or identifying signature for the poem combines with the missing addressee in the title and the suggestive editorial note to hold, like the earlier valentine, the identities of both author and recipient secret, and to deliberately signal the verse as lifted and even excerpted from a larger private exchange. The very positioning of the poem in the paper contributes to its secret character; it appears as one of many miscellaneous items on the page, and except for the white space around the poem, it is not particularly distinguished (Fig. 2.1). In fact, a cursory glance at the paper could easily mistake the small poem for an advertisement, some of which are even in verse form. Unremarkable among the paper’s contents, the poem performs, like the valentine before it, a tease on Dickinson (albeit very publically) even more so than other *Republican* readers. It is a public display of affection that probably mortified Dickinson, but it also extended her epistolary exchange into the paper in such a way that she remained an anonymous letter writer personally connected to the paper’s editors.

⁴⁰ Dickinson very likely sent the poem as a letter to Holland’s wife Elizabeth, with an appended rose bud.

Based on Dickinson's early exchanges with Holland and Bowles, as well as these two early publications, we might say that Dickinson's encounter with the *Republican* during the 1850s was significantly informed by her epistolary relations and even that it affirmed the intimacy of those relations. In the early 1860s, however, the epistolary aspect of the paper for Dickinson would be fundamentally altered. Significantly, as Holland took permanent leave from his duties at the paper in 1860, and poet and fiction writer Fidelity Hayward Cooke (1816–1897) took over as literary editor for the paper, the literary selections became at once more prominent and more supportive of a cultivated and ethically-oriented female poetic. As Cooke negotiated an authorial ethos for the work of regional women poets, including herself, in her capacity as *Republican* literary editor, a handful of Dickinson's poems would make their way into the paper again, two of which—"I taste a liquor never brewed - " (F 207) and "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers" (F 124)—would be directly caught up and transformed by Cooke's reformist agenda. Unlike the first two publications from the 1850s, these later two poems published appear in featured "Original Poetry" sections with other poetry and take on the rhetorical functions that original poetry was made to perform by Cooke. Cooke's uptake of Dickinson's poetry came not only to alter the epistolary aspect of the newspaper, but also to involve Dickinson in public forms of poetic address that would threaten her own poetic project. As Dickinson's poetry became integrated in the rhetoric of women's poetry in the paper, and thus a part of the *Republican's* poetic address to its readers, it could no longer affirm her own epistolary relations; what had once seemed a letter from friends, was now a letter to the world, and not from Dickinson exactly, but a female poetic collective actively shaped by editorial hands. In what follows, I investigate how Cooke's literary direction at the *Republican* during the 1860s negotiated an authorial ethos for women's poetry in the paper; I then map how Dickinson's poetry was used in these negotiations, which not only

transformed the *Republican*'s epistolarity for Dickinson but also pushed her poetic address in extensive and consequential public directions.

The *Springfield Republican* in the 1860s

During the 1860s, the *Republican* came into its own as “The New England Family Newspaper,” developing a reputation for providing timely, high-caliber, and independent content, with a distinctive New England tone. Every issue included political news and editorials, scientific, religious, agricultural, and local news, original and selected stories and poetry, and (usually humorous) miscellanies.⁴¹ By the end of the decade, the *Republican* was highly reputable. One review of the paper called it “the model for provincial journals throughout the country” (*New York Round Table*), and it was editor-in-chief Samuel Bowles’s continual effort to outdo his own standards that made it so. Beginning November 11, 1858, and continuing until the end of that year, the *Republican* ran a house advertisement to increase subscriptions, which outlined the paper’s New Year’s resolution to be “a better paper than it has been in the Old”: “Besides maintaining, in increased perfection, all the well-known characteristics of the past, other and new features will be introduced to give piquancy, instruction and value to both the Daily and Weekly issues” (“The Republican for 1859”). In addition to building new office headquarters, hiring “new and able correspondents,” and capitalizing on the “free use of the Telegraph . . . [to

⁴¹ In addition to the regular daily issue of the paper, a weekly edition of the *Republican* was also issued on Saturdays, as was a supplementary evening edition on Tuesdays. The weekly edition was a large cut-and-paste rural edition of the paper, containing selected articles, literature, and news from the daily edition issues of the previous week. Both the weekly edition and the Saturday daily edition were double the size of the regular daily paper, and printed on a large “quarto sheet” (eight pages of six columns) like the New York *Tribune* and the *Times*.

gather] the latest news from all quarters simultaneously with the metropolitan press,” the *Republican* promised that, in 1859, “[t]he whole range of popular American and English literature will be searched for choice tales and bits of poetry and spicy miscellany to secure to every sheet a welcome in every household.” While each of these new features helped double subscription rates over the following two years, it was the “choice” literary selections that would ensure the paper’s appeal.⁴²

Though literary editor Josiah Holland was originally the authority on these “choice tales and bits of poetry,” he was not for long. In fact, Holland had been for some time planning his exit. As Bowles confided in a letter to friend Charles Allen in October 1857, “Holland is ready with an offer to vacate, & go into a literary and lecturing life - He really wants to resign his place, he chafes under the drudgery & responsibility” (2).⁴³ Though Holland continued to contribute pieces to the paper until about 1864, as Bowles biographer George Merriam tells us, “after 1857, he gradually diverted his labors into lecturing and book-writing” (202). To fulfill the brunt of the

⁴² Circulation grew from around 11,000 to over 25,000 subscribers (daily and weekly combined) from 1858 to 1862, which put it well above all other New England periodicals, excepting the cheaper Boston dailies. The paper’s commitment to providing original literature and correspondence by popular New England writers meant other daily and weekly papers, as well as popular monthly magazines, regularly looked to its pages for material to reprint.

⁴³ Holland’s “offer” was precipitated by Bowles’ brief decamping to Boston in April 1857 to take up position as editor-in-chief at the Boston *Traveler* (his return to the *Republican* would happen less than a year later). In his stead, Holland took over as editor-in-chief of the *Republican*. With this change, Holland’s responsibilities at the paper greatly increased include overseeing all news, politics, and administration at the paper. Bowles relates to Allen that he anticipates having to return to full time work imminently, following Holland’s “offer”: “I hold the matter under advisement, yet I think it is destined to result in my taking hold at once here. I would rather be ‘fancy free’ for a few months or a year longer! But how can a man in these times?” (2). It is possible that Holland’s “offer to vacate” and Bowles’ “holding the matter under advisement” refers to a plan hatched by Holland to bring in Fidelia Cooke as his replacement.

editorial labors in the literary department, at some point in late 1859 Bowles and Holland hired Fidelia Hayward Cooke, whom the *Republican* counted as “decidedly the best female writer of poetry in Western Massachusetts, and the equal of any of her sex in the Commonwealth” (“Trout Fishing in Franklin County”). Well-known to *Republican* readers, Cooke had been contributing to the *Republican* since at least early 1853, and to the *New York Tribune*, *The Liberator*, and *Godey’s* prior to that, under the name Mrs. F. H. Cooke, or simply F. H. C. To Holland, at least, Cooke had always been more than just a scribbling woman. One of the first of Cooke’s poems to be published in the *Republican*, “Our vaunted wisdom dwells” (1853) was prefaced with an editorial note comparing her, as Lydia Sigourney was so often compared, to British Poetess Felicia Hemans: “The following poetic gem from the pen of Mrs COOKE, communicated to the *Republican*, is worthy of the muse of Mrs Hemans.” In Holland’s celebrated *History of Western Massachusetts* (1855), which was serialized in the *Republican* before it was bound in a volume, Cooke is praised as a Poetess of the highest degree, though this praise is characteristically tempered by Holland’s instructive tone:

[The town of] Wendell is honored also in being the residence of the most gifted and graceful poetess living in Western Massachusetts...Her contributions to the *Springfield Republican*, for the last few years, have been copied by the press throughout the Union. Mrs. Cooke has not yet undertaken a poetical task equal to her powers, now in their fresh maturity, and the past, though bright as a performance, is brighter as a promise. (458)⁴⁴

⁴⁴ This impressive history was first serialized in the *Republican* between January 1854 and February 1855. Whether Cooke and Holland were, at that time, acquainted much beyond their professional relationship of editor and contributing poet is unclear. This description of Cooke seems to have been influenced by another more interesting and detailed description of Cooke that appears in an unsigned article printed in

Although the exact dates of Cooke's appointment as literary editor are unclear, she was employed by the paper from late 1859 until late 1867, first as editorial assistant under Holland (1859–1860), then literary editor (1860–1865), and then travel correspondent (1866–1867).⁴⁵ In November 1861, about a year and a half after Cooke began working with the paper, the *Republican* made an official announcement that a “lady writer of accomplished talents and literary experience” had joined “the editorial corps of the paper” (“The Springfield Republican”).⁴⁶

the *Republican* in 1853. The piece, almost certainly written by Bowles, recounts a horseback tour and fishing trip in Western Massachusetts, during which the editor visited Cooke's house: “The gifted poetess...We account her decidedly the best female writer of poetry in Western Massachusetts, and the equal of any of her sex in the Commonwealth.... Mrs. Cooke unlike many a child of genius, looks the lady and appears the woman that she is. To a fine dark eye, a well and strongly molded face and open brow, she adds the grace of most agreeable personal manners, and the charms of happily adjusted conversational powers. There, upon that hill, and where from the nature of her location she can enjoy but little sympathetic society, she has drawn around her the society of books, and, in the discharge of household and neighborly duties, loves the life whose ideal, in broken fragments of song, find their way occasionally from her pen to the world”(2). If this was in fact written by Bowles, then Cooke's relationship to the editors of the paper would seem to have been as personal as it was professional.

⁴⁵ Merriam provides a vague timeline (388). My dates are supported by the convergence of census records (beginning with the U.S. federal census, July 27, 1860); Springfield post office notices printed in the *Republican* (beginning May 1, 1860); staff retrospectives of the *Republican* under Bowles (*SR* Special on the *Republican*, Dec 8, 1888; “Death of William R. Pomeroy”); Samuel Bowles' letters (to Mary Bowles and to Charles Allen, Amherst College Special Collections; to Austin Dickinson, Houghton Library); and Cooke's travel correspondence for the *Republican* beginning in early 1866.

⁴⁶ This included, alongside Cooke, five other editors: William M. Pomeroy (managing editor), Joseph E. Hood (senior editorial writer), W. S. George (night editor), Tom McGuire (New England local editor), and Holland (nominally as editor). William M. Pomeroy, who recalled being introduced to Cooke as the paper's literary editor when he was hired in May 1861, noted that, “Dr. Holland was still nominally one of the editors and sometimes wrote an article; but lecturing and bookmaking occupied most of his attention, and he was not relied upon for daily work” (qtd. in “Death of William R. Pomeroy”). Beginning Nov 15, 1860, *Republican* house advertisements downgraded Holland's previous title as editor and proprietor to

Alongside this announcement of the new lady literary editor, the *Republican* indicated other changes to the literary aspect of the paper: “The character and numbers of [the *Republican*’s] outside contributors, particularly in the literary department, have been improved; and it is the aim of the proprietors to make this department more completely original and of a higher order, than heretofore.” As an examination of the paper around the time of this announcement reveals, the *Republican* began to make significant changes to its layout, such that poetry, instead of being indistinctly scattered between articles in the paper as it was during the 1850s, was now primarily housed under separate sections, with original poetry distinctly featured. A section devoted to “Original Poetry” in the *Republican* first appeared on January 7, 1860, and was included thereafter on Saturdays, occasionally during the week, and also in the weekly edition of the paper. This new section included two to three poems or, very rarely, one long poem, mostly by authors native to New England. It was usually printed in the top left corner of page 2, 4, or 6. Occasionally, when the paper received large submissions of original poetry, there would often be two sections of “Original Poetry” in one Saturday issue. During 1860, a separate section of “Selected Poetry” also appeared in occasional Saturday issues, increasing between 1861 and 1863 to at least one section every Saturday, with the odd offering during the week, presumably if space permitted. “Selected Poetry” featured reprinted poems from celebrated United States and international authors, which lent a more worldly face to the regional paper. These layout changes are maintained through 1864, after which these sections appear only

celebrated *contributor* who, “continues connected both to the editorial and proprietary departments of the paper; and his pen constantly enriches its columns” (“The Springfield Republican”). The fact that they do not mention Cooke until late 1861 suggests an effort to appease the many readers who followed Holland’s popular articles.

occasionally, and poetry returns to being more indistinctly scattered among the *Republican* articles and a less distinguished feature in the paper overall.

Though no direct evidence links Cooke's hand to these layout changes, her growing editorial responsibilities coincide with the paper's increased literary commitments between 1860 and 1864, and her presence as the in-house literary editor during this time places Cooke in the midst of the chafing "drudgery and responsibility" that Holland was so eager to escape. Like Holland before her, Cooke's duties included not only writing literary editorials and reviewing new books, but also the relative tedium of scanning the literary monthlies and the exchange papers for poems "of a higher order" to fill the *Republican's* "Selected Poetry" section, as well as selecting, editing, and organizing the original submissions for the "Original Poetry" section. Cooke was hired to do this work at her own desk, in the large editorial room of the *Republican* building alongside senior male editorial writers, which was highly unusual for a woman at the time.⁴⁷ Where examples of women in comparable positions (i.e., employed as an editor at a major daily newspaper) exist, these women do not tend to work at the office alongside male editors. Margaret Fuller (1810–1850), for instance, who served as literary editor from 1844–46 at the *New York Tribune* under Horace Greeley, and who perhaps comes closest to Cooke in her responsibilities, worked outside of the *Tribune* offices. As Fuller scholar Catherine C. Mitchell notes, "Fuller did not work in the office. Instead she wrote at home and dropped her writing off at the newspaper office" (40). Mitchell argues that this had less to do with Fuller's temperament, as has been suggested, and more to do with the fact that, "[i]n the 1840s a woman risked her reputation if she worked in an office because offices were a part of the public sphere reserved for men. Not until the Civil War, fifteen years later, did office work become acceptable for women"

⁴⁷ As Herbert L. Bridgeman, former City Editor at the *Republican* (1864-?) reports, Cooke's desk was "in the corner behind a screen and looking out over Main Street" ("City Editor Whole Staff in Early Days").

(40). Before 1865, women were virtually absent from the editorial rooms of major metropolitan and provincial daily newspapers in the U.S.⁴⁸ Where women did serve in editorial capacities at daily newspapers, as editorial assistants or editors in their own right, they were often filling voids left by dead husbands, brothers, or fathers, and their editorial work was often temporary and limited to administrative work. Where women had significant editorial responsibility, it was invariably at quarterly or weekly newspapers that had fringe agendas and limited circulations, as in the cases of Frances Wright (1795–1852), who co-edited (with Robert Dale Owen) the New Harmony colony’s weekly, *Free Enquirer*; Lydia Maria Child, who served as editor of the *American Anti-Slavery Society’s National Anti-Slavery Standard* from 1840-43; and Mary Ann Shadd Cady, who published and edited the *Provincial Freeman* from 1853-57.⁴⁹ As an in-house literary editor directly involved in the day-to-day operation and publication of a major daily newspaper, Cooke’s responsibilities were extensive and by all accounts matched those of her male peers. In fact, between 1861 and 1863, when Cooke’s superior, editor-in-chief Samuel Bowles, was on extensive and repeated sick leaves, Cooke realized an autonomy in her role as literary editor that may have surpassed even that of her male peers.⁵⁰

In addition to the coincidence of Cooke’s employment and the paper’s new literary focus, the paper’s selected and original offerings show a marked favoring of women’s work—especially New England women’s poetry—during what we might call Cooke’s peak in responsibility and

⁴⁸ For an extensive list of U.S. women editors in the nineteenth century, see Okker, appendix. For an extensive early history of newspaper women before 1861, see Stanton et al., 43–49. Neither of these surveys mentions Cooke.

⁴⁹ For a recent discussion of Frances Wright’s pioneering work as an editor, see Karcher.

⁵⁰ Bowles took sporadic and often lengthy absences from the paper between 1861–1863, due to ongoing sciatica flare-ups, chronic dyspepsia, and general exhaustion. As Bowles’ letters to his wife and daughter make clear, Cooke had regular contact with his household and was asked to manage his personal mail.

autonomy from 1861-63. Previously, under Holland, the *Republican* had published fewer original poems and more reprints, and poetry written by men comprised most of the “choice” selections. As late as 1860, moreover, immediately subsequent to the *Republican*’s new commitment to originality, women’s poetry was included under “Selected Poetry” only a third of the time, and comprised less than half of the “Original Poetry” section, on average. Beginning in 1861, however, there is a notable gender shift: “Selected Poetry” reaches near parity in the numbers of poems by men and women, and “Original Poetry” features three times as many poems written by women. This trend is maintained through 1863 and then levels off to relative parity in 1864, when poetry on the whole becomes a less distinguished feature in the paper. In other words, during Cooke’s peak years as literary editor, the majority of poems published in the *Republican* were written (and signed) by women, and the majority of those women were regionally based. New Englanders predominate, including Luella Clark (1832–1915), Nancie A. W. Priest (1836–1870), Margarette McNary Spencer (1810–1886), Mary E. (Wilcox) Alvord (1831–1900), Kate B. W. Barnes (“Kate Cameron”) (1836–1873), Rose Terry Cooke (1827–1892), and, of course, Emily Dickinson (1830–1886), albeit anonymously. Cooke’s own poetry frequently appears at the top of the “Original Poetry” section, and occasionally under “Selected Poetry,” over the byline F. H. C..

As a New England woman poet herself, Cooke would have had a personal interest in seeing the “overall character and numbers of outside contributors, especially in the literary department” improve in her favor. Likewise, her advocacy of women poets and women’s literary work, a fact that is borne out through many of her *Republican* contributions, suggests her inclination to shape such a transformation. Cooke’s editorial on Elizabeth Barrett Browning on July 20, 1861 provides a case in point. Printed as the *Republican*’s official response to the death of the “poetess” (“Elizabeth Barrett Browning”) on June 29 of that year, the piece includes a review

of Browning's *Aurora Leigh* that entirely revises the *Republican*'s prior opinion of the poem, which was outlined in an editorial on January 1, 1857, when the work was selected as "the poem of the year" ("Aurora Leigh").⁵¹ This earlier review, which was likely written by Holland (though possibly Bowles), and which appears in the first column on the front page of the paper, offers backhanded praise of the poem: "Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the poetess, and the wife of a poet, has borne a child, and though endowed with feminine name, it is a man child—fair, open browed, and with a shapely frame, well knit together. It is the poem of the year" ("Aurora Leigh"). Calling the work a "child" and calling Browning the "wife of a poet," the review attempts to domesticate the work, and make it more credible as "womanly" in origin. But the work is so incredibly a "man child" from the pen of a woman, and so abnormal as to be practically monstrous, that it is determined not to have "within it the elements of a classic." The

⁵¹ Both editorials are unsigned and thus represent the opinion of *Republican* as a whole. Thomas L. Nichols, in *Forty Years of American Life* (1864), states that "[i]n France, every article must bear the signature of the writer, of someone who takes responsibility for the article. In America, as a rule, the opinions of a paper are attributed to the responsible editor" (1:303). As Catherine Mitchell notes, this rule was often broken by *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley, who insisted his associate editors be periodically distinguished from him, as in the case of Margaret Fuller's star byline. In Bowles' *Republican*, bylines were added only when it directly contributed to the reader's positive opinion of the paper, to cultivate personal relationships with the reader, or to foster a greater sense of New England community. For Holland's dedicated columns, and for all correspondent pieces, bylines were a matter of course. Bylines were also provided for literature by well-known poets and regular contributors. For pieces by unknown authors, often the New-England town or city would serve as the byline. For reprints, the name of the original publication usually served as a byline, alongside the name of the author if particularly famous. Bylined pieces correspond roughly to all work written outside of the *Republican* offices. All other pieces, including all national and local news, general editorials, literary reviews, and religious articles, contained no bylines. Evidence of Cooke's authorship of the 1861 editorial is given by Samuel Bowles in a letter to his wife Mary, on July 24, 1861: "Don't forget Mrs. Cook[e] in my remembrances; her notice of Mrs. Browning was very good" (qtd. in Merriam 324).

Republican is, in the final analysis, “sorry to conclude that *it* is the poem of a year” (my emphasis). In stark contrast, Cooke’s piece, instead of reading the “genius and marvelous power” of Barrett Browning’s work as unnervingly masculine, claims that “her power is largely drawn from those feminine sources, love and sorrow” (“Elizabeth Barrett Browning”). Throughout her editorial, Cooke links Barrett Browning’s poetic genius to a feminine essence, describing her as having “a woman’s quick insight into truth through feeling rather than thought” and “instinctive flashes of perception that pierce through social disguises to the palpitating heart.” Deliberately countering the sentiments of the *Republican*’s first review, Cooke suggests not only that Barrett Browning’s greatest work was a woman child, but that nothing like it could ever be written by a man: “the enlarged affections of a wife and mother added much to her poetical power. Aurora Leigh, the longest and best of her poems, could never have been written without this domestic experience.”

As nineteenth-century newspapers did not typically assign bylines to contributions from editorial team members, who were understood to form the collective voice of the paper, Cooke’s vision of the woman poet, and more generally of women’s position in relation to men, offers an important clue for distinguishing her contributions in the *Republican*, especially apart from Holland’s work before 1862, when he was still nominally connected to the editorial department of the paper. One interesting early exchange in 1858 is suggestive of differences between Cooke’s and Holland’s attitudes toward women and also may illuminate why Cooke was hired to work at the *Republican*. On Saturday January 2, 1858, the *Republican* printed the first of many of Holland’s “Timothy Titcomb’s Letters to Young Men,” which would eventually be collected along with his letters to “Young Women,” and letters to “Young Married People” into one best-selling volume, *Titcomb’s Letters to Young People, Single and Married* (1858). “Timothy Titcomb” was Holland’s not-so-secret pseudonym under which he wrote highly popular moralistic essays, offering

unsolicited instruction and advice to people on love, life, and moral upbringing. The first of these was advice to young men on the most beneficial way to choose a wife:

Inspiration to a higher and purer life always comes from above a man, and female society can only elevate and purify a man when it is higher and purer than he is.

In the element of purity I doubt not that women generally are superior to men, but it is very largely a negative or unconscious element, and has not the power and influence of a positive virtue. Therefore whenever you seek female society, as agency in the elevation of your tastes, the preservation of your morals, and the improvement of your mind, seek for that which is above you...never content yourself the idea of having a common-place wife. You want one who will stimulate you, stir you up, keep you moving, joke you on your weak points, and make something of you.

As “Titcomb” continues, he explains why choosing to marry a woman superior to oneself should be so important for a man: “After marriage, as a general thing, the woman ceases to acquire. She is absorbed in family cares,” while the man “grows and matures, and in ten years from the date of his marriage, he becomes, in reality, a new man.” Thus, “a woman ought to have a long start of man, and then, ten to one, the old man will come out ahead, in the race of life.”

Six weeks later, on February 20, 1858, Titcomb’s usual column was temporarily usurped by “A Delicate and Womanly Criticism” of Titcomb, that had arrived as a “Letter to the Editor” that week. The letter began somewhat acerbically: “Those who read the pungent letters of this venerable man have doubtless a warm sense of their merits; mine be the task of looking out their defect: a task doubly agreeable, since people love disparagement and brevity.” To Titcomb’s advice in the matter of choosing a woman superior to him, the letter retorts “this advice has little practical bearing, since it is safe to say that all respectable young women are in some degree

superior to any given young man.” This “delicate and womanly” critic then directly questions the ground for Titcomb’s reasoning, as she has read it, that “women degenerate, socially, in the maturer years of life, and, what is more remarkable, faster than their brothers! Is this inevitable?”

She continues:

The point claimed is that domestic cares are narrowing in an eminent degree. On the contrary, they are enabling, because essentially unselfish. The wife and mother labors *directly* for the benefit of those she loves, while the husband’s profession attains that end *indirectly*, and he is in considerable danger of forgetting the end in the means...a woman’s intellect is quicker than her brother’s. It bears to it the relation of the diameter to the circumference. While a man is slowly creeping round the gradual curve, her intuitions have flashed like lightening from point to point, and reached the goal before him. She can therefore afford to dispense with the severer training that he finds so needful. Will T.T. in his letters to young ladies advise them to accept the companionship of their inferiors for the other sex?

The writer goes on to question two other letters of advice, gently highlighting the bias and shortcomings of the idealistic and absolutist position from which “Titcomb” speaks. She calls for a more pragmatic, just, and thereby more effective counseling of “our young friends,” each of whom, not unlike their mentors, has “plenty of failings which are peculiarly his own.” Not only is this letter followed with the byline “F.,” which is suggestive in itself; it also reads much like the editorials and reviews that can be identified as written by Fidelia Cooke.

Cooke’s prose, though confident, is much less pedantic and patronizing than Holland, and her opinions are almost never expressly negative. Not exactly a proponent of equal rights for women as Elizabeth Cady Stanton was championing, Cooke’s brand of women’s rights, similar to Sarah Josepha Hale’s, relied upon the conventional and liberal Christian belief in the

distinctive yet complementary powers of the male and female sex: emotional (feminine) and rational (masculine) intelligence, respectively. This largely essentialist belief was borne out not only in the literary selections Cooke made for the paper, but also in her literary reviews and more contemplative editorials, especially where these reveal her opinion of women's work. Coupled with Cooke's duties and autonomy as literary editor between 1861 and 1863, her support of women's work made her an influential force in shifting the literary character of the paper toward a more feminine ethos.

Newspaper culture during this time—the first three years of the Civil War—certainly helped Cooke achieve this. As Faith Barrett notes, “the war . . . heightened Americans’ commitment to the discursive strategies of poetry” (2); it also heightened their reliance on newspaper poetry to communicate their responses and mediate their reception of the day's war news. As mentioned above, the *Republican* matched the big metropolitan dailies in delivering the earliest news by telegraph. As daily doses of increasingly devastating news during the first years of the Civil War threatened to overwhelm the *Republican's* readership, the literary department offered readers a certain balance. Under Cooke, the *Republican* palliated the negative emotions of war-weary readers through the material positioning of topical, affectively soothing poetry in contiguous relation to frontline Civil War reports. Cooke, who was especially attuned to the affective power of women's verse, ensured that regional women poets like herself supplied the frontline of this rhetoric. If, as Eliza Richards has argued, “[p]oetry served a crucial role in negotiating a crisis of representation, both political and poetic, instigated by the war” (“How News” 158), Cooke gave regional women poets the edge on such negotiations. It was in the midst of these negotiations that two of Dickinson's poems were selected and edited by Cooke to fit alongside other “bits of poetry” that would perform this rhetorical work. This integration of

Dickinson's poetry into what was very much Cooke's *Republican* at the time played a crucial role in the Republican's shifting epistolary relation to Dickinson.

Offering "The May-Wine"

The first instance of this shift occurs on May 4, 1861, when an edited version of Dickinson's "I taste a liquor never brewed - " (F 207) was printed in the *Republican* as "The May-Wine."

Dickinson's poem represents one of seven original poems printed in the paper that day, and one of five penned by regional women writers. Poetry in this particular issue is spread over three non-consecutive pages. On page 1, a few brief excerpts of poetry are embedded within a report on war preparations by New York women, from Washington correspondent Mary Clemmer Ames, to rouse and mythologize women's war relief efforts. Additional poetry appears on page 6: an excerpt from an elegy for a soldier taken from New York monthly, *The Knickerbocker*, which is included among selected miscellany, and an "Original Poetry" section with three war poems. Finally, a second section of "Original Poetry" featuring four additional poems, less focused on recent war events, is printed on page 8. Dickinson's poem appears last in this section. Although "The May-Wine" is not explicitly war-themed, it participates in the rhetoric of women's original poetry in the paper, which mediates the reader's experience of the news by creating affective resolution.

Directly addressing the political and moral divisions that led to the war, each of the original poems on page 6 attempts to bring the battle lines between the North and the South into high moral relief. Leading this effort in the "Original Poetry" section at the top left corner of the page is a poem by Cooke, "What Fell With the Flag at Sumter" (byline: F. H. C.) (Fig. 2.2).

The Republican.

ORIGINAL POETRY.

What Fell with the Flag at Sumter.
The Nation's flag waved over Sumter's fort,
Guarding a fair and favored port,
Queen of the sunny South, with regal dower;
Beneath the shelter of those loyal guns
Gathered the chivalry, both sires and sons,
And daughters lending grace to hall and bower
Like their own passion-flower.

What dawn is this? The battle's sulphurous glare
Breaks on the morning air.
Its dewy waves by deadly din are stirred;
No echoes of the sweet voiced mocking-bird,
But war's deep thunder, roar of shot and shell,
And all the terrible enginery of hell.

Fear not, fair city! In the seaward view
Floats yon proud flag against the dome of blue:
Ye have a guard within those fortress walls
Of warriors who have sworn when danger calls
To keep the foe from your imperilled halls.
Fear not: those veterans are tried and true.

True? Yes, but ye are false:
Ye throw the treacherous shots, with dastard hand,
Among that patriot band.
Faster and fiercer, too, O shame of shame!
Your missiles bleed with the devouring flames,
Till, in your frenzy suicidal grown,
Ye have destroyed your own!

Yes; more than ever ye have hoped or feared
Fall with the Nation's flag from Sumter's wall:
Habit of peaceful years endeared,
Old forms and precedents revered,
Pleading for slavery all.

Ye spurn the Union, though her honored laws
Alone have pledged us to your sinking cause,
Shattering the tie whose fragile bond retains
Your slave slaves in chains.

Beware! or ye may hear a voice like Fate's
Rell shuddering through the still United States,
Abolishing us forever from the vow
Broken by treachery now!

F. H. C.

Our Nation's Flag.

Aye, give that banner to the breeze,
The glorious banner of the free;
And let the brave old stars and stripes
Wave o'er our heads right gallantly.
A battle-shout is on the air,
And brave, true hearts are beating high,
Once more to rally 'neath thy folds,
Thou dear old flag of Liberty!

Fondly we give thee to the winds,
The flag which o'er our fathers waved,
When they, said peril's darkest hour,
The holy ark of Freedom saved.
The patriot sons of patriot sires,
To-day we shout their battle cry,
And swear, before our fathers' God,
To freemen live, or freemen die.

Joyful we give thee to the winds,
For stainless is each gleaming fold,
As true to Freedom's sacred cause
As when on Bunker-hill unrolled:
No traitor's dark, polluting touch,
No damning stain of slavery there;
Still shining bright, with Freedom's light,
It floats unsullied on the air.

Once more beneath thy stars and stripes,
Old Massachusetts' sons shall go,
To wield their might for truth and right,
Against the fierce besieging foe:
The worthy sons of glorious sires,
They lift to thee a fearless eye,
And, calling on their fathers' God,
Will freemen live and freemen die.

Hartford, April 22.

To Arms

Oh Heaven! does Columbia reel?
Yes, Freedom cries for northern steel!
Must traitors make their work complete?
New England's hills shall crumble first!
Great God! her granite rocks would burst,
Should they be trod by fettered feet.

Thank God, at last there is a North!
Then let her cannon thunder forth
Until their smoky lips grow white:
Let statesmen tremble as they may,
But high above the bloody fray
God's mighty hand directs the fight.

Rutland, O.

C. W.

ence; yet when she was sad or thoughtful he never harmonized with her more pensive mood. At first he put her aside when she appealed to him, with good-natured small talk and playful caresses. At length, when he thought her babyish exactions grew upon her, he sat down gravely by her side, and deliberately explained to her his crude philosophy of life.

"Amy," said he, "you often come to me with your little troubles and fancies and depressions, and you seem to expect me to enter into your feelings and comfort you in some way, I don't understand exactly how. Now we may as well have an understanding on this subject: first as last. You know that I love you, that I would do anything in my power to protect or aid you. If you want money, if you want help, if you want any distinct, tangible gift or performance from me,—speak your wishes and they will, very probably, be realized. But if you want sympathy and soft words and childish petting, I may as well tell you at once that you want what I have not to give. If there is anything for me to do, tell me, and it shall be done, but I cannot go back to baby-talk, not even to give you pleasure."

Amy listened and her face grew white. After a pause she answered, speaking slow and painfully: "I think I understand your meaning. You do not wish me to come to you in my troubles, either physical or mental, unless you can do something for me. You do not wish me to look to you, hereafter, merely for sympathy and kind words."

"That's it; you understand it." "Well, then, Marshall, let me beg that you will understand me. I think I can do this that you request of me. I think I can break myself, at once and forever, of looking to you for sympathy in the minor trials of life. But if I do this I shall certainly think less of you. I shall shut my heart up, away from you; you will be outside of it and not within. I suppose I can do this and yet live, but I am quite sincere when I tell you I would rather die."

Marshall Sterne looked down upon her quivering lips with a smile of superior wisdom.

"You are a little excited, now," said he, "and you exaggerate everything according to your foolish, feminine way. You will make this sacrifice, to please me; and you won't cease to care for me: that is impossible."

"Don't deceive yourself, I beg," replied the wife. "It is not only possible, but certain."

"Well, well, suppose we try it and see," responded the husband with a smile of superb incredulity. "Set about the reserve and the indifference just as soon as you like. Only understand that this namby-pamby sentimentalism of which you are so fond is what I never can give you. It isn't in me, and you must just manage to be content without it."

Now, with all his boasted masculine wisdom, Marshall Sterne was quite as apt to use exaggerated expressions as his wife, and in this very dialogue he had said, unconsciously, a great deal more than he meant. Besides, whatever he might have had the absurdity to mean at the time, a wife of many years experience would have known better than to believe him. A bright, genial, hopeful woman would have recognized the incredulity, his smile, and said in her secret heart: "Very well, my friend. Console yourself with your absurd theories as long as they please you. Meantime, I shall achieve the impossible." And the generality of women would have forgotten all about it, and teased him, after a few days' reserve, with as many appeals for sympathy as ever. But, unhappily for herself, Amy's was an exceptional nature. She verily thought that he had spoken, as he intimated, once for all. Not the less because it was bitter, she accepted his decision as the rule of her future life. For many years an orphan, brought up by a maiden aunt, she knew little of manhood at any age. She had no conception of the softening changes wrought by time and sorrow, or even by the one fact of perpetual feminine companionship. "Experience worketh hope." Hers was the inexperience that only wrought despair. So she did what, very fortunately, not one woman in fifty would have done; she put down her swelling heart and forbade it to ask for the sympathy of her wedded lover ever any more. "I will do all I can for him," she said, magnanimously, "but I will ask no more in return than if I were his guardian angel."

It was a pretty idea, but by no means a practicable one. Women are not angels, and they never love long without return, except in obedience to a tyrannous instinct which forms the exception and not the rule. Amy was no exception. She soon learned to regard her husband with a calm, dispassionate friendship. She served him from duty only, and he accepted her service and went rejoicing on his way. In the Pearl of Orr's Island, the unfinished story of Mrs. Stowe, is a passage which applies to our young friends at this stage of their experience:—

"All that was developed of him at present was a fund of energy, self-esteem, hope, courage and daring; the love of life, action and adventure. His life was in the outward and present, not the inward and reflective. If ever two people thus organized are thrown into intimate relations, it follows from the very laws of their being that one must hurt the other, simply by being itself; one must always hunger for what the other has not to give."

body that the mind is tem trembling with w cannot always trans tions of a vigorous harmonious relation his imprisoned soul. cation was in the ha mal dispatches were erted. You and I, p too well. Marshall S the lesson; but he in comments of a pain sat in his uneasy chai the room in the qui watching her in sile tion in his large blue question, and her he united these half-dis have lived without hi not live without her; of physical vigor, hi peal for sympathy an were not lightly put a few years standi nature. Besides, th softening heart a dim Time and experience change in Marshall t possible; a change might materially ha hearted obedience di tide of life never flo these two wedded frie cially what they had each other. But th Through the grave m fully rectified at las ment of a broader an

If this were not a tr close with the usual happiness, and restor lished health. But benignant than the s a vision that looks l in its full symmetry their first intimacy changed. Their muts had wrought througl row into joy. Each future experience, t ether. Was the wor by death; indeed p effectually softened l of incurable disea; ment could have fu manhood to the too has not been a lively from whose grave t structive lesson; ev tears may grow to y

WHAT SHALL I

What shall we na portant question tha of his newspaper. l the baby's mother, i to name the baby, future career. An body can have a car from other bodies b has not always enjo baby. This office, i time to her—it has right to read the ne Among the Oris that the father also child, and then only old times, had but c of his grandfather; of the father. Rom like manner. With there arose a fashio grew out of family privileges of Roman seem to have origin cating, among other fluence in the ming name with that of i

But a study of su import to the quest baby? Let us see l answered. In Pola Christianity, all the Paul, and all the w The Italians seem although the counn ought to say,) the s Roman history and frequently resorted Orpheus, and Cesa Augustine or any o ender. The poets f such as Tasso, G Laura. England, i circle, prefers name their own. France, its names in the wo the baptismal name tensive enough, an the mother entirely. to much extent

Figure 2.2 "Original Poetry," *Springfield Republican* 4 May 1861: 6. Courtesy, Archives & Special Collections, Amherst College.

Responding to the Confederate siege of Fort Sumter three weeks prior, on April 12, 1861, which marked the beginning of the Civil War, the poem presents a detached, prophetic, and something of a Shakespearean commentary on the siege, drawing out the irony of the South's "treachery" in "spurn[ing] the Union":

Ye throw the treacherous shots with dastard hand.

Among that patriot band.

Faster and fiercer, too, O shame of shames!

Your missiles blend with the devouring flames,

Till, in your frenzy suicidal grown,

Ye have destroyed your own!

Yes; more than ever ye have hoped or feared

Fall with the Nation's flag from Sumter's wall:

Habits by peaceful years endeared,

Old forms and precedents revered,

Pleading for slavery all.

Ye spurn the Union, though her honored laws

Alone have pledged us to your sinking cause,

Shattering the tie whose fragile bond retains

Your sable slaves in chains. (21–35)

In spurning the Union, the final stanza argues, Confederates also spurned the Union's "honored laws," including its toleration of slavery in the South. "Shattering the tie," Confederates effectively "absolv[ed the North] from the vow" (38) to let the South keep its "Habits of peaceful years endeared, / Old forms and precedents revered, / Pleading for slavery all" (18–20). By this

move, the South and its institutions have “suicidal grown,” their “sinking cause” for slavery all but drowned. Though Cooke problematically and too nobly casts “honored laws” as the only thing binding the North to the Southern slave trade, turning Northern complacency into a kind of twisted martyrdom, the North is not represented as righteous here.

Absolution for the North is mentioned in terms of a warning to the South, not in terms of a certain heaven-ordained fate:

Beware: or ye may hear a voice like Fate’s

Bell shuddering through the still United States

Absolving us forever from the vow

Broken by treachery now! (35-39)

Though Cooke, speaking on behalf of the North, shirks any direct complicity with slavery, she does not affirm the North’s infallibility. For Cooke, the fact of the siege offers only the first opportunity for a cleaner line between Northern and Southern interests and a clearer signal of the Union’s stand against slavery. Relative to the other war poems in this issue of the paper, Cooke’s representation of the situation is relatively nuanced and neither side is untarnished. The poem just below Cooke’s, for example, titled “Our Nation’s Flag,” (byline: Hatfield, April 22), speaks to the same event, but is stark in its glorification of the “stainless” (18) Union and in its representation of the timelessness of the battle: the righteous Union cause (“the holy ark of Freedom saved” [12]) vs. the evil Confederate cause (“fierce besieging foe” [28]). The poem just below “Our Nation’s Flag,” entitled “To Arms” (byline: Ravenna, O. / C. H.), tells a similar and only slightly less dramatic good vs. evil story: “Let statesmen tremble as they may, / But high above the bloody fray, / God’s mighty hand directs the fight” (10-12).

Though dealing with the same subject as Cooke’s poem, both “Our Nation’s Flag” and “To Arms” in their claims that the hand of God holds (and has always held) the Union flag,

contrast with Cooke's more detached and considered meditation on the South's strategic failure. This contrast is also echoed in the binary rhetoric expressed in Henry Ward Beecher's Sunday sermon on the flag, transcribed and printed on the same page: "I thank them that they took another flag for such work. I thank them that they took another flag to do the devil's work, and left our flag to do God Almighty's work. (Applause—suppressed)" Cooke's poem, neither as reactive nor as righteous as Beecher's sermon, invokes the sentiment expressed a few weeks earlier in Barrett Browning's letter to the *Independent*, excerpted in the *Republican* on April 1, 1861, which Cooke selected for the paper. Rallying the North to fight, not in order to smite the devil but because "that fine madness of the South, which is God's gift to the world in these latter days" can bring "the reconstitution everywhere of political justice and national right." The preface to the excerpt, written by Cooke, calls Browning's letter "the illustration of a thought which must have occurred to every reflective student of history." Taking a leading role in mediating the news of the siege, "What Fell With the Flag at Sumter" attempts to bring the same "illustration of a thought" to bear on the less reflective, more affectively charged regional response, including the surrounding editorials, poems, and sermon. In doing so, Cooke's poem fulfills her own ideal of balanced writing, which she outlined in an editorial "When Should We Write," that was published in the *Republican* on July 7, 1860. In this editorial, Cooke speaks directly to women writers, imploring them not to rush into writing with the wound still fresh, noting that for poetry to be really powerful, "the lacerated bosom must first be healed, ere it can gladden other natures with the overflowings of a healthful life."

On page 8, the second "Original Poetry" section as a whole carries forward from Cooke's balanced and reflective response into a more "healthful" affective poetry, particularly if the poems are read in sequence (Fig. 2.3). Each of the four poems printed here is written by a regional woman, beginning with "War," by Mary Wilcox (byline: *State Line, Mass., April 28*.

MARY E. WILCOX), followed by “Consolation,” by Margarette McNary Spencer (byline: BY M. MCNARY SPENCER. *Collinsville, Ct.*), “Honorias Child” by Maine writer Caroline A. Howard (byline: By Caroline A. HOWARD. *April 1861*), and Dickinson’s poem, “The May-Wine,” which was printed anonymously and without a byline. Echoing the line of reasoning in Cooke’s poem, Wilcox’s poem does not draw simple binary lines around the North and South. Whereas Cooke’s poem speaks to the “fair city” (14) beyond Sumter, astonished that “ye are false!” (20), Wilcox’s poem speaks to the “awakening North,” but like Cooke, demonizes fratricide in the country rather than demonizing the South itself:

Oh! My country, fair and broad!
What just curse has fallen from God,
That before thy pleasant gates
Anarchy, the Demon waits?
Towards thy bosom point the guns
Of thy own rebellious sons;
High their reptile ensign waves
O’er thy fallen patriots’ graves,
While thy flag, by hands unjust,
Torn, dishonored, lies in dust,
Trampled by insurgent tides
Of relentless fratricides. (1–12)

In a seeming corrective to what Cooke bemoans as the “literature of misery” in the editorial mentioned above, the three poems that follow Wilcox’s quickly move the reader away from the miserable scene through an increasingly consolatory experience, beginning with Spencer’s aptly titled “Consolation.” For readers who have read both the previous poems and the surrounding news, Spencer’s poem serves up prayer-like relief:

Not in Grief’s deepest streams alone, O Lord,

Our need of grace is;

But in the shallow pools we daily ford,

Earth’s commonplaces.

.....

And half-rebelling, slow of heart, we brave

Each evil doubled;

Unwilling to believe God’s angels have

The waters troubled.

.....

Our souls take courage at some great demand,

Self-sacrificing,

But when the motive power is low, thy hand

Lend energizing;

So that we lose not heart and purpose quite,

But feel rather,

Though walking ‘neath the cloud that makes the night,

Thou are Our Father. (1–4; 13–16; 25–32)

As Spencer's poem creates an affective balm that works to counter-balance the effects of newspaper's sharp and mostly negative war news on the reader, Howard's poem develops the remedial sentiment through "Honorias Child," which, even further removed from the battle-front, focuses the reader's attention through four structured septets on the features of a living child, who reminds the speaker of someone lost:

Dark, dewy eyes,
Wherein a slumb'rous shadow lies,
As on twin violets at set of sun,—
I see from your far depths arise
The smile, all pensive tenderness, of one
Whose day went down the western skies
Ere half its golden hours their course had run. (1–7)

Recognizing in the child's features and voice the spirit of the beloved, now deceased, Howard's speaker comes to a happy thought, "Thou speakest yet! I am not *all* alone" (21) and anticipates reunion in a life beyond death.

The consolatory effect of these poems seems to culminate in "The May-Wine" (Fig. 2.4), which evokes a final reeling faith in life amidst precipitous change:

The May-Wine.
I taste a liquor never brewed,
From tankards scooped in pearl;
Not Frankfort berries yield the sense
Such a delicious whirl.

Inebriate of air am I,

And debauchee of dew; -
Reeling through endless summer days,
From inns of molten blue.

When landlords turn the drunken bee
Out of the Fox-glove's door,
When butterflies renounce their drams,
I shall but drink the more;

Till seraphs swing their snowy hats,
And saints to windows run,
To see the little tippler
Come staggering toward the sun.

The poem describes a “little tippler,” akin to a bee or butterfly drunk on the nectar of flowers, but whose “summer days” are endless; however, the poem’s placement on the page also implicitly links it with the poem above. As a “debauchee of dew,” Dickinson’s tippler recalls the speaker in Howard’s poem, who indulges in the memory of a smile arising from the “far depths” of the child’s “Dark, dewy eyes” like “twin violets at set of sun.” Via this link, Dickinson’s tippler echoes, by association, the grieving subject (in Howard’s poem) in need of revelation, the “Self-sacrificing” subject (in Spencer’s poem) in need of faith, the “country fair and broad” (in Wilcox’s poem) in need of justice, and the reader of the news, in need of affective consolation.

ich they go about their al war, and the visible r expect a compromise One Alabama man, ings here, sat down in a e and shed tears. An- r said that he had state of things as he from the South agree what is the real nature e in that section."

SSION.—A writer in that a high degree of ssion, and that this is nd architectural forms. s which do not amount hes in effect, but great- ividual character, and a discovery made by in China:—

en I was in China, just by the allied troops, several other gentle- an old pagoda near ouble in so doing, for every alternate story, g to be ascended by outside of the tower. ured the top story of eated in solemn con- dha, life size, made around them, for no beyond the first story, There, for thousands it gods, waiting, nev- ation of all questions, g into futurity, with itable gaze, that same ain and future hope, Sphinxes, memorials nd a wiser race than d in chaos.

lost his head, which riend, the doctor, was ag for his expedition, lute and active man, with infinite danger ries of the tower had out repair that they pieces. Some days I never beheld more is rough clay figure. ; there was no regu- were of the Indian y no Chinaman. In melody. The eyes le countenance there t pain and suffering, ching. If this man, n Greece, he might ian sculptor; but I face was not supe- o. This face had a so call it. The res- ity which mark the e; no fierce defiance is there, but a gentle

Collinsville, Ct.

Honoria's Child.

BY CAROLINE A. HOWARD.

Dark, dewy eyes,
Wherein a slumb'rous shadow lies,
As on twin violets at set of sun,—
I see from your far depths arise
The smile, all pensive tenderness, of one
Whose day went down the western skies
Ere half its golden hours their course had run.

Soft, shining hair,
Parted athwart a baby brow,
Less thoughtful haply, scarcely though less fair,
Than hers whereon is beaming now
Love's light eternal, in a Kingdom where
Cometh no grief nor pain to bow
The spirit, new-born to its native air.

Low, tender tone,
In words or laughter gushing o'er
Two rosy lips, which, as they meet my own,
Electric thrill my heart once more,
As ere Death left that heart an empty throne—
O voice of Love! from that far shore
Thou speakest yet! I am not *all* alone.

Wee, tot'ring feet!
Still in life's way as undefiled
As now, would I might keep you from its heat,
Its dust, from error's thorny wild
Forever free, tiil hand in hand we meet
The loved; I too, as thou, a child
Led upward to the Soul's communion sweet.
April, 1861.

The May-Wine.

I taste a liquor never brewed,
From tankards scooped in pearl;
Not Frankfort berries yield the sense
Such a delirious whirl.

Inebriate of air am I,
And debauchee of dew;—
Reeling through endless summer days,
From inns of molten blue.

When landlords turn the drunken bee
Out of the Fox-glove's door,
When butterflies renounce their drams,
I shall but drink the more;

Till seraphs swing their snowy hats,
And saints to windows run,
To see the little tippler
Come staggering toward the sun.

UNEXPECTED VITALITY.—I have doomed peo- ple, and seen others doom them, over and over again, on the strength of physical signs, and they have lived in the most contumacious and scienti- fically unjustifiable manner as long as they liked, and some of them are living still. I see two men in the street, very often, who were both as good as dead in the opinion of all who saw them in their extremity. People will insist on this

stands in to, Springfield, Windsor, Vt., in place of lows Falls; Oshea Scot gage-master for the Co place of Mr Andrus of F. Leonard of Barton, in of Bellows Falls.

HAMPDEN

N. P. Pratt of Granby mail agent on the Ne Northampton route.

Samuel Douglass ha agent of the town of W fort Gibbs, whose term

HAMPSHI

President Lincoln has ery of California, forme agent at San Francisco.

FRANKLI

The Greenfield Demo Bement of Ashfield wa of deputy sheriff, as c cession doctrines, it n misunderstanding. He flags and getting up m ernment.

BERKSHI

Thomas Hurlbut, of but, paper makers at dence in that town on For nearly forty years l his late partner, C. M. the manufacture of pa pany's influence and have been the means c village of South Lee. of Wethersfield, Ct., a South Lee since March

John Wilson, former Lee paper mills, had hi village on Tuesday, by warehouse and a team

James C. Clapp, son Pittsfield, who has bee to the United States e been appointed by Pr the southern district county of Monroe, an the wrecking district of the most lucrative ment, as well as one o

Chester Tower of Flo the head and spine, o itated into the wheel- of 14 feet, and his rec

EASTERN

A large building fill ed by fire at Charlesto building was owned b loss is \$3000, fully work of an incendiary in the vicinity were d

Charles F. Potter o ed U. S. pension agen The Androscoggia largest mill except on un a large part of its

Figure 2.4 "The May-Wine," *Springfield Republican* 4 May 1861: 8. Courtesy, Archives & Special Collections, Amherst College.

But Dickinson's tippler, as "Inebriate of air . . . / And Debauchee of Dew -," also echoes Emerson's "The Poet" (1844), in which the true poet's "intellect" is "inebriated by nectar"; his "cheerfulness should be the gift of sunlight; the air should suffice for his inspiration, and he should be tipsy with water" (16-17).⁵² In this sense, the "liquor never brewed" describes poetic affect itself, and this is precisely what is offered to *Republican* readers in this poetic series, which is completed with Dickinson's poem. Indeed, Dickinson's poem, framed by the added title "The May-Wine," is presented to readers not simply as the little tippler's exclamation, after all, but as itself the "liquor never brewed," a poetic dram to lift the spirits in the midst of the war news on the first Saturday in May 1861.

Though both "Original Poetry" sections (on pages 6 and 8) are surrounded by news about burgeoning Union forces and war preparations, news on page 8 is especially raw and impactful. As the last page of the paper, it was one of the first pages seen by readers, and especially so given that it housed the latest news telegraphed to the *Republican* on the progress of the war. This section was printed a third time on May 11, 1861, in the weekly edition of the paper. The last three of the four poems in the second "Original Poetry" column from May 4, 1861, are reprinted in the weekly edition at the top left corner of page 6, in the same order as before. In this iteration, however, the poetry section is not surrounded by war news. In addition, the explicit "War" poem (by Wilcox) from the first printing has been omitted, leaving only the more detached sentimental poetry. The weekly edition, as a rule, was put together exclusively by Samuel Bowles on Thursdays, or, when he was away, by Josiah Holland (until 1864). Thus Cooke's involvement in the weekly edition, if any, was probably indirect and negligible; indeed, her editorial hand, so visible in the daily issue, is markedly absent here.

⁵²Jay Leyda makes this connection, suggesting that Dickinson's poem was written in direct response to her reading Emerson's "The Poet" (2:20).

The material context of Bowles' weekly edition negotiates the ethos of women's poetry very differently than the daily edition prepared during Cooke's tenure. Instead of featuring women's original poetry, the weekly edition ghettoizes it, determining spatially and symbolically an upper limit for what women's poetry can do, and to whom and for what it can speak. For instance, directly following the truncated "Original Poetry" section that ends with "The May-Wine," is chapter 6 of Timothy Titcomb's book "Ruminations: Essays on Human Life," which was serialized in the paper that year. This particular chapter discusses Titcomb's (a.k.a. Holland's) conditional support of "woman's rights." Though he is "a firm believer in 'woman's rights'—especially her right to do as she pleases," he also believes that some rights demand too much masculinity to look proper in a woman. Using the example of a woman's right to "sing bass" to explain his case, Titcomb distinguishes between claiming a right (women have the right to sing bass) and exercising that right (a woman's right to sing bass does not mean she will do it well, and if not well done, then such a right is best left unexercised): "I will admit all the rights that such a woman claims—all that I myself possess—if she will let me alone, and keep her distance from me. She may sing bass, but I do not wish to hear her. She is repulsive to me. She offends me." The same holds for women's right to vote: "When women talk with me about their right to vote, and their right to practice law, and their right to engage in any business which usage has assigned to man, I say 'yes—you have all those rights,' I never dispute with them at all. . . . [But] [t]he ballot-box is the bass, and it should be man's business to sing it, while woman should give him home melody with which it should harmonize." It is telling that Titcomb's essay appears between a column packed with just such "home melody" (only the most domestic and affective poems of the week written by women being retained for this issue), and a "simple life-sketch" called "Aunt Patience" (byline "Kate Cameron"), about a beloved, self-sacrificing aunt whose tombstone, as the last line of the story, reads: "She hath done what she could."

Directly preceding the Titcomb piece, Dickinson's poem is effectively stripped from what the daily edition opened it up to: a professionalized, politically active and consequential mediation of the war news for *Republican* readers.

Though the weekly edition significantly revises the context that the daily edition provided for Dickinson's poem, both contexts position Dickinson's poem in ways that fundamentally alter how the *Republican* addresses her and how Dickinson's own poetic address functions. Fostering connections between women's poetry and war news in the daily edition (and women's poetry and domesticity in the weekly edition), "The May-Wine" becomes part of the *Republican*'s poetic address to its public readers and suggests neither Dickinson's epistolary context nor the hint that there was ever a specific addressee. Though Dickinson's poetry had been printed twice in the *Republican* prior to the "The May-Wine," neither of these earlier instances fundamentally altered Dickinson's address or its epistolary context.⁵³

Unlike "The May-Wine," the earlier two poems were editorially contextualized in such a way that retained Dickinson's epistolary context, which was used to frame and even provide purpose for the publication, and which preserved a distance between Dickinson and *Republican* readers, who remained unaddressed by the poems. The difference of "The May-Wine" from the first two poems published in the *Republican* is measurable by its transformation of Dickinson's original address, even more so than its transformation of her poetics. As an edited version of Dickinson's "I taste a liquor never brewed -" (F 207), "The May-Wine" shows a number of differences from the only extant manuscript version, which is included in Fascicle 12: A title is added, capitalization is conventionalized, all but two dashes are omitted, punctuation is added, the last

⁵³ Like the Dickinson poems printed in the 1860s, these earlier poems were submitted to the paper for publication by the friends who received them in letters, and not by Dickinson herself. Each of these poems was printed anonymously.

two lines of the first stanza are rewritten to effect a proper rhyme for “pearl,” and the final line of the poem is altered to simplify the sense.⁵⁴ Notably, the final line, “Come staggering toward the sun” does not read like Dickinson in either word choice or rhythm, and though it appears similar to the variants recorded by Dickinson in the fascicle version⁵⁵ (“From Manzanilla come!” and “Leaning against the - Sun”), it is not among them, and thus the line is likely Cooke’s alteration. In the *Republican*’s uptake of the poem, however, more than dashes and phrasing were altered. As “The May-Wine” is taken up into the paper as a functional part of its gendered rhetoric and public address, it is completely divorced from its original context of address. Though the original addressed poem is now lost, the fact that it appeared in the paper suggests that Dickinson had sent it to someone close to the *Republican*, the most likely candidates being Susan Dickinson or Samuel Bowles. If we read Dickinson’s “little tippler” beyond its possible allusion to Emerson’s “true poet,” we might also consider this poem to be about a flower that enjoys an endless summer, that is, by blooming year round, such as those Dickinson kept in her prized conservatory. This resonance of the “little tippler” with a flower in turn suggests that Dickinson might have supplied a cutting from her garden with her poem when she sent it, as she did for the source of the *Republican*’s “To Mrs.——, with a Rose.” Appending a material referent of a poem was something Dickinson did often; in fact, Dickinson did just that with the poem immediately following “I taste a liquor never brewed -” in her fascicles, “A feather from the Whippowil” (F 208B; Fascicle 12.2). Within months of the publication of “The May-Wine,”

⁵⁴ Dickinson made at least two copies of this poem, though only one is extant: (1) a fair copy of the poem on a folded sheet of paper that was bound into Fascicle 12; and (2) the lost source copy for the *Republican* printing.

⁵⁵ For a summary of Dickinson’s complex signaling of variant words in the fascicles see Cameron, *Choosing* 8, note 8.

Dickinson copied “A feather from the Whippowil” in pencil on the front of a folded sheet of stationery, enclosed a cutting from the bough of a white pine inside, then, folding the sheet vertically, not quite in half, turned the corners up to secure the two leaves of paper, and sent the package to Samuel Bowles (Fig. 2.5).⁵⁶ Since Bowles was away when Dickinson sent this package, Fidelia Cooke, who was managing Bowles’s mail in his absence, received it in his stead.⁵⁷ When Cooke opened Dickinson’s package, she would have first loosened the ends, opened the outer fold of the stationery to read the poem, and then opened the inner fold of the stationery. It is clear she must have then “carefully” laid aside the cutting, before refolding the stationery inside-out, and writing in ink a little note to Bowles on the new, blank front page: “Enclosed in this was a sprig of white pine, which I have carefully preserved. I have also laid aside for you a letter of thanks from Clara Pease. You may expect to hear from the children by the next bulletin. I hope you are all well. F. H. C.”

Cooke’s writing is a small, light, and perfectly legible cursive, a striking contrast to Dickinson’s large, idiosyncratic script, now on the inside of the stationery. When Cooke sent the sheet to Bowles, she folded it horizontally, then vertically to a quarter of its size, essentially hiding

⁵⁶ This fascicle copy differs from the copy sent to Bowles, in that on the page above the poem is written “Pine Bough” in Dickinson’s hand. However, given that she very rarely (i.e., arguably never) recorded proper titles for her poems, and given that she included a cutting of a white pine with the copy sent to Bowles, we might instead understand “Pine Bough” less as a title than as a record of the offering, a note added perhaps after she sent it. This would also be an unusual action, however. For a discussion of Dickinson’s aversion to titles, see Mulvihill.

⁵⁷ It is unclear when exactly Dickinson sent the poem, since Bowles was often away during 1861. The paper is wove (smooth texture), cream and blue-ruled, and it is embossed in the top corner with a queen’s head. Franklin notes that Dickinson used this paper from about August 1861 to August 1862 (37). Habegger, however, dates the mailed poem to early 1861, when the Bowles were in New York, which would make it contemporaneous with Dickinson’s fascicle copy.

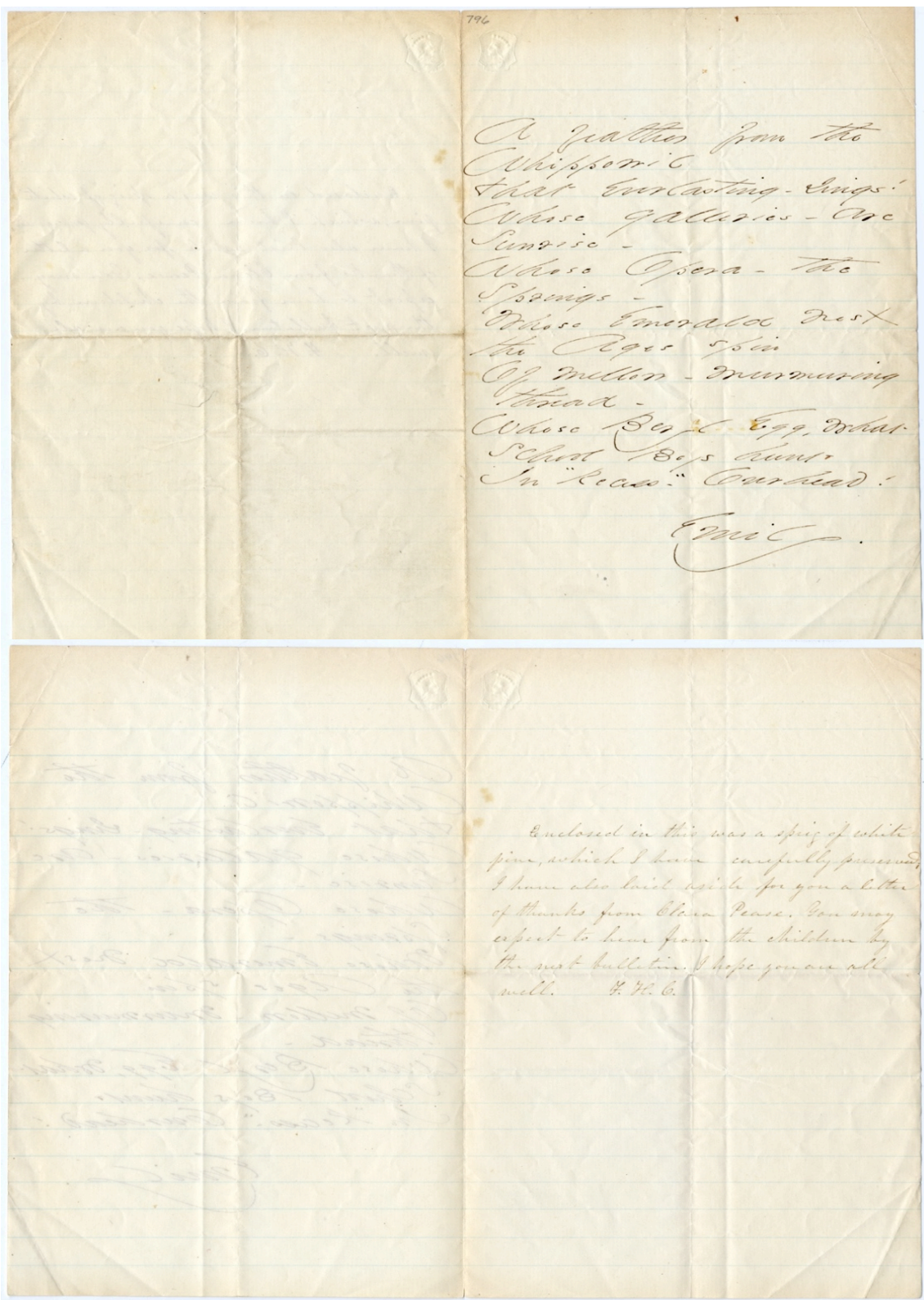


Figure 2.5 "A feather from the Whippowil," poem addressed to Samuel Bowles (F 208A; AC 796). Courtesy, Archives & Special Collections, Amherst College.

the poem inside. As Dickinson biographer Alfred Habegger suggests, Cooke may have forwarded the poem because “the literary editor knew enough about Dickinson to assume the poem was a private communication,” and in fact, this interception provides evidence that Cooke knew Dickinson was Bowles’s friend and also a regional woman poet (384).⁵⁸ However, Cooke was not simply forwarding the poem: in “editing” the poem by detaching it from its material referent, folding it inside out, and adding her own note to the front, Cooke made Dickinson’s gesture the context for her own. Judging by the contents of Cooke’s note, this was the only item she sent on to Bowles at this time, and thus it functions as both a gesture for well being, perhaps not unlike Dickinson’s gesture, and a “bulletin” for Bowles. In other words, Dickinson’s poem, removed from its referent and readdressed in this context, becomes an accessory to Cooke’s news from Springfield. This illustrates a material interference in Dickinson’s correspondence that reflects the material integration of her poetry in the *Republican* at the time. Although there is no clear evidence that Dickinson was aware of this particular interception, she was certainly aware of how

⁵⁸ Dickinson also was likely aware of Fidelia Cooke as a regional woman poet connected to Bowles, Holland, and the *Republican*. During the 1860s, Cooke was in close proximity to the Dickinson family. Emily’s brother Austin and his wife Susan, who were close friends with Samuel and Mary Bowles, often travelled the 20 miles south from Amherst to Springfield to visit them. Emily’s sister, Lavinia, is reported to have been in Springfield (probably visiting the Hollands) on November 22, 1860 (Flynt Diary, qtd. in Leyda 2:19). Since Cooke was so well known to the Bowles family and other friends in Springfield, as well as to the Hollands, it is quite possible that Austin and Susan Dickinson, at least, were introduced to her during one of their many visits between 1860 and 1867. And while Emily and Cooke may have never met in person, Emily took such an active, personal interest in the *Republican*, as well as in all news of Bowles and Holland, that it can be assumed she was well aware of the new literary editor at the paper. It also happens that Cooke’s brother-in-law, Moody Cook (variant spelling), was working in some capacity with the horses at the Dickinson homestead in the early 1850s, and shared a friendly acquaintance with both Emily and Austin Dickinson. In a letter to Austin dated June 29th, 1851 (L 45), Emily mentions that Moody Cook visited the Dickinsons and stayed for supper.

“I taste a liquor never brewed - “ was materially redeployed in the *Republican*, as the context for another’s gesture.

Reversing “The Sleeping”

Though Dickinson was likely aware each time her poetry was printed in the *Republican* during her lifetime, either because she encountered the poems herself in her daily reading of the paper or her complicit friends let her know of their presence there, we know for sure that Dickinson was made aware that “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers” (F 124) had been printed, when her sister-in-law Susan sent over a note to Emily asking, “Has girl read *Republican*?” (Leyda 2:48).⁵⁹ Printed as “The Sleeping,” on March 1, 1862, nearly a year after “The May-Wine” was printed, Dickinson’s poetry would become integrated in the material rhetoric of the *Republican*’s “Original Poetry” section once again (Fig. 2.6), only this time her poem would not provide the finishing touch of Cooke’s rhetorical effort, but would instead supply its ground.

Both manuscript and print versions of “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers” have received extensive critical attention because the surviving manuscript copies of the poem provide a unique glimpse into Dickinson’s compositional practice—in this case, Dickinson’s production of four progressively “frostier” versions of the second stanza, in response to her sister-in-law Susan’s criticism (OMC 62). The *Republican* printed the earliest known version of the poem, from 1859, and includes the original (and least frosty) version of the second stanza, which in Sue’s estimation

⁵⁹ The dating of this letter to the *Republican*’s printing of “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers,” is documented by Martha Nell Smith in *Rowing in Eden* (181, 190–196).

The Republican.

ORIGINAL POETRY.

The Sleeping.

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

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

"The Shadow of Thy Wing."

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

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

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

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

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

Development.

BY M. McNARY SPENCER.

The miner breaks and grinds the stubborn rocks;
Washes the fragments, sifts the sandy soil;
Content and happy at his daily toil,
Finding where others see but granite blocks,
New revolutions wait his hammer's shocks,
And from the pools, that geese and ducklings roil,
Wealth that outweighs the brokers' shifting stocks,
Grasps in fit payment, for his patient toil.
So great thoughts, hidden somehow, ripening are
Where men suspect not, and large-hearted deeds
Are born, earth blessing; while their authors share
Blows like the rock, and sifting that exceeds
The miner's process.—God teach us to bear,
Till strength full grown, from patient hope proceeds.
Collinsville

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Figure 2.6 "Original Poetry," *Springfield Republican* 1 March 1862: 2. Courtesy, Archives & Special Collections, Amherst College.

never quite matched the “ghostly shimmer” of the first stanza (*OMC* 61).⁶⁰

Positioned at the top left corner of page 2 under “Original Poetry,” the poem was one of nine printed in the paper that day, and one of three included in the “Original Poetry” section.

The Sleeping.

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

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

Pelham Hill, June, 1861.

Though printed anonymously, the byline, “*Pelham Hill, June, 1861*,” situates the poem (and poet) regionally, and working together with the added title associates the poem with the Pelham Hill Cemetery, with which Hampshire county residents (including Springfield and

⁶⁰ The source copy of the *Republican* printing is presumed to reflect one of two manuscripts of the poem from 1859: (1) a lost copy, which was composed and sent to Susan in late 1859; or (2) an extant copy, which Emily recorded in late 1859 onto a folded sheet of paper that was bound into what is now referred to as Fascicle 6.

Amherst) would have been familiar, and thus helps establish the poem as a meditation on human death

and burial.⁶¹ In this 1859 version of Dickinson's "Safe in their Alabaster chambers," the dead "sleep" in a peaceful, if foolish, oblivion to the world above, which "laughs," "[b]abbles," and "[p]ipe[s]," in a blithe summertime—a distinctively less frosty scene than Dickinson would create when she revised the poem in December 1861 (after Sue sent the original to Bowles, but before Cooke printed it), following Sue's feedback. Unlike in Dickinson's original first stanza and the one printed in the *Republican*, in the revised version the dead do not "sleep" in a peaceful

⁶¹ Though the title was almost certainly supplied by Cooke, the addition of the byline is unclear. Since no evidence exists to suggest Emily sent the poem to the *Republican*, the byline, as some scholars have suggested, points to the origin of the source copy: a trip Samuel Bowles made to Austin and Susan Dickinson's house on June 17 or 18, 1861, a day before embarking on a horseback trip through the Berkshire mountains, which may have included a ride through the Pelham Hills range, some three miles east of the Dickinson's house. Habegger documents this probability, correcting Franklin's initial suggestion that Bowles received the poem during this trip, suggesting Susan gave Bowles a copy to publish when he visited Amherst, probably on June 18, 1861, and that "Pelham Hill, June, 1861" was a notation added by Bowles to mark his reception of the poem during this trip (719, n441). Alternatively, as Domhnall Mitchell suggests, the byline may have been Susan's addition, with "Pelham Hill" functioning "as a kind of oblique code" (*Monarch* 265) between the Dickinsons and Bowles. If Bowles did receive the poem from Susan in June 1861 as a submission for the *Republican*, there remains the question of why it took until March of the following year to appear in print, a highly unusual move for the *Republican*, which was otherwise bent on printing only the "freshest" poetry. This may be explained by the fact that the poem was in Bowles' possession during his horseback trip, and may have been lost in the shuffle of his papers en route (he received a number of letters during this trip). Following this trip Bowles did not return to the *Republican* offices, and shortly thereafter embarked on another fresh-air journey, hoping to mend his progressively ailing health. Bowles was to be away from the office for most of the remaining months of 1861 and into January 1862. In February 1862, organizing for a lengthy trip abroad in April, Bowles made preparations with his staff to handle the paper in his absence. If the poem was misplaced or forgotten among his papers the previous summer, it is quite possible that it resurfaced during these preparations, and was handed to Fidelia Cooke, who promptly arranged it for print.

oblivion, but “lie” frozen in stillness and soundlessness. The alternative second stanzas that Dickinson generates in her workshop with Sue, moreover, seem like successive variations on the deafness of the entombed dead to the sweeping, stirring, and thawing world above them, which operates according to an epic time rather than the seasonal change depicted in the 1859 version. Moreover, the blithe springtime nature of the 1859 version is replaced by stark elemental forces that grow less intelligent and act less of their own accord through each successive alternative. What is described does not “laugh,” “hum,” or “pipe”; things do not make sound here, but only “scoop,” “row,” “drop,” “surrender,” then “shake,” “stiffen,” “unhook,” and “crawl.” Though less frosty than the revision, Dickinson’s 1859 version is nevertheless bleak in its spatial figuration of life beyond death, and its ironic take on the Christian beatitude, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth,” or its earlier iteration in Psalms: “But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (Mt. 5.5; Ps. 37.11). “Safe,” “[u]ntouched,” and entombed underground, awaiting the Resurrection, “the meek members” have quite literally inherited the earth in death, while the eternal summer beyond their “[r]after of satin, and roof of stone” lives on without them.

The edits made in the course of printing the poem—which removed dashes, regularized punctuation, and inserted structural indents—leave this bleak sentiment largely intact. However, one edit in particular seems to have corrected an ambiguity in Dickinson’s manuscript that could have caused discomfort for readers: in the manuscript, the word “cadence” is followed by a dash; in the printed version the word is made plural and followed by a colon.⁶² While the pluralization

⁶² When the poem was reprinted in the weekly edition, the pluralization of ‘cadence’ was removed, but the colon remained. This suggests that either the colon was an acceptable editorial change (made by Cooke, and approved by Bowles), or that Bowles’ manuscript copy of the poem contained a colon introduced by Susan. That Susan’s copy had a colon penned by Emily is extremely unlikely.

does not significantly affect the meaning of the poem, the colon assigns the final exclamation (“Ah! What sagacity perished here!”) to the piping birds (and by extension, the bee and the breeze; nature; the eternal summer; life beyond death), as if the birds are sounding the commentary, and thus retain a separate perspective, detached from the place (“here”) where “sagacity perished.” This punctuation, in effect, allows the life beyond to escape this fate, that is, to escape the perishing of spiritual discernment. Assigning the final exclamation to the life beyond death allows the meaning of death and mortality to be preserved there, however mysteriously or inaccessibly. Dickinson’s dash allows this reading too, but it also opens up another possibility: that the final exclamation comes not from the life beyond, but from a third perspective, that of the poet, who observes both the death and the life beyond as two sides of the same “here,” and thus both are implicated with a perished sagacity. Only the poet, by her exclamation, ostensibly escapes this fate. By hemming in this possibility with the addition of a colon, the printed poem returns sagacity, and the discernment of meaning to life beyond death, if not to death. Though small, this edit is significant in that it reflects the way in which Dickinson’s poem, in this “Original Poetry” context, is deployed to condition the ground for a moral on hope and faith, which the other original poems in the sequence flesh out.

Directly following Dickinson’s poem in the sequence is another anonymous contribution, “The Shadow of Thy Wing.”⁶³ Following this, is a third and final poem by regular contributor Margarette McNary Spencer (byline: By M. McNary Spencer. *Collinsville*), entitled

⁶³ This second poem does not have a byline. Martha Nell Smith, developing early suggestions by Thomas Johnson and Connie Ann Kirk, argues that the poem may have been written by Susan Dickinson and given to Bowles along with the source copy for “The Sleeping.” Beyond Susan’s letter to Emily, in which she references “our Fleet” (see Smith *Rowing* 181), the poem matches Susan’s style and religious themes. Susan also occasionally published her work in the papers.

“Development.” While “The Sleeping” draws the reader toward a bleak impasse, in which the meaning of human death is indiscernible from the mortal side, the latter poems, in distinct ways, redirect the reader to hope and faith in revelation. “The Shadow of Thy Wing” is a versified prayer, alluding to both Psalms (17, 36, 57, 63) and the popular hymn “Jesus, Lover of My Soul” (1740), written by English hymnist Charles Wesley (1707–1788). Over five rhyming quatrains, the supplicant seeks for herself and for others the “refuge” and “shelter” of God’s wing (4; 8). Here, in the face of perpetual trial and suffering, faith in the saving grace of God brings certain refuge. In the final line, hope for refuge is extended to all, even, presumably, the “faithless kind” (6). Like “The Shadow of Thy Wing,” Spencer’s “Development” argues for “patient hope,” though in a decidedly more secular sense (14). The poem is a modified Italian sonnet and describes, in the octave, a miner who finds “revelations” and “wealth,” “where others see but granite blocks” (4) through the “daily toil” (3) of “his hammer’s shocks” (5). In the sestet, Spencer elaborates on the conceit: authors who “share / Blows like the rock, and sifting that exceeds / The miner’s process” have “great thoughts . . . ripening . . . / Where men suspect not” (11–13; 9–10). In the final line, an apostrophe to God, the poet asks for “us to bear” such blows “Till strength full grown, from patient hope proceeds” (14). Where “The Shadow of Thy Wing” provides a faithful response to the same beatitude that “The Sleeping” ironizes, Spencer’s “Development” provides a fitting rejoinder to readers who have just meditated, via “The Sleeping,” on the meaninglessness of human death, offering in place of “granite blocks” (recalling “alabaster chambers” with “roof of stone”) a “patient hope” that will lead the way to strength and revelation.

Read as a continuous series, Cooke’s selection of original poetry draws out a particular affective experience for *Republican* readers who have just turned from the war news on the front page. Though the front page positively reports on the slow but steady advancement on

Confederate factions by Union forces, the final section—a Washington correspondent piece by Mary Clemmer Ames—paints a solemn and highly sentimentalized picture of a land of grieving mothers in an “epoch of affliction.” Referencing the recent death of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln’s third son, William Wallace Lincoln, on February 20, 1862, the correspondent imagines that the bereaved Mary Todd Lincoln may now vicariously “draw nearer in ministering compassion to the many ‘boys’ dying within her reach in inclement camps and noisome hospitals, whose mothers, in far off homes, cannot soothe them while they die, nor ever see the spot of earth which will hold them when they are dead.” Immediately following this image is the “Original Poetry” series, led by Dickinson’s poem, which channels the sentimental power of the front-page news into an affectively-charged poetic experience for the reader, one that ultimately moves the reader from hopeless disconnection to hope in faithful communion.

The one other original poem to appear in this issue of the *Republican* does not simply align with the affective movement of the first three, it also manifests the implication of this affective movement by offering *Republican* readers a cold, but thoroughly positive, sign of resurrection. The poem, entitled “March,” was written by Cooke (byline: F. H. C.) and is printed at the top left corner of page 5, oddly outside the bounds of the “Original Poetry” section.

How coldly breaks the dawn of Spring,
While only snow-birds spread the wing
Beneath a sky of gray;
Arbutus, stol’n in autumn woods,
Breathes but in parlor solitudes
Faint odors like the May.

Blue violets underneath the snow

Are sleeping, and above them blow
The wintry breezes chill;
Our eyes the coming snow-drops greet,
They fall o'er every peopled street
And forest-crested hill.

Pierced through its mail, the river moans,
And where the brooklets kiss the stones,
The dimples form and freeze;
Yet with unfaltering faith we cling
To the sweet promise of the spring
For many a fair and winsome thing
Is born of throes like these.

As with much of Cooke's poetry for the *Republican* during the 1860s, the poem is both regionally topical and symbolically suited to the issue in which it appears. Certainly the poem, printed on March 1, is timely and appropriate to the final days of winter in New England. Cooke's poem describes the "throes" (19) of a lingering winter and then looks forward with steadfast faith to "the sweet promise of the spring" (17). As in "The Shadow of Thy Wing" and "Development," and unlike "The Sleeping," the pronoun "we" is used in the final stanza to engender a communal perspective united by faith. Whereas "The Shadow" and "Development" attempt to rouse a community of readers to faith and hope in the face of trial and suffering, in "March," faith already exists and is affirmed as "unfaltering." The community ("we"), always faithful, looks forward to the fulfillment of "the sweet promise of the spring" and expects the frozen winter landscape to thaw. There is no room for doubt here, as the "dawn of Spring" (1) is already in

sight. In this sense, “March” raises the moral rhetoric of “The Shadow” and “Development,” functioning as a sermon to their psalms.

Accordingly, whereas “The Shadow” and “Development” offer hopeful rejoinders to the vacant perspective of “The Sleeping,” “March” quite literally reverses that perspective. In “March,” it is not the faithful community of the dead (Dickinson’s “meek members of the resurrection”) but the flora (“Blue violets underneath the snow”) and fauna (all but “snow-birds”) that sleep, dormant and waiting. Here, the streets are “peopled,” and rather than a perished sagacity, there is an insistent discernment of the meaning of the scene: “our eyes . . . greet” the “snow-drops,” and the chilling “wintery breezes,” as merely seasonal throes that are sure to bear “many a fair and winsome thing” (18). More than a reversal of “The Sleeping,” the parallels suggest Cooke was influenced by Dickinson’s “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers” not only when she selected the poetry for this issue, but also when she wrote “March.” It is possible, for instance, that “March” was added as a counterbalance to ensure affective renewal for readers that may have found “The Sleeping” so bleak as to overpower the sense of renewal provided by the sequence of poems that followed.

This possibility may explain the curious placement of Cooke’s poetry, alone, on page 5. Almost exclusively during the period of Cooke’s peak autonomy as literary editor, original poetry appeared on page 2, 6, or 8 of the *Republican*’s daily edition. It is possible that page 5, which was invariably reserved for advertisements, had extra space left over, which Cooke’s poem perfectly filled. That there is (unusually) no header indicating the status of the poetry supports the idea that the poem served to fill space allocated for advertisements. But what was *Cooke’s* poem doing in this space, when she could have taken a leading spot in the “Original Poetry” section, as she did in every other instance that her poetry was printed from 1861–1863? Considering the material rhetoric of the poems in the “Original Poetry” section that day, and the thematic consistency

between this series and her own, I argue Cooke's poem was doing much more than filling empty space on page 5.

Although appearing outside the "Original Poetry" section could have compromised Cooke's poem's reception as original or regional, and thus have broken with the aims of the newspaper, both the timely title and the familiar byline of "March" would have allowed readers to infer this status quite easily. Appearing at the top left-hand corner of page 5, Cooke's poem is positioned to follow directly from the war news on the previous page, which consists of editorial reflection and retrospective commentary on the progress of the Civil War, including a record of Union victories from the previous month.⁶⁴ The absence of a proper header for Cooke's poem means that only a page break separates the final article on page 4 from the poem on page 5, which makes the connection between the two even more apparent. It is also possible that the lack of a header was a compromise made to allow Cooke's poem to fit in that particular position on the page. In any case, the material placement and function of Cooke's poem here directly parallels that of the series on page 3, only, instead of channeling a despair provoked by the issue's war news (as "The Sleeping" does) and then moving the reader from despair to hopeful prayer (as "The Shadow" and "Development" do), Cooke's poem channels the hopeful charting of the war's progress and victories. It effectively transforms a chilly hope into a steadfast, communal faith in the "spring" to come, and this is precisely what the previous poems had anticipated.

In this role, "March" completes the sentiment expressed by the sequence of poems in the "Original Poetry" section in practically the same way as "The May-Wine" did almost a year before, that is, as a poetic iteration of faith in perpetual life through nature. This parallel between

⁶⁴ Other literary offerings in this issue, including selected poems, function primarily as entertainments or reviews of entertainments, rather than topical, affective, moral pieces, and they follow light social news and reviews, rather than war news.

“March” and the “May-Wine” suggests that the composition of “March” and Cooke’s selection of poems for this later issue were not only influenced by “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers,” but also by Dickinson’s “I taste a liquor never brewed -,” and, indeed, by Cooke’s own editing of that poem as “The May-Wine.” Furthermore, just as Cooke’s “March” parallels the role of “The May-Wine” in the May 4, 1861, issue, “The Sleeping” parallels the role of Cooke’s “What Fell With the Flag at Sumter” from the same issue, by articulating the meaninglessness of human death suggested by the day’s war news, and conditioning the poetic ground that would bring the reader affective renewal. In reverse fashion, then, Cooke’s poetry bookends Dickinson’s in each issue. This bookending indicates a complex network of influence between Dickinson and Cooke that directly involved Cooke in at least two ways: (1) in shaping the material rhetoric that positioned poetry—timely, affective poetry; women’s poetry—as a site of transformative refuge and reformative revelation, and as an inherently faithful medium; and (2) in altering the *Republican*’s epistolary aspect for Dickinson.

Though not all of the poetry chosen by Cooke for the *Republican*’s “Original Poetry” section might on its own signal the professionalism of its author, nor be readily distinguished from works by “writing women” in “the grip of *cacoethes scribendi*” (Williams 36), it was nevertheless effectively disciplined and made culturally resonant by its positioning in the newspaper among the *Springfield Daily Republican* masthead, proximal war articles, “Original Poetry” header, titles, bylines, and surrounding works. As such, each poem became much more than the sum of its parts. Under the editorial direction of Cooke, this poetry by Dickinson and others evokes a female poetic collective, one brimming in a cultivated feminine perceptivity, ethics, and high-sentimental reformist politics that reached beyond everyday domestic concerns to publically intervene in sociopolitical happenings beyond their New England towns. Such

gendered authorial ethos, which Dickinson's poetry was conscripted to shape in 1861 and 1862, underwrites the professional woman author of the 1860s.

By involving Dickinson's poetry in the material rhetoric that positioned regional women's poetry as a force of life and hope for New England readers, the *Republican* of the early 1860s must have seemed, to Dickinson, very different from the paper she had read aloud to her sister in 1858. No longer a letter from friends, the paper became, via its active negotiation of the material rhetoric of Dickinson's own poetry, Cooke's "letter to the World," shifting the Republican's epistolary aspect for Dickinson fundamentally. But if Cooke's work interfered with Dickinson's epistolary relations, did it also interfere with Dickinson's poetic project, as it repurposed and readdressed her poetry for ends that were not her own? Printing Dickinson's "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers" as "The Sleeping" effectively diminished the very experience that made this particular piece a work of "poetry" for Dickinson. Neither Dickinson's 1859 manuscript version nor her "frostier" variants in 1861 move its reader to faith as emphatically as "The Sleeping" does; in fact, they provoke a deep chill that, as Susan Dickinson put it, "never can again" (*OMC* 61) get warm. As Dickinson told her friend, literary critic and writer Thomas Wentworth Higginson, during his visit to her house some eight years later, this chill-factor was the mark of poetry: "If I read a book [and] it makes my whole body so cold no fire ever could warm me I know that is poetry" (L342a). In the next chapter, I will argue that it is precisely Dickinson's uptake in the ethos of women's poetry in the *Republican* as discussed here that played a formative role in solidifying her aversion to publication, and that it also prompted a bold rhetorical move on Dickinson's part to forestall any further uptake. Dickinson's correspondence with Higginson became her way around what she viewed as an increasing and inevitable threat to her poetic projects.

Chapter 3

Materializing an Amateur Ethos: Dickinson's Letters to T. W. Higginson

"You asked how old I was? I made no verse - but one or two - until this winter - Sir -"

— Emily Dickinson to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, 25 April 1862 (L 261)

"Those [letters] to Mr. Higginson are not of a private nature, and as to the 'innocent' and 'confiding' nature of them, Austin smiles. He says Emily definitely posed in those letters."

— Mabel Loomis Todd, Diary 18 October 1891⁶⁵

On April 16, 1862, New England author, literary critic, minister, activist Thomas Wentworth Higginson received a letter from Emily Dickinson, then unknown to him. In the letter, which enclosed four poems, Dickinson asked Higginson "to say if [her] Verse is alive," and if he might "think it breathed" (L 260). Higginson would later describe this initial letter as being "in a handwriting so peculiar that it seemed as if the writer might have taken her first lessons by studying the famous fossil bird-tracks in the museum of that college town. Yet it was not in the slightest degree illiterate, but cultivated, quaint, and wholly unique" (444). The surprising letter would spark a lifelong correspondence between Dickinson and Higginson, one that would span a quarter decade until her death in May 1886 and would eventually lead Higginson, following Dickinson's death, to edit (with Mabel Loomis Todd) the *Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1890).⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Quoted in Bingham, *Ancestor's Brocades*, 166–67.

⁶⁶ When Lavinia Dickinson discovered the bulk of poems Emily had stored away, including the forty bound fascicles, she turned to Austin Dickinson's mistress, Mabel Loomis Todd, to sort and edit them for publication, who in turn sought the help of Higginson. Together, Todd and Higginson published two

Though nearly all of Higginson's side of the correspondence was destroyed, Dickinson's side—numbering 67 letters and 103 poems sent with those letters—survives.⁶⁷ As one of the longest and most extensive of Dickinson's numerous correspondences, her letters to Higginson are interesting for what they reveal about Dickinson's understanding of herself as a poet and also her desired proximity to the literary market.

The question of this desired proximity has been a recurrent point of discussion and debate in Dickinson criticism since the first book of her poems was published in 1890, and while this debate arises largely from the fact that she did not actively publish her poetry during her lifetime, it is also informed by our understanding of Dickinson's relationship with Higginson, or rather, what is taken to be Higginson's influence on Dickinson's choice not to publish. Higginson was a well-respected contributor and editor for the prestigious literary magazine *The Atlantic Monthly* and was literary mentor to many young women writers, including Helen Hunt Jackson (1830–1885), Louisa May Alcott (1832–1888), Harriet Prescott Spofford (1835–1921), and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (1844–1911).⁶⁸ That Dickinson humbly asks for Higginson's critical opinion on her poems in her first letter to him (as she would continue to do over the years), and

series of poems by Dickinson in 1890 and 1891, respectively, with Roberts Brothers, Boston, to mostly positive critical and public reception. For a recent historical account of the posthumous publication of Dickinson's poems, see Lyndal Gordon's *Lives Like Loaded Guns* (2010).

⁶⁷ Only three of Higginson's letters to Dickinson survive.

⁶⁸ Higginson was an avid supporter of women's writing. Alcott notes in a letter to Higginson's wife, Mary, dated 18 October 1868, "the many helpful & encouraging words which his busy & gifted pen finds time to write so kindly to the young beginners who sit on the lowest seats in the great school where he is one of the best friendliest teachers" (*Selected Letters* 118). In addition to his literary endeavors and his advocacy of women's rights, Higginson was a staunch abolitionist and would command of the first black Union regiment during the Civil War.

that this request comes very soon after Higginson's famous article "Letter to a Young Contributor" (1862) is published in the *Atlantic*, which advised young women poets how to prepare their submissions for an editor, paints a clear picture of Dickinson as an eager protégé. And yet, as many critics have pointed out, Dickinson never found an eager editor in Higginson. As Dickinson biographer Richard Sewall notes, Higginson "was as much mystified by her poetry as he was by her person, [and] as a literary advisor he failed her completely" (6). For Sewall, this explains in part "Dickinson's failure to publish" (6). As Mary Loefellholz has more recently stated, "Higginson discouraged Dickinson's hopes for publication, finding her verse more unconventional than he could quite stomach" (132). That Dickinson was perpetually an amateur in Higginson's eyes is clear; he even referred to Dickinson in a letter to his sister as "my partially cracked poetess at Amherst" (qtd. in *Letters of Emily Dickinson* 570). In what follows I take seriously the critical argument that Higginson's discomfort with Dickinson catalyzed her "failure to publish." At the same, however, I would like to interrogate the argument that Higginson failed Dickinson, and the related presumption that Higginson's opinion dashed Dickinson's hopes for publication. Did Dickinson hope for publication? If she was already being published at this time, why was Higginson needed at all? Was Higginson a way *toward* publication, or could he have been a way out of publication? Is possible that *Dickinson* failed *Higginson* in order to fail the standard that would make her publishable?

Looking closely at the timing and rhetoric of Dickinson's initial letter to Higginson, one can see that she is responding to his 1862 "Letter to a Young Contributor" and requests his help in his capacity as mentor. But what is arguably more illuminating in terms of the timing and rhetoric of this letter is the fact that it was sent six weeks after "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers" was printed in the *Republican* as "The Sleeping." Among the four poems Dickinson enclosed in this letter was a copy of the "frostier" 1861 version of "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers," not

the published version. In fact, she makes no mention of the recent publication. If Higginson was indeed approached as a potential mentor, it is curious that Dickinson did not mention the publication, which was given such prominent place in the *Republican*. Also curious is the fact that Dickinson asked Higginson to mentor her because she had “none to ask”: “Are you too deeply occupied to say if my Verse is alive? The Mind is so near itself - it cannot see, distinctly - and I have none to ask” (L 260). Surely she had some to ask: it was April 1862, Dickinson was 31 years old, she was recently published, and she shared her poetry frequently with friends and family, especially with her sister-in-law, Susan Dickinson and *Republican* editor Samuel Bowles, both of whom were not only capable of responding critically to her writing but had already done so for at least one of the poems she enclosed with her introductory letter to Higginson.⁶⁹

At about this time, however, both Susan and Bowles were becoming increasingly disconnected from Dickinson. Bowles’ travel and professional obligations kept him too distant and unresponsive for Dickinson’s comfort, and Susan was swamped with obligations to her growing family. Both of these friends had also been responsible for putting “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers” into Fidelity Cooke’s hands. If Dickinson felt disconnected from or even betrayed by those she counted on most to affirm the life of her poetry, then she may have been truthful when she told Higginson she had “none to ask” if her “Verse is alive.” Certainly, Dickinson’s choice to enclose the 1861 version with the alternate second stanza that Susan felt was not suitable (“it does not go with the ghostly shimmer of the first verse as well as the other

⁶⁹ The four poems enclosed in her first letter to Higginson included, “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers” (F 124F), “I’ll tell you how the Sun rose —” (F 204B), “The nearest Dream recedes — unrealized —” (F 304B), and “We play at Paste” (F 282A). Martha Nell Smith documents that Susan “critiqued the text [“Safe in their Alabaster Chambers”] while Dickinson was in the process of writing” (*Rowing* 182). Bowles, who received the poem presumably from Susan, passed the poem on to Cooke for publication in the *Republican*.

one” [OMC 61]), and her choice not to mention the *Republican* publication, mark a certain split with Susan, Bowles, and even her authorship of the earlier poem as positioned by the *Republican*. Was Dickinson’s enclosure of the 1861 version in her letter to Higginson a repudiation of the momentum for publication that Susan, Bowles, and Cooke had set in motion? If so, why does her letter to Higginson serve as the medium for this repudiation? Arguably, Dickinson reached out to Higginson to alleviate a rising panic that she may, in fact, have “none to ask,” and thus no help, no poetic life support, no buffers against encroaching pressures to publish.

If the story of Dickinson’s earnest request for Higginson’s mentorship is complicated by the fact of Dickinson’s recent publication (and her denial of it), the material rhetoric of her letters to Higginson, especially during the first year, indicate that Dickinson used his mentorship precisely to forestall publication. As I will demonstrate, Dickinson did not approach Higginson with a desire to be published; she intentionally failed to be publishable in Higginson’s eyes. My understanding of Dickinson’s disinterest in publication builds primarily on Karen Dandurand’s important archival work in the 1990s, which established that none of the Dickinson poems published during her lifetime was necessarily intended for publication or sanctioned by Dickinson. My understanding is also informed by the recent work of Paul Crumbley and Cristanne Miller, both of whom have argued that Dickinson was uninterested in publication for much if not all of her life. Specifically developing Crumbley’s assertion in *Winds of Will: Emily Dickinson and the Sovereignty of Democratic Thought* (2010) that Dickinson never intended for Higginson to be an avenue for publication, I read the material rhetoric of Dickinson’s letters to Higginson as a deliberate attempt to block rather than facilitate the publication of her poetry. Dickinson approached Higginson to craft and sustain just the buffer she needed: an amateur ethos that could delay indefinitely what was becoming for her an inevitable entry into public modes of poetic address.

As early as her first letter to Higginson, Dickinson was actively negotiating his reception of her as an amateur poet, and inviting Higginson to fill a particular role in her writing life as “the friend” who could guide her. In Higginson, Dickinson would find trust and predictability, largely because he was already a popular representative of literary convention and invested in the success of young, mostly women, poets under his tutelage. As Cindy Mackenzie notes, “with friends and family, [Dickinson] could expect content and context of letters to overwhelm poetics, but with Higginson, more than any other correspondent, she presumably thought deeply about how he was reading her and about what the impact of his reading might have on her poetry” (17). Dickinson could expect Higginson, whose intelligent and idealistic writings she followed closely⁷⁰ and greatly admired and whose poetic ear was explicitly tuned to the prudent growth and professionalization of amateur poets, to be intrigued by her turn of phrase and moved to instruct her writing. Approaching him as she did, she was baiting that kind of investment.

As is commonly noted, Dickinson’s first letter to Higginson was sent in response to his advice article “Letter To a Young Contributor,” which appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* some two weeks prior. Reviewed in the *Republican* on March 29, 1861 under “Books Authors and Art” as an article that “ought to be read by all would-be authors of the land,” Higginson’s piece spoke directly to readers who hoped to become an *Atlantic* contributor.⁷¹ There is no indication that Dickinson was interested in becoming an *Atlantic* contributor; however, Dickinson’s initial approach to Higginson followed some of his advice for approaching an editor:

⁷⁰ Dickinson was an avid reader of what she called Higginson’s “Chapters in the Atlantic” (L 261).

⁷¹ The review has no byline, as was usual for the “Books, Authors, and Art” section, which represented the editorial opinion of the paper as a whole. Since this section was under the direction of Cooke, who was literary editor at this time, it can be assumed she wrote the piece.

Do not despise any honest propitiation, however small, in dealing with your editor. Look to the physical aspect of your manuscript, and prepare your page so neatly that it shall allure instead of repelling. Use good pens, black ink, nice white paper and plenty of it. Do not emulate “paper-sparing Pope,” whose chaotic manuscript of the “Iliad,” written chiefly on the backs of old letters, still remains in the British Museum. If your document be slovenly, the presumption is that its literary execution is the same, Pope to the contrary notwithstanding. An editor’s eye becomes carnal, and is easily attracted by a comely outside. If you really wish to obtain his good-will for your production, do not first tax his time for deciphering it, any more than in visiting a millionaire to solicit a loan you would begin by asking him to pay for the hire of the carriage which takes you to his door.

(402)

In the envelope Dickinson addressed to “T.W. Higginson” on April 15th 1862 were included an introductory but unsigned letter in black ink on plenty of white paper, using only the first and third page of a folded stationery sheet; four poems in black ink, each unsigned on separate stationery sheets; and another smaller envelope containing a card on which her name was written in pencil. Neither “paper-sparing” nor “slovenly,” concerned not to “tax his time” (“Are you too deeply occupied”; “had you the leisure to tell me”), and enclosing her penciled name in a separate, smaller letter, while assuredly reminding him of his honor in being entrusted with her work (“that you will not betray me - it is needless to ask - since Honor is its own pawn”), the poet deliberately propitiates her addressee. Dickinson’s use of pencil to record her name was still noteworthy to Higginson 29 years later as the mark of a humbled amateur:

But the most curious thing about the letter was the total absence of a signature. It proved, however, that she had written her name on a card, and put it under the

shelter of a smaller envelope enclosed in the larger; and even this name was written—as if the shy writer wished to recede as far as possible from view—in pencil, not in ink. The name was Emily Dickinson. (“Emily Dickinson’s Letters” 444)

Though Dickinson continues to propitiate Higginson, especially over the course of her first five letters, allowing the “physical aspect” of these letters to do as much work, rhetorically, as the symbolic, she never actually allows Higginson to function easily as an editor who would help her publish her work, a role which he would automatically be inclined to assume in this context, however informally. Rather than garnering the appeasement of a would-be editor, her propitiation works to negotiate Higginson’s reception of her work (and her very address) in ways that position him as a poetic standard by which she can gauge her own poetry. In these initial letters to Higginson, Dickinson actively establishes seemingly different yet ultimately redundant modes of relation to Higginson: volatile “force” to measure of “control”; “Sailor” to magnetic compass “Needle”; patient/“Bone” to “surgeon”; and “Scholar” to “Preceptor”; amateur writer to professional reader. As Dickinson’s “Preceptor,” Higginson is supposed to tell her of her “fault” (L 261); his “charge,” as she defines it, is to reveal “Ignorance out of sight” (L 271). As she tells him, she hopes his superior perspective will help her reduce the possibility of mistaking her place, of finding herself “the only Kangaroo among the Beauty” (L 268). As her “surgeon,” Higginson is called upon “not to commend the Bone, but to set it”(L 261), that is, as her dictionary has it, “to return [it] to its proper place or state; to replace; to reduce [it] from a dislocated or fractured state” (ADEL 1844). Higginson’s “surgery” (L 261) re-replaces her dislocated verse—puts it in its place, so to speak. As her compass “Needle,” moreover, Higginson serves as a constant point of direction by which she can locate herself and navigate the course of her writing. In each of these roles, Higginson functions not as liaison to the literary market or

potential literary executor; rather, he functions as a valuable and reliable instrument by which Dickinson gains perspective on and situates her verse.

Whether or not she suspected Higginson would find her verse in need of “surgery,” throughout their initial letters Dickinson methodically reiterates his precepts back to him by couching them within the terms of their relationship as she originally defined them: “You think my gait ‘uncontrolled.’ I have no Tribunal...Will you be the friend you think I should need.”⁷² In doing so, Dickinson negotiates a trusted critical relationship with Higginson. What is notable about her relationship with Higginson is how it does not contribute to her development as a professional author. In fact, Dickinson never actually workshops her poetry with Higginson and there is no evidence she corrected any of her poetry on his advice. When she tells him, for example, “I will observe your precept,” she seems to mean it quite literally: as simply “to watch” or “to register,” not “to comply.” In fact, merely observing his “precept” becomes the way for Dickinson to continually reinscribe Higginson as a point of reference that reestablishes her as an amateur. Given Dickinson’s continued correspondence and Higginson’s proximity to the literary market and capacity to help her develop as a publishable poet, her response to his feedback is oddly resistant. But since this resistant correspondence with Higginson comes on the heels of, and is arguably an indirect response to, the material uptake of her poems in public modes of poetic address (i.e., Cooke’s “Original Poetry” section in the *Springfield Republican*), it may be that Dickinson was hoping to halt her professionalization by remaining Higginson’s protégé

⁷² Martha Nell Smith makes a similar point: “Though he did not understand what she was doing, Dickinson was enjoying their exchange, and making it seem that she considered him her instructor almost insured its continuation” (“A Hazard” 253); “Dickinson (well aware that she is an unknown woman approaching a frequently published man of letters) maintains a feminine and deferential pose in order to intrigue but never offend him” (253).

indefinitely. Attention to Dickinson's material rhetoric in this correspondence reveals Higginson as a significant "friend" who served not simply as poetic interlocutor, literary paragon, or her best link to the literary market, but also one who could, because of his status, slow her inevitable entry into the print world, as long as she kept him nervous.

Material Rhetoric in the Higginson Letters

Alexandra Socarides' recent study of Dickinson's manuscript practices identifies six "different yet connected modes of relation between poems" constructed by Dickinson in her private records and correspondence up to and including her letters to Higginson: (1) "poems copied onto the same sheet of stationery"; (2) "poems sewn to each other in the fascicles"; (3) "poems as correspondence"; (4) "poems copied within the text of a letter but marked as such"; (5) "poems as individual enclosures that were sent together in the same envelope"; (6) poems embedded in the text of a letter where the lines "function as part of the letter" (72). These different modes, especially in the case of poetry sent in letters, produce new contexts of address for the poetry and, as Socarides argues, new possibilities for communication (73). Rather than understanding her deployment of poetry in letters as "genre reformation," Socarides argues it exemplifies Dickinson's "experiments with communication," in which "she was trying after neither the one abstracted lyric voice nor the one intimate voice of the letter writer to her recipient, but instead beginning to harness the potential of all those voices in between, voices that might pull her reader close and push him away at the same time" (74).⁷³ Building on this idea, I argue that the

⁷³ Socarides complicates earlier discussions of Dickinson's use of poems in her letters, particularly what Marietta Messmer has called the "dynamic, intergeneric dialogue" of Dickinson's "letters-cum-poems" (43). Messmer argues that when Dickinson includes poems in/with letters she is using genre to bend

push-pull nature of Dickinson's correspondence with Higginson, which is especially manifest in the material ways she deployed her poetry there, form deliberate "experiments with communication" that function to shape an amateur ethos. What makes this correspondence stand out especially in this regard is Dickinson's frequent enclosure of poems with her letters to Higginson.

As Chapter 4 explores in detail, the practice of enclosing poems with letters is quite rare for Dickinson, who, in correspondence with close friends and distant acquaintances alike, often set her poems in letters (inserted or embedded in the prose) or simply sent them as letters in themselves. Dickinson's regular habit with most correspondents was to make her poetry more integral to her epistolary address than an enclosure would afford, particularly as a means to establish personal, affective connection. If poems sent as letters can be said to collapse the distinction between Dickinson's epistolary and poetic address, then poems enclosed with letters can be said to maintain this distinction explicitly: the personal address to Higginson remains distinct from the poem's address to a nonspecific addressee, and yet the placement of the poem in the context of the epistolary address, and indeed Dickinson's request for Higginson to read and

gender conventions: "To circulate 'poetry' within a 'letter' framework, as well as to ascribe literary features to seemingly private letters while having poems partake of epistolary discourse...challenges traditional preconceptions about generic properties that had been established by prescriptive nineteenth-century epistolary manuals. More specifically, these strategies subvert the genre-political implications advanced in these manuals, including their hierarchically inflected differentiation between 'women's letters' as a primarily nonliterary, private, socially useful mode of writing, and 'poetry' as a stylistically more complex, 'literary' genre predominantly within the purview of male (published) authors" (48). While Socarides does not directly dispute Dickinson's transgression of gender conventions, she argues that Dickinson's methods indicate that genre is not "as stable and identifiable in Dickinson's writing as we have thought" (62). Readings such as Messmer's presume stable genre distinctions and also tend to "collapse Dickinson's methods," and in doing so inadvertently proto-modernize Dickinson's agenda, mistaking "experiments with communication" for "genre reformation" (74).

respond to the poems, begs for them to be read together. What is the significance of Dickinson's frequent curating of this dynamic communication in her letters to Higginson, a practice she reserves for Higginson almost exclusively? Does this mode support her negotiation of a particular relationship with him, or indeed, a certain ethos for her work? And what do this and other "communication experiments" with Higginson tell us of her desired proximity to the literary market Higginson represented?

Except for two instances, all the poems Dickinson sent to Higginson in the first year of their correspondence take the form of individual enclosures, that is, poems copied either on separate single leaves or folded sheets of stationery. Enclosed poems, as a rule, appear alone on the sheet, without title, address, signature, other notes or markings. While clearly meant to be read alongside a letter, the enclosures are also at a distinct remove from the address of the letter, and on their own do not function as Dickinson's poetic address *to* the letter's recipient, at least not directly. This mode of enclosing poems without signature or other identifying mark also resists the presumption of Dickinson's authorship of the poems, which a more formally guided or sequenced presentation (setting a poem *in* a letter), and more explicitly addressed poetry (sending the poem *as* a letter) would indicate. Though Higginson is requested to honor her trust in sending him the poems and not circulate them further, Dickinson nevertheless rests authority with him: he is invited to come to the discretely enclosed poems as it suits him, to regard, to evaluate, rearrange, keep, and discard them at his discretion, and to tell her "what is true" about them.

In addition to Higginson's relatively unique position in receiving enclosures from Dickinson, most of the enclosed poems in the first letters were, to borrow Socarides' term, "redeployed" ones—that is, previously addressed poems or poems she had already recorded and bound in her fascicles. Redeployed poetry is fairly unusual in Dickinson's correspondences; she often dispatched previously unaddressed, unseen, or unbound poetry to her correspondents. In

contrast, of the 12 poems sent in her first four letters to Higginson, while she was still actively negotiating the terms of their relationship, all but one had been copied from existing fascicle sheets, and many had been previously circulated in more incorporated forms (not as enclosures) and more intimate contexts of address. In her introductory letter, Dickinson redeploys two bound fascicle poems as enclosures (“I’ll tell you how the Sun rose -” [F 204B; BPL 3]; “The nearest Dream recedes - unrealized - “ [F 304B; BPL 12]), and the 1861 version of “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers,” a poem not only previously workshoped with Susan, but also recorded in her fascicles, and circulating (in part) within the weighty context of the *Republican*. In her second letter, on April 25, 1862, in response to Higginson’s first “surgery,” she redeploys poems that had multiple prior incarnations. “There came a Day at Summer’s full” (F 325), for example, had been previously incorporated in a letter to Reverend Edward S. Dwight (L 246; AC 22) in response to news of his wife’s recent death, and it had also been shared with Susan around the same time. Just prior to enclosing the poem in her letter to Higginson, and after sending it to Dwight and Susan, Dickinson copied it onto an unbound, unfolded sheet and also recorded it in Fascicle 13. By the time Higginson received the poem it was in some sense already tried and true.

The only apparently “untried” poem in the first four letters to Higginson is enclosed in her introductory letter. Unlike the other poems enclosed in her first four letters, this poem, “We play at Paste -” (F 282A), seems designed to have a personal effect on Higginson, though its material format as an enclosure curtails any explicit address. Musing on artistic development, the poem speaks to Higginson’s interests as a literary mentor and alludes to several of his essays.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ The allusion to Higginson’s work has been noted by Dickinson biographer, Richard Sewell, among many others. In her study of Higginson and Dickinson, Brenda Wineapple notes the poem’s resonance especially with Higginson’s *Atlantic* article “Gymnastics,” published in March 1861, in which he instructs

Whether or not this poem was composed with Higginson in mind, when enclosed in the context of her introductory letter to him, it plays into the scholar-preceptor relationship Dickinson is actively negotiating at this point in their correspondence. It is not until the fifth letter (L 271), in August 1862, when she has safely established herself as Higginson's "Scholar" and has effectively wooed him into accepting her designation of him as "Preceptor," that she shares apparently new and untried poetry again, including "Before I got my Eye put out" (F 336A; H1118.1[14]) and "I cannot dance upon my Toes -" (F 381A; H1118.1[15]).⁷⁵ Although a variant copy of each of these poems is included in Fascicles 16 and 19, respectively, the fascicle copies do not precede those she prepared for Higginson, which suggests that Dickinson prepared Higginson's directly from a working draft (not extant). Moreover, whether or not these poems were written with Higginson in mind, it appears neither was sent in whole or part to anyone else.

Taken together, in the context of the fifth letter (August 1862), both poems present a similar situation: an "I" describes herself as lacking a certain modality or knowledge, speculates on what it would mean to possess it, and opts for an oblique, idiosyncratic means to the same end. In "I cannot dance upon my Toes -," for instance, the speaker lacks "Ballet - / knowledge -" but is "oftentimes, among my mind" possessed by "A Glee" so moved to dance that if she had such knowledge she "would lay a Prima, mad." The speaker's "Glee" is so "full of Opera" that she "know[s] the Art," despite appearances ("no Gown of Gauze"), the lack of "Audiences," puffery ("my shape in Eider Balls"), the sound of clapping hands ("Till I was out of sight, in sound, / The House encore me so"), and advertisement ("nor any Placard boast me"). Though

the reader to "Practise...thoroughly and patiently, and you will in time attain evolutions more complicated, and, if you wish, more perilous" (qtd. in Wineapple 292, n10).

⁷⁵ According to Franklin, two other poems, now lost, may have been enclosed in this letter as well: "A Bird, came down the Walk -" (F 359); "Dare you see a Soul at the 'White Heat'" (F 401).

lacking the trappings and direct experience of a dancer, she is able, nevertheless, to approximate the feeling of dance.

In “Before I got my Eye put out,” the speaker describes an inability “to see / As other Creatures, that have Eyes / And know no other way”:

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 - <page break>
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 - <page break>

So safer Guess -

With just my soul

upon the Window pane -

Where other Creatures

put their Eyes -

Incautious - of the Sun -

The speaker has an inability to see like “other Creatures” who are “*Incautious*- of the Sun” (unobservant; unaware; unknowing). In the attempt to “take” “noon” between her “finite Eyes,” the all-too-observant speaker has been and would be “put out,” “split,” or struck “dead.” To see the “Stintless” things beyond the window from her finite perspective, the speaker would necessarily apprehend, capture, and apportion the view (“have”/”mine”/”mine”/”take”/”for mine - to look at”); her “Eye” (I), as such, can only meet its own boundaries and finitude again and again. For the speaker, the guessed at “safer” way is “just my soul / upon the window pane.” In other words, despite her inability to directly see what lies beyond the window pane, an oblique

correspondence—via her soul—provides an “other way.” As in “I cannot dance upon my Toes,” Dickinson imaginatively speculates about a sensual experience that presumably escapes her grasp because she lacks the proper tools-of-the-trade, as it were. In doing so, the poem registers at once her lack of appropriate tools and her alternative tools as an inward turn (“among my mind”; “with just my soul”) and poetic gesture. In both cases, the poem itself attempts to make present the sensual experience it describes.

In the letter enclosing these poems, Dickinson begins by asking Higginson, “Are these more orderly?” Though we do not have the Higginson letter for which this functions as reply, Dickinson quotes Higginson in her letter, indicating that he had apparently called verse “Wayward” (L 265) and lacking control. Read alongside the question, “Are these more orderly?” the poems become a tongue-in-cheek reply to Higginson’s critique. In this context, they supply both an admission and revaluation of poetic waywardness, providing a deft, if oblique, rhetorical parry to Higginson’s thrust. In the context of the epistolary address, then, both poems challenge and invite Higginson’s response. At the same time, however, the material rhetoric of the enclosures helps to curtail any explicit personal address in the poems. Although, as in her first letter to Higginson, these poems seem specially chosen to affect him, and though their status as untried makes this exchange seem to cultivate intimacy in ways more akin to her correspondence with close friends, she still unusually encloses the poems separately from the letter and thus deliberately preserves the distinction between poetic and epistolary address — that safe distinction which so often marks her correspondence with Higginson. Together, then, the symbolic and material rhetoric of the enclosed poems establishes and maintains a certain balance of intimacy, staving off a potential slip one way or another.

T.W. Higginson's Discomfort

Why are Dickinson's letters to Higginson so careful to prevent such a slip and to reiterate an "other way"? For critics who attend to the peculiarities of this correspondence, Dickinson's rhetoric is often characterized as a balancing act designed to impress Higginson and, ultimately, to persuade him to take her seriously as a poet with at least some intention to publish.⁷⁶

Dickinson scholar Marietta Messmer, for example, argues that Dickinson employs a polyvocal strategy to encourage Higginson to leave her gender (and amateur status) behind, and "to treat her as an 'author only'" (121). In "juxtaposing self-denigration (submissiveness) and self-affirmation (confidence in her work)" (121), Dickinson, Messmer argues, showcases an impressive and "carefully crafted balance of power appropriation and voluntary disempowerment [that] is, in part, motivated by Dickinson's attempts to secure Higginson's continued interest in her work and thus a continuation of their (professional) friendship" (121). However, rather than *securing* Higginson's interest in her work in a professional sense, I argue this "carefully crafted balance" is motivated by precisely the opposite impulse; that is, to destabilize a possible "(professional) friendship," to continually reset Dickinson as a would-be-author, or "a young contributor," only. This destabilization, I argue, works specifically through Dickinson's material rhetoric, which structures her address to Higginson in a way that continually unsettles his role in the exchange.

⁷⁶ On the balancing act in Dickinson's letters to Higginson, see Suzanne Juhasz, who notes a "seesaw motion" (433) between pride and obsequiousness; and Paul Crumley, who notes "shifting voices that constitute the continuum between the child and the Queen" (*Inflections* 80).

Though a direct recipient of her poetry, Higginson is never allowed to serve comfortably or unequivocally as its direct object, addressee, first reader, editor, or mediator in any sense. In fact, she leaves him no comfortable position as recipient of her poetry, except as her literary mentor, or perhaps more accurately, her literary crutch, a support that instead of helping her professionalize, would keep her seeming wayward. While the poems that Dickinson sends Higginson arguably comprise, as Martha Nell Smith puts it, “an assemblage that demonstrates the range of her poetic vision” (“A Hazard” 251), the complex rhetoric of this demonstration does not speak to her interest either in appearing as an author or in having Higginson serve as a would-be-editor or publisher. That the rhetoric of her correspondence with Higginson precludes his assumption of such a role, in fact, suggests the opposite: that Higginson was a means “to avoid publication” (156), as Paul Crumbley has observed. Developing Crumbley’s assertion, I argue that Dickinson’s rhetoric ensures Higginson’s continued discomfort in publically promoting her work and encouraging her to print. Disrupting both the direct intimacy of a letter between friends and the professional acumen of an exchange between author and editor, Dickinson always kept Higginson too nervous to act on her behalf. Even after Dickinson’s death, when Mabel Loomis Todd approached Higginson about editing a volume of Dickinson’s poetry, Higginson remained nervous. This nervousness might seem odd coming from a well-respected male writer who had devoted a large part of his literary life to promoting new female poetic talent and who had very little to lose by presenting an edited Dickinson to the public after her death and near the end of his own life. However, following two decades of corresponding with his “partially cracked poetess,” who, as he noted to his wife after meeting Dickinson face-to-face, “drained my nerve power so much. Without touching her, she drew from me. I am glad not to live near her” L 342b), Higginson’s final hesitancy makes sense.

Dickinson's cultivation and manipulation of Higginson's discomfort becomes obvious as early as her third letter (L 265) to him. Within this seven-page letter, postmarked June 7, 1862, some two months into their correspondence, Dickinson responds to what was ostensibly Higginson's suggestion that she was not yet ready to publish. Dickinson famously "smiles" at the suggestion:

I smile when you suggest
that I delay "to pub-
lish" - that being foreign
to my thought, as
Firmament to Fin - <page break>
If fame belonged
to me, I could not
escape her - if she
did not, the longest
day would pass me
on the chase - and
the approbation of my
Dog, would forsake me -
then - my Barefoot -
Rank is better -

In this dismissal of publication, Dickinson does not simply agree with Higginson's suggestion to delay publication; rather, she removes publication from her realm of possible action. Notably, the ambiguity of Dickinson's relative pronoun ("that"), which may refer to either the "delay 'to publish'" or simply "to publish," allows her to dismiss both. In other words, "to publish" as both

a thing one could delay or put in the future (an intention), and as an action, is “foreign” to her “thought.” Publication is “foreign” in the sense that, as Dickinson’s 1844 Webster’s defines it, it is “remote; not belonging; not connected; with to or from.” Dickinson’s expression (“that being foreign to my thought”) creates a hybrid of the usage examples given in her dictionary: “You dissemble; the sentiments you express are foreign to your heart. This design is foreign from my thoughts. [The use of from *is preferable and best authorized.*]” (my emphasis). Disregarding Webster’s parenthetical advice by opting for “to” instead of “from,” Dickinson implies that publication is not simply remote (far) from her thought, but that the sentiment (*ADEL*: “thought; opinion; notion; judgment; The decision of the mind formed by deliberation or reasoning”) and design (*ADEL*: Purpose; intention; aim; implying a scheme or plan in the mind”) of “to publish,” do not belong to her “thought.”

The foreignness of publication to Dickinson’s “thought” corresponds, here, to the foreignness of “Firmament to Fin”; in other words, it is as foreign as the sky is to that which is designed for moving through the sea. This analogy is complicated by the scriptural tone of “Firmament,” which refers us not simply to the sky, but to heaven, which in Genesis is described as formatively dividing the waters at Creation:

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which *were* under the firmament from the waters which *were* above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven...

And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry *land* appear: and it was so. And God called the dry *land* Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas (Gen. 1:6–10).

As a thing that divides the waters, Firmament is in an odd sense akin to a Fin, which as it moves through water, divides it. However, as heaven, Webster tells us, firmament is “an expanse, a wide extent; for such is the signification of the Hebrew word, coinciding with regio, region, and reach ... [it] does not convey the sense of *solidity*, but of stretching, extension; the great arch or expanse over our heads.” Though a “Fin” may also be said to divide water, its nature is fundamentally different; denoting solidity and containment, a fin limits reach: “The fins of fish serve to keep their bodies upright, and to prevent wavering or vacillation. The fins, except the caudal, do not assist in progressive motion” (*ADEL*). What Dickinson’s analogy tells us is that publication not only makes her a fish out of water, so to speak, but its tendencies are also opposed to her own.

Whereas the region and reach of publication do not suit Dickinson’s “thought,” the relation to fame that publication engenders would only serve to torment her. For Dickinson, fame will always overrun or flee from the one who keeps or covets “her”: “If fame belonged to me, I could not escape her - if she did not, the longest day would pass me on the chase.” In other words, with any relation to fame (having or lacking it), fame would consume her space and time. This disparagement of an all-consuming fame, which was echoed in Dickinson’s writings throughout her life,⁷⁷ finds fuller and less humble expression in a poem Dickinson composed around the same time as this letter to Higginson:

Fame of Myself, to justify,
All other Plaudit be
Superfluous - An Incense

⁷⁷ “Fame” was a regular subject or point of reference in many poems and letters throughout her life. Dickinson wrote many poems explicitly discussing fame and its implications, including “Fame of myself to justify” (F 481); “Fame is the tint that scholars leave” (F 968); “The clover’s simple fame” (F 1256); “The beggar at the door for fame” (F 1291); “Fame is a fickle food” (F 1702); and “Fame is a bee” (F 1788).

Beyond Necessity -

Fame of Myself to lack -

Although

My Name be else supreme -

This were an Honor

honorless -

A futile Diadem (F 481; Fascicle 23; H Ms Am 1118.3 [165])⁷⁸

Here, the fame attending publication would not simply consume her space and time, and remove the “approbation” of her dog; it would also be an unnecessary distraction from her own positive self-regard. Since Dickinson never sent this poem to anyone as far as we know, we might understand it as her private and possibly most pointed reason for dismissing such fame: in addition to her own approbation, such fame is “Superfluous” and “Beyond Necessity,” and on its own, in the absence of self-approbation, it is merely “an Honor / honorless - / A futile Diadem.” That is, public fame is worthless. For Dickinson, as the letter to Higginson makes clear, an approving dog and “Barefoot - Rank” are simply “better” than a stately public fame. As she puts it in another poem about fame, “A little bread - a crust - a crumb” (F 135A; H Ms Am 1118.3 [228]), which she sent as a letter to Susan Dickinson in 1860, “[a] modest lot, a fame petite -” “is Enough!” because, unlike a “portly - mind,” it “Can keep the soul alive -” and “breathing - warm - / Conscious, as old Napoleon / The night before the Crown.” If the “petite fame” of her dog’s approbation and even her own self-recognition might keep her soul alive and breathing, it is no wonder Dickinson smiles at Higginson’s suggestion that she “delay ‘to publish’” and thus delay her entry into a grander fame. But why tell Higginson this?

⁷⁸ Franklin dates this to around late 1862.

Critics and biographers who argue that Dickinson aimed to publish or to impress Higginson, tend to view this “smile” as a defensive reaction to his suggestion that she delay, something to cover up an over-sensitivity to what was ostensibly Higginson’s criticism of her poetry.⁷⁹ If Dickinson were negotiating a professional authorial ethos with Higginson or hoped to establish a relationship that could propel her into a successful literary career, then we could read her “smile” as such. However, if we keep in mind that Dickinson’s rhetoric in the correspondence as a whole seems aimed to elicit a certain confusion and discomfort from Higginson about his role in the relationship, then Dickinson’s smile takes on a more complicated aspect. First, it takes some pressure off him, allowing him to feel justified in making the suggestion she delay publishing and, by extension, justified in feeling discomfort both within his role and with the “unregenerate condition” (448) of her poetry, as he would later describe it. As a dismissal of publication and fame, moreover, her smile lets Higginson off the hook as a potential, if ambivalent, agent in her literary career. Dickinson’s smile thus functions as a response to Higginson’s feelings; it is a polite gesture to permit his discomfort and even invite his doubt about her readiness to publish.⁸⁰ If we take Dickinson at her word, moreover, her smile is not only a gesture to let Higginson off the hook; it also registers her satisfaction and, perhaps, relief that Higginson would not comfortably sanction her publication and or even push her in that direction.

⁷⁹ Joanne Dobson was the first to call this reading into question as too presumptive: “no evidence exists to indicate that Higginson told her *not* to publish or that she was being coy or defensive with him. There is no reason to think she was lying” (129).

⁸⁰ Paul Crumbley makes a similar suggestion: “Dickinson’s smile presents the possibility that Higginson’s withdrawal into the rhetoric of publication is a familiar evasion on the part of readers who seek to control intimacy. Her smile is both sardonic and grateful, because the evasive tactic demonstrates that she has touched her reader, albeit too close for his comfort” (*Inflections* 166)

Dickinson's larger effort in this correspondence, I am arguing, was to establish and maintain an unsettled or unsettling, not-quite professional and not-quite personal relationship with an influential literary figure. And as long as she remained "so remarkable, yet so elusive of criticism," as Higginson himself characterized her in 1891, he would remain personally and professionally disarmed by her work, yet unconvinced of its readiness for print. In Higginson's retrospective on this correspondence written for the *Atlantic* in 1891, he notes that Dickinson was "always persistently keeping up this attitude of 'Scholar,' and assuming on my part a preceptorship which it is almost needless to say did not exist. Always glad to hear her 'recite,' as she called it, I soon abandoned all attempt to guide in the slightest degree this extraordinary nature, and simply accepted her confidences, giving as much as I could of what might interest her in return" (450). Above all, in this correspondence was Dickinson's insistence that Higginson continue to treat her as if she were his "Scholar," coaxing him always back into this relation even as she simultaneously disrupted its trajectory. Just as she would keep returning the question, "But, would you be my Preceptor," in different iterations, Higginson would keep verging on a role that he could never really inhabit. Positioned as such, Higginson was inclined only to encourage her prudence with publication.

While it is clear Dickinson chose Higginson for his close proximity to the literary market, I agree with Crumbley's assertion that "her interest in sustaining a correspondence with Higginson did not grow out of a wish for his assistance in getting her poems into print" (156), and I will add that even her initial request of Higginson, to tell if her "Verse is alive," was a red herring. In fact, Dickinson not only recognized the material rhetoric of proximity and contiguity, and certainly as it played out across the pages of the *Springfield Republican*, as we have seen, she also harnessed this rhetoric in her correspondence with Higginson, the *Atlantic Monthly's* house expert on the literary profession for young contributors, and in doing so established and managed

her distance from the print world in perpetuity. I believe Dickinson intended this dynamic all along, and that she used it specifically to create a gap between herself and an encroaching literary culture, a gap her closest friends and more distant admirers were all too eager to close. Though during the exchange with Susan Dickinson, in which “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers” was workshopped, Dickinson expressed her wish to “make Susan and Austin proud a long way off,” this wish speaks less of her own literary ambition than of Susan’s, and of Dickinson’s desire to defer her literary success. Higginson—as an authoritative third party, with more influence than Susan or even Bowles—could authorize Dickinson’s deferral.⁸¹ That Dickinson used Higginson in this way is borne out within and beyond their correspondence. In fact, Dickinson used her correspondence with Higginson not only to defer his approbation indefinitely, but also to negotiate exemptions from the print world more broadly. As Dickinson became more widely known, and more solicitations by interested editors came her way, she turned to Higginson for help in furnishing refusals.⁸²

⁸¹ Martha Nell Smith has argued that contacting Higginson was Susan’s idea. While it may have been Susan who first suggested she contact Higginson, my contention is that Dickinson contacted him with intentions opposite to those Susan may have imagined.

⁸² Dandurand also makes a similar claim: “Dickinson put off publication indefinitely by casting Higginson in the role of her ‘Preceptor’ and herself in that of his ‘Scholar,’ adopting the stance that in asking for his help, she irrevocably declared herself to hold the ‘Barefoot - Rank’ of unpublished poet” (“Publication, Attitudes Toward” 240). Dandurand also argues that Higginson was the person “to whom she turned for protection against pressure to give her poems up to public demands” (“Dickinson and the Public” 265). While I agree that Dickinson turned to Higginson for protection from the pressure of publication, I do not believe Higginson really understood his position as such, nor would he have accepted this position at face-value. I think Higginson’s stewardship in this sense was never quite apparent to Higginson himself, and as such Dickinson was always needing to covertly renegotiate an amateur ethos with him to maintain his “protection.” Roger Lundin also suggests Higginson met Dickinson’s need for help against the pressures of publication, but his reasoning is odd: “In Higginson, Dickinson hoped to find a critical

Dickinson's "Safest Friend"

One of the most significant of these instances occurred in the late 1870s, when popular poet Helen Hunt Jackson (1830–1885) began actively soliciting Dickinson to share her work with the wider world through print. Jackson, who had been born in Amherst the same year as Dickinson, and had maintained an acquaintance with Dickinson since childhood, became familiar with Dickinson's poetry and her reticence to publish in the late 1860s, in part through their occasional correspondence, in which they exchanged poetry, and also via Higginson, who had become friends with Jackson in the late 1860s. In a letter dated March 20 1876, Jackson even admits to having "a little manuscript volume with a few of your verses in it," calls Dickinson "a great poet," and playfully insists that "it is wrong to the day you live in, that you will not sing aloud. When you are what men call dead, you will be sorry you were so stingy" (L 466).⁸³

In August of that year, Jackson invited Dickinson to contribute to "a volume of Verse" forthcoming from Boston publishing house Roberts Brothers, as part of their No Name Series. The series, as the publisher's announcement reported, would feature "Original American Novels

audience without the risk of exposing herself to public scrutiny through publication" (115); "From the start, Higginson met two of Dickinson's greatest needs. He served as a confidential yet discerning audience of one for this most private of poets, offering his professional advice about the work she sent him; his judgments strengthened her confidence in her poetry's value and bolstered her hopes for posthumous fame. At the same time, Higginson's advice against publishing meshed nicely with her desire to be told by someone else not to do that which would leave her 'laid open, bare, by earth's publicity'" (117). I do not believe that Dickinson needed Higginson to boost her "confidence in her poetry's value," or her "hope for posthumous fame"; as I am arguing, and as Chapter 4 explores in detail, Dickinson already knew her poetry's value and was seeking to preserve that value by avoiding, via Higginson, public forms of poetic address.

⁸³ The "little manuscript volume" was probably a collection of poetry copied from Higginson's personal stash, and those Dickinson already sent to Jackson.

and Tales, to be published Anonymously. These novels are to be written by eminent authors, and in each case the authorship of the work is to remain an inviolable secret...Its success will depend solely on the writer's ability to catch and retain the reader's interest." (endpaper, *Masque of Poets*). The first novel in the series, *Mercy Philbrick's Choice*, written by Jackson herself, was to launch the following month. The singular "volume of Verse" planned for the series would include "anonymous poems from famous hands, to be written especially for it." Stressing the anonymity of the venture, Jackson did her best to lower the stakes for Dickinson:

When the volume of Verse is published in this series, I shall contribute to it: and I want to persuade you to. Surely, in the shelter of such double anonymousness as that will be, you need not shrink. I want to see some of your verses in print. Unless you forbid me, I will send some that I have. May I? - It will be some time before this volume appears. There ought to be three or four volumes of stories first, I suppose -. (L 476a; 20 August 1876)

The "shelter of...double anonymousness" that Jackson promises for Dickinson would presumably be the anonymous publication of a poem that Jackson would anonymously submit on Dickinson's behalf ("I will send some that I have"). In other words, not even the editor of the volume need know who the real author was. Though we do not have Dickinson's response to this letter, if any response was given it clearly did not give Jackson permission to use any of Dickinson's poems in her possession, since the following October, Jackson tried to persuade Dickinson again, first in person, during a visit to the Dickinson homestead, and then in a follow-up letter in which she apologized for being impertinent during the visit, but reiterated her purpose:

I am ver[y sorry if] I have seemed [neglectful] and I hope [to hear from] you again. [I feel] as if I ha[d been] very imperti[nent that] day [in] speaking to you

[as] I did, accusing you of living away from the sunlight and [telling] you that you [looke]d ill, which is a [mor]tal price of ill[ness] at all times, but re[al]ly you look[ed] so [wh]ite and [mo]th-like[!]...You say you find great pleasure in reading my verses. Let somebody somewhere whom you do not know have the same pleasure in reading yours. (L 476c)⁸⁴

Jackson's scolding of Dickinson's hesitancy to step into the public eye as a kind of "living away from the sunlight" highlights the extent to which Jackson understood publication to be a natural and, indeed, healthful venture. Jackson also thought it was a duty to put one's talent into service for others, as she makes clear in a letter to Dickinson eight years later: "I do not think we have a right to with hold from the world a word or a thought any more than a deed, which might help a single soul" (L 937a). While the friendship between Dickinson and Jackson developed around the mutual admiration of each other's work, Dickinson did not share Jackson's valuation of publication and was unwilling to contribute to the No Name Series volume. Jackson's persistence offered Dickinson little ground for protest, however, and finding it difficult to counter such an admiring and influential peer, Dickinson turned to the only person who might intercept: her Preceptor. Dickinson pleaded the case to Higginson:

Dear Friend, - Are you willing to tell me what is right? Mrs. Jackson, of Colorado, was with me a few moments this week, and wished me to write for this. I told her I was unwilling, and she asked me why? I said I was incapable, and she seemed not to believe me and asked me not to decide for a few days. Meantime, she would write me. She was so sweetly noble, I would regret to estrange her, and if you would be willing to give me a note saying you disapproved it, and thought me

⁸⁴ This manuscript is in pieces, with some parts cut away. The transcription above is Thomas Johnson's.

unfit, she would believe you. I am sorry to flee so often to my safest friend, but hope he permits me. (L 476)

Positioned as her “safest friend,” Higginson became an unwitting buffer against Jackson’s solicitation. As Dickinson presumptively asks for Higginson’s disapproval, an official reiteration of his earlier suggestion that she delay to publish, she allows him little room for reflection on the matter. In fact, Dickinson actively limits Higginson’s assessment by remaining vague about Jackson’s invitation. Signaling only that Jackson “wished me to write for this” and referring Higginson to a publisher’s notice for the No Name Series as a whole, which Jackson had forwarded to her, Dickinson excludes crucial details: (1) that she was being asked to contribute to the special “volume of Verse” in the series; (2) that it “would be some time before this volume appears”; and (3) that Jackson already had a poem in mind, from her “little manuscript volume” of Dickinson’s poetry and would submit it anonymously alongside her own contributions. Withholding details that might encourage Higginson’s complacency with Jackson’s plan was perhaps subtle trickery on Dickinson’s part to secure a blanket injunction from her “safest friend” against publication. Left with the pamphlet and common knowledge of the Series as novels written anonymously by “eminent authors,” Higginson would be left to assume it was out of Dickinson’s realm, which suggests she may have been intentionally misleading. In any case, Dickinson’s efforts backfired, and she secured nothing from Higginson to help her cause: “It is always hard to judge for another of the bent of inclination or range of talent; but I should not have thought of advising you to write stories, as it would not seem to me to be in your line. Perhaps Mrs. Jackson thought that the change & variety might be good for you: but if you really feel a strong unwillingness to attempt it, I don’t think she would mean to urge you” (L 476b). Though Dickinson could rely on Higginson’s clout as both a literary critic and a friend of Jackson’s, and also on his discomfort with Dickinson’s readiness for print, a discomfort Dickinson

had been stoking since their very first exchange, Higginson's response did not supply the disapproval she was seeking, and it even suggested Dickinson was overestimating Jackson's zeal. Seeing her efforts wasted, Dickinson corrected Higginson: "It was not stories she asked of me. But may I tell her just the same that you dont (sic) prefer it? Thank you, if I may, for it almost seems sordid to refuse from myself again" (L 477). Providing as little new detail as possible and still not mentioning poetry, Dickinson takes a cue from Jackson's assertiveness and thanks him for furnishing her with a refusal, before he has even given it to her explicitly.⁸⁵

Jackson would not drop the matter, however; two years later, after several "volumes of stories" were published in the No Name Series, and the poetry volume was in production, Jackson entered another round of negotiations with Dickinson. On April 29th, 1878, Jackson again tries to reduce the stakes of publication for Dickinson:

Would it be of any use to ask you once more for one or two of your poems, to come out in the volume of "no name" poetry which is to be published before long by Roberts Bros.? If you will give me permission I will copy them - sending them in my own handwriting - and promise never to tell any one, not even the publishers, whose the poems are. Could you not bear this much of publicity? only you and I would recognize the poems. I wish very much you would do this - and I think you would have much amusement in seeing to whom the critics, those shrewd guessers would ascribe your verses. (L 573a)

In late October Jackson visited Dickinson again, and followed up with a final, deeply personal request for the poetry: "Now - will you send me the poem? No - will you let me send the "Success" - which I know by heart - to Roberts Bros for the Masque of Poets? If you will, it will

⁸⁵ It is unknown if Higginson ever supplied an explicit refusal, but we can assume he acquiesced to Dickinson's "strong unwillingness" to agree to Jackson's proposal.

give me a great pleasure. I ask it as a personal favor to myself - Can you refuse the only thing I perhaps shall ever ask at your hands?" (L 573b). The desperation of Jackson's plea, and the fact that the volume would be on the market only three weeks later, as Thomas Johnson and other Dickinson scholars have noted, suggests Jackson had already submitted Dickinson's "Success" for inclusion.⁸⁶ In fact, as early as July, *A Masque of Poets* was reported as "in press already," delayed only because of "the time necessary to have proof sheets corrected by the authors who live in England...[and] the number of prominent poets who wish to be represented in its pages is increasing" ("Literary News Items"). Faced with Jackson's personal plea, and the probability that the poem was already included in the collection, Dickinson finally relented and allowed the publication.⁸⁷

The release of *A Masque of Poets* in November 1878 marks Dickinson's first publication in a book.⁸⁸ The 301-page volume included 70 shorter poems (each 1–10 pages in length) as well as one "novelette in verse" by 53 different writers. Unlike other poetry anthologies of the time, which arranged their contents by author, and sometimes by subject, this volume includes a spare table of contents, which listed poems by title only in no apparent order. Each poem, as per volume editor George Parsons Lathrop's suggestion, begins on its own page so as not to "run on to each other" (Lathrop 2), presumably in keeping with the "masque" theme, as though each

⁸⁶ Thomas Johnson suggests that, since the book was sold only three weeks following her final request, Jackson had already submitted the poem and was covering her tracks (*Poems* xxxii).

⁸⁷ Jackson's follow-up letter suggests Dickinson was complicit with Jackson's submission of the poem on Dickinson's behalf: "I suppose by this time you have seen the Masque of Poets. I hope you have not regretted giving me that choice bit of verse for it" (L 573c).

⁸⁸ Stearn reports that a total of 2590 copies were printed: "Trade edition: 1500 copies printed in November, 500 in November 1878; 90 in April 1894. Red Line edition: 500 copies printed in November 1878" (396).

poem were a masked performance unto itself. The front and back matter are likewise structured to give the sense of masked performance. Preceding the contents, an anonymous epigraph asks “Poets of To-Day” to take “comfort” that “A single verse may live as long, God please, / As all of Shakespeare or Euripides.”⁸⁹ This is followed by an illustration and another epigraph, which together form a kind of emblem introducing the masked performances to come. Here, a cherubic child prances in an over-sized robe, holding a large mask to his face, which is turned in the direction of the first poem, signaling the masque as a child’s play. Beneath the illustration, a short verse teases players and audience alike, inciting a competitive game:

Vain is the mask! Who cannot, at desire,
Name every singer in the hidden choir?
A thin disguise is that which veils with care
The face, but lets the changeless heart lie bare!

The volume as a whole has a parlor game quality to it, inviting readers to perform the piece and guess the player. Though anonymity of the volume was initially billed as a way to focus attention on the merits of the poetry independent of authorship, as the *New York Herald* review put it, “it is almost impossible to read any of them for their own sake, for our mind is continually on the rack to trace similarities or fathom the style” (Monday, November 25, 1878: 5).

The volume concludes with an envoy, again delivered as an emblematic pairing of illustration and interpretative verse. The illustration is of a middle-aged man, dressed in a robe, sitting on a bench in a classical dramatic setting — there are ancient Greek-style masks hung up beside him, a thyrsus leans on the bench beside him, and there is a scroll at his feet. He looks back toward the final poem with his face resting on his hand, in contemplation. The verse, a line

⁸⁹ This was in fact penned by Thomas Bailey Aldrich (1836–1907), one of the contributors.

from Prospero's speech in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, "Our revels now are ended" (IV.i.148), alludes to the end of the fanciful masque celebrating the betrothal of Prospero's daughter Miranda to Ferdinand. With the "insubstantial pageant faded" (IV.i.155) comes the return to real life and death. And thus the envoy rounds the volume off as a diversionary child's play.

Though the volume included the work of some of the most popular of Dickinson's contemporaries, including Helen Hunt Jackson, Louisa May Alcott (1832–1888), Mary Mapes Dodge (1831–1905), Elizabeth Akers Allen (1832–1911), Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, (1844–1911), Christina Rossetti (1830–1894), Sidney Lanier (1842–1881), Edmund Clarence Stedman (1833–1908), Higginson's brother-in-law William Ellery Channing (1818–1896), Franklin Benjamin Sanborn (1831–1917), James Russell Lowell (1819–1891), Thomas Bailey Aldrich (1836–1907), Sarah Piatt (1836–1912), and even Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) (posthumously submitted by Sanborn), all of the contributions were light fare, and to a great degree trivial, as many were written to expressly trick the reader from guessing correctly.⁹⁰ Jackson told Dickinson the volume was, as a whole, "a disappointment. Still it has much interest for all literary people. I confess myself unable to conjecture the authorship of most of the poems" (L 573c). Contemporary reviews of the volume voiced similar comment, many assuming the poetry was a poor showing for what was assumed to be the work of well-known and beloved poets, and Dickinson's poem, "Success is counted sweetest" (F 112), assumed by some reviews to be the work of Emerson, was not counted among the more notable contributions, though its placement in the volume, just

⁹⁰ Also included were: Celia Thaxter (1836–1878), Harriet Waters Preston (1843–1911), Louise Chandler Moulton (1835–1908), Sarah Chauncey Woolsey (1835–1905), James T. Fields (1817–1881), Bayard Taylor (1825–1878), Annie Adams Fields (1834–1915), Nora Perry (1841–1896), and Hawthorne's daughter, Rose Hawthorne Lathrop (1852–1926).

preceding the “novelette in verse,” was, as Jackson assured Dickinson, “special...being chosen to end the first part of the volume” (L 573c).⁹¹

Success.

Success is counted sweetest
By those who n’er succeed
To comprehend a Nectar
Requires the sorest need.
Not one of all the Purple Host
Who took the flag to-day,
Can tell the definition,
So plain, of Victory,
As he defeated, dying,
On whose forbidden ear
The distant strains of triumph
Break, agonizing clear.

The poem—an edited version of Jackson’s copy (or perhaps her incorrect memory) of the one Dickinson enclosed in her fourth letter to Higginson—is a meditation on how success is meaningful from a distance: those lacking success and having “sorest need” are the only ones

⁹¹ Thomas Niles acknowledged in a letter to Dickinson that in some reviews of the book, “Emerson has had to author” (L573d) her poem, referring to the fact that readers were guessing that Emerson was the secret author of “Success.” Thomas Johnson notes a typical review of *Masque* “in the influential *Literary World*, 10 December 1878 (IX, 118): ‘If anything in the volume was contributed by Emerson, we should consider these lines upon ‘Success’ most probably his’” (*Letters* 626–7).

who can “count” and “comprehend” the sweetness of success.⁹² At a definitive remove from those who succeed (“the Purple Host / Who took the flag”), “those who n’er succeed” can “tell the definition / So plain, of Victory,” that is, understand victory by way of their constant distance from it. This understanding comes as a reverberation of “distant strains of triumph” on the “forbidden ear” of the “defeated, dying,” an agonizing mark of the success forever beyond their reach.

The majority of the edits in this printed version, including edits to line breaks and dashes, spelling (“n’er” [*Masque*] for “ne’er” [ED]; “sweetest” [*Masque*] for “sweetestt” [ED]; “to-day” [*Masque*] for “Today” [ED]), and article (“the sorest” [*Masque*] for “sorest” [ED]), word choice and meaning (“plain” [*Masque*] for “clear” [ED]; “Break, agonizing clear” [*Masque*] for “Burst - agonized - and / clear!” [ED]), bring a simplicity to the poem that the version Dickinson sent to Higginson in July 1862 does not allow.⁹³

⁹² In addition to the Higginson copy sent in 1862 (F 112D; BPL 1093.10), two earlier copies of the poem are extant: (1) a copy sent as a letter to Susan Dickinson in summer 1859 (F 112A; H MS Am 1118.5); (2) a copy included in Fascicle 5, recorded in 1859 (F 112C; AC 83–1). The poem was also printed in the *Brooklyn Daily Union* on April 27, 1864, which means there was possibly another copy in Dickinson’s hand that got passed along to the editor, via friends. For an extensive discussion of these possibilities see Dandurand, “New Dickinson Civil War Publications.” Dickinson, Higginson, and Jackson were very probably unaware of this earlier printing. The existing Dickinson copies and the *Brooklyn Daily Union* printing are practically identical in phrasing. The *Masque* printed version stands as the most significant alteration to Dickinson’s phrasing.

⁹³ In Higginson’s copy of the book, he notes that edits “were probably made by H.H.” However, an exchange between series editor Thomas Niles and Dickinson following publication of the volume, in which Niles sends Dickinson an author’s copy in exchange for her “valuable contribution,” indicates the poem was altered “in phraseology” after Jackson submitted it: “I wanted to send you a proof of your poem, wh. as you have doubtless perceived was slightly changed in phraseology” (L 573D). This suggests at least some edits were made by Niles himself, or volume editor Guy Lathrop, not Jackson. It also suggests that Jackson did not hide the fact that Dickinson was the author of the poem.

Success - is counted
sweetestt
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!

In this 1862 version, for instance, the contraction “ne’er” creates a sight rhyme with the assonant “sweetestt” (sic), “succeed,” and “need” in the first four lines, and in doing so adds a subtle aural hint of “near” to the word “never,” and the implicit complication of near success just beneath the scene of success and defeat. As such, “ne’er / succeed” figuratively registers a reaching (for) success by both those “Who took the Flag” and those “defeated, dying,” and thus prepares the word “strains” (in “the distant strains of triumph”) to mean a “violent effort; a stretching or exertion of the limbs, or of any thing else” (*ADEL*), as in the embattled reach for success, and not

only “song; note; sound” (*ADEL*), as in the aural expression of success at the end of the battle. The printed version, which replaces “ne’er” with “n’er,” simplifies the scene; erasing the very hint of battle Dickinson’s poem evokes. Combined with the edit in the final line, the situation of agony in the printed version is also simplified; it is “agonizing” to the defeated how “clear,” that is, how definitively “The distant strains of triumph / Break” on their “forbidden ear.” In Dickinson’s 1862 version, it is not the blow of defeat, but rather the success reached (for) that is agonizing.

Here, it is the “distant strains of / triumph” that are “agonized.” In other words, both the battle for success and the expression of success is marked by agony. As “the Purple Host / Who took the Flag - Today -” succeed, they “Burst” (suddenly and violently) victorious in a way that is both “agonized [*ADEL*: “Distressed with excessive pain; tortured”] - and clear! [*ADEL*: “Clean; quite; entirely; wholly; indicating entire separation”], bringing an explosive end to the agonized reaching of all who went to battle, even suggesting that limbs may have burst clear off in the process. “Success - is counted / sweetest / By those that ne’er / succeed” not only because they desire what they still lack, but also because they have so far escaped the agony of the win. Dickinson’s version thus subtly challenges the presumption that success is sweet at all, reminding us that success is the fruit of a violent effort, and those who count it sweetest are only those who are nearly there with the “sorest need,” not those who are already there. And apparently satisfaction and ease escape both.

These agonizing positions in relation to success are not, however, the only ones; the poem also allows a third position, that of the speaker or poet. No hint of a lyric “I,” this detached, unarticulated voice is not explicitly or implicitly aligned with either the “Purple Host” or the defeated. In fact, the voice of the poet, here, remains unimplicated in the agonized experience of success as either the fruit of a violent effort or a “sweetest” lack. Merely observant, she articulates

the scene from another vantage point, one that transcends, not success per se, but the need for success. Though the speaker's voice remains similarly detached from the scene in the printed poem, it is, as I have suggested above, no agonized battle she observes, where the sweetness of success is nothing more than an artifact of its lack, and never grasped by either side; rather, the speaker observes a simple, if ironic, consolation, that success is sweet. Even those who will never know it will know that.

As the final poem of the section, "Success" is not only part of the group of poems which precede it; it also completes the first half of the masque and, in a sense, functionally aligns with the epigraph and the envoy to frame the masque. Indeed, like the epigraph and the envoy, the poem might be said to reflect on the scene of the masque, speaking to the reader who may never succeed in guessing the writer, the writer who may never be known, and also the masque itself (and the poem's own participation), if the strains of triumphant readers succeed in unmasking its "insubstantial pageant." The printed version's alteration of "phraseology" thus works in conjunction with the poem's positioning in the book, to create quite a different effect and purpose. Rather than ironizing the reach for success and imagining a way out of its souring economy, it encourages the reach and especially a competitive reach. It comes across as a teasing consolation in this scene, and the significance that attends Dickinson's version is, as a result, deemphasized and even redeployed as its inverse—a redeployment not unlike what occurred with Dickinson's poetry in the *Springfield Republican* some 15 years before.

While we do not have any clear evidence of what Dickinson thought of this, the differences were apparent enough to make Jackson anticipate Dickinson's regret: "I hope you

have not regretted giving me that choice bit of verse for it.”⁹⁴ Here, Jackson suggests the “choice bit of verse” may be cause for regret, as if to say the poem was too good for the collection, and that Dickinson might regret the association or regret including that particular poem. Jackson’s own appraisal of the volume as “a disappointment” seems to turn on the quality of the contributions and the success of the masque idea, as though it were the very “insubstantial pageant” its envoy alludes to, and not professional enough. But would Dickinson have shared this kind of professional disappointment?

If Dickinson had a regret about this publication, it was less about its degree of professional success, than about Jackson injecting her into the fraught economy of professional authorship toward which “Success is counted sweetest” gestures and from which it stages an escape. Like other literary agents in Dickinson’s life—Samuel Bowles, Fidelia Cooke, even Susan Dickinson—Jackson’s intervention sought to negotiate an authorial ethos for Dickinson’s work—at least by association—that involved repurposing and readdressing Dickinson’s poetry in a new material context for unknown readers, and for the community of poets contributing to the volume, including Jackson herself. Like Cooke, Jackson may have also sought to use Dickinson’s poetry for broader professional purposes. In fact, Jackson’s efforts with Dickinson indicate that she sought, as Paul Crumbley notes, “to collaborate with Dickinson through the promotion of poetry that she [saw] as representing a level of accomplishment that inspire[d] her admiration but which

⁹⁴ Dickinson’s niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, reports that “my mother spoke to Emily of her poem, also published without permission, included by Helen Hunt in the ‘Masque of Poets,’ and saw her go so white she regretted the impulse which had led her to express her own thrill in it” (30). Domhnall Mitchell suggests that “Dickinson’s tension might have related to her having published without having informed Susan beforehand” (410–11, n127), but one wonders if, instead, Dickinson was worried that Susan’s enthusiasm about the publication might renew Susan’s desire (and surreptitious efforts) to see Dickinson in print.

she failed to realize on her own” (142). Dickinson’s impulse to insert Higginson—the person most uncomfortable with her readiness for print—in between her and the very person who might align Dickinson with professional authorship, is telling. Using Higginson as an intermediary, Dickinson attempts to forestall and even preclude the opportunity Jackson offers and all it portends: the forces of literary professionalism, gendered or otherwise, knocking at her door, and threatening to amplify, channel, dilute, or quell the life of her poetry.

As Martha Nell Smith has argued, “Dickinson found the printed transformation of her work dissatisfying” (*Rowing* 2). For Smith and others, what is especially at stake in the “printed transformation of her work” are Dickinson’s poetic forms and expressions, such as their “unfinishedness” (Dandurand, “Why” 109) and their genre- and gender-bending polyvocality (Messmer), which print conventions and mediations would alter, limit, or “violat[e]” (Erkkila 97).⁹⁵ While I agree that the “printed transformation of her work” was “dissatisfying” to Dickinson, the material rhetoric that contributed to this “printed transformation” reveals that much more was at stake for Dickinson than her words, form, or meaning. What is irreversibly and entirely transformed in print is her poetry’s directionality and address, as it was used to

⁹⁵ See also Werner, *Emily Dickinson’s Open Folios*: 1; McGann, “Emily Dickinson’s Visible Language”: 259. The theory that print transformation of her poetics motivated Dickinson’s choice not to publish is heavily influenced by the “manuscript turn” in Dickinson studies. Dandurand (“Why,” Chp. 2) summarizes major lines of argument (to 1984) for Dickinson’s reluctance to publish: due of lack of support by/indifference from contemporaries (Whicher, Ward, Bingham, Miller); due to negative response to 1860s publication of her poems or abhorrence toward editorial tampering (Johnson, Ransom, Sherwood, Anderson, Lubbers, Patterson, Sewall); due to failure to find appreciative support as a woman poet (Patterson, Mossberg, Keller). A common thread among these theories is the assumption that Dickinson was forced to abandon the possibility of publication because the nineteenth-century literary market was not receptive her poetics. While my argument is closest to those who consider Dickinson’s negative response to the 1860s publications, I diverge from these by arguing that her literary market was receptive, but Dickinson was fundamentally not interested in public modes of poetic address.

negotiate an authorial ethos for her peers, and implicated in their reach for literary professionalism and success. Thus, while I agree in part with Dandurand's assertion that "Dickinson chose not to publish to avoid the demands made on successful authors, demands that would have taken her time, her privacy" ("Publication, Attitudes Toward" 240), demands that many professional authors, like Louisa May Alcott,⁹⁶ often found intolerable—it is perhaps more the demands made of her poetry, and the estranging distances it would be asked to traverse that so vexed Dickinson. Moreover, while, as Mitchell claims, "the ephemeral nature of the popular, the brief life and death of the best-seller" (*Monarch* 96) was certainly a factor in her opinion on fame, it was also the wholesale transformation, in such worldly contexts, of her poetry's personal address (and the interpersonal affect realized thereby) that made her repudiate its existence there.

If we are to believe Dickinson's story as she told it to Higginson in her second letter to him, she had been forestalling worldly demands on her poetry since the early 1860s, and the question of direction and address was at the heart of the matter: "[t]wo editors of journals came to my father's house this winter, and asked me for my mind, and when I asked them 'why' they said I was penurious, and they would use it for the world" (L 261; April 25, 1862). Like Jackson's comment 15 years later, in which she called Dickinson "stingy," Dickinson's delay to give these editors her "mind," is viewed as "penurious." But Dickinson is not being penurious; she is concerned with their purpose, and to what end her "mind" would be used. Her question "why" is obstinate and passive-aggressive in its delay to answer yes or no to her solicitors, and also in its refusal to make what Susan S. Williams refers to as "a simple choice between resistance and collusion" (91) in one's relation to the literary market, both of which invited fame of the

⁹⁶ Alcott notes in her journal from June 1865 that as she is "[b]usy writing, keeping house, and sewing. Company often; and strangers begin to come, demanding to see the authoress who does not like it, and is porcupiny. Admire the books but let the woman alone, if you please, dear public" (*Louisa May Alcott* 167).

“romantic genius” or “scribbler” kind. Reiterating her voicing of this question, in the letter to Higginson, as her first and final word in her exchange with the soliciting editors, she extends her delay further and into her amateurish exchange with Higginson, precluding her alignment with those who, like Cooke, Jackson, and Higginson’s female protégés, also avoided the “simple choice between resistance and collusion,” but did so by “adopt[ing] authorial strategies that enabled them to succeed in the literary market on their own terms.” For Dickinson, “adopt[ing] authorial strategies” was an equally problematic choice, and success in the literary market could never be on her own terms. Arguably, this was Dickinson’s most extensive and consequential mobilization of what Sharon Cameron has identified as Dickinson’s tendency of “choosing not choosing.”⁹⁷

An exchange with No Name Series editor Thomas Niles in April 1882 and again in April 1883 demonstrates further Dickinson’s continued passive-aggressive stance toward the literary market. Addressing Niles in his capacity as Roberts Brothers editor, Dickinson inquires after a rumored biography on George Eliot being written by John Walter Cross.⁹⁸ Niles’ response came in two letters: the first reporting the Eliot biography had been abandoned, and the second reporting a mistake—the biography was, in fact, going forward. In this second letter, he added a personal remark: “‘H.H.’ [Helen Hunt Jackson] once told me that she wished you could be

⁹⁷ In *Choosing Not Choosing* (1992), Sharon Cameron reads in Dickinson’s fascicle texts, a principal choice to not choose as a textual, formal, and thematic, and philosophic strategy indelible to Dickinson’s poetic practice. While I agree with Cameron on the point that “not choosing” is a principal feature of Dickinson’s poetic practice, and that “Dickinson’s poetry dramatizes the impossibility of wholeness understood as boundedness” (182), I do not agree that Dickinson seeks via this practice to remain “indifferen[t] to difference” (182). Since choice was integral to her selection, material placement, and circulation of poetry through her correspondence, “choosing not choosing” in the fascicles was often a means to a very different end for a given poem in her letters. Dickinson always made clear choices when it came to communicating her poetry to others, or communicating with others through poetry.

⁹⁸ Cross’s *George Eliot’s Life as Related in her Letters and Journals* was eventually published in 1885.

induced to publish a volume of poems. I should not want to say how highly she praised them, but to such an extent that I wish also that you could.” Dickinson’s response to this was characteristically noncommittal, enclosing a poem “How happy is the little Stone” (F 1570E) with the following note:

Thank you, Mr Niles,

I am very grateful for the Mistake.

I should think it irreparable deprivation to know no farther of her [Eliot] here, with the impregnable chances - The kind but incredible opinion of “H.H.” and yourself, I would like to deserve - Would you accept a Pebble I think I gave to her, though I am not sure - (L 749; AC 832b).

This is a cheeky response to Nile’s offer, since Dickinson humbles herself and then effectively snubs the suggestion of publication with her poem:

How happy is
the little Stone
That rambles
in the Road
alone
And does’nt
care about
Careers
And Exigencies
never fears -
Whose Coat of
elemental Brown

A passing
Universe put on
And independent
as the Sun

Associates or
glows alone
Fulfilling absolute
Decree
In casual
simplicity -

Appearing on its own page, the poem is a rhetorical observation of “How happy” the rambling, lone, indifferent “little Stone” is, existing without “Exigencies” or consciousness of the “passing Universe,” and “In casual simplicity.” That the speaker recognizes a bliss in this unconscious state, but remains vague on its definition or degree (“how happy”), places the speaker at a distance, as one who does not necessarily experience this bliss themselves, and perhaps only desires it. In the context of this letter, the poem takes on a didactic tone. As the “little Stone” is specifically indifferent to “Careers,” the poem comes as rejoinder to Niles’ prodding, inducing him to recognize an implication: that the “little Stone” is only happy because it is not involved in “Careers” or the goings on of “[a] passing Universe.” Although there is no evidence that Dickinson actually sent Jackson this particular poem, she certainly conveyed similar sentiments in person and through her letters, and thus Dickinson’s performance of forgetfulness—“Would you accept a Pebble I think I gave to her, though I am not sure -”—comes as a poke at Jackson’s refusal to accept such a “Pebble” from Dickinson in the past. Here, Dickinson half-heartedly and

almost comically offers it to Niles as second-pickings, a mere reiteration that is quite unconcerned and casual in tone, forgetting its own pedigree, not unlike the “little Stone” itself. Effectively tossing her “Pebble” at Niles and asking him to accept what Jackson was never willing to accept, Dickinson dismisses Niles’ and Jackson’s mutual “wish” without saying no, evading even the possibility of being “induced to publish a volume of poems.” One imagines this is the kind of response Dickinson might have given Fidelia Cooke had they ever corresponded.

Dickinson redeploys this poem a couple of months later in a letter (L 767; F 1570F) to Higginson and his family, in which she affectionately addresses his “Baby” in verse, comparing her to a Robin, encloses a “Jewel” for the child to “pin [on] her Apron or her Shoe,” and shares her relief in Higginson’s lately restored health. The poem is embedded in the letter signed “Your Scholar” and is clearly meant to be read as part of the letter’s personal address. It follows directly from her note about his improved health (“I am glad you are better...I am glad you are with the ‘Elms’ - That is a gracious place -”), which positions the poem as a response to Higginson’s convalescence. It also precedes a final stanza of verse that develops the poem as a comment on the most fulfilling way to be:

Obtaining but
our own Extent
In whatsoever
Realm -
‘Twas Christ’s
own personal
Expanse
That bore him
from the Tomb -

Dickinson's "Obtaining" dominates the poem and its sense channels Webster's definition on the transitive form of the verb: "This word usually implies exertion to get possession," and "is applied both to things of temporary and of permanent possession.... We obtain by seeking." In this sense, "Obtaining but / our own Extent / In whatsoever / Realm - " describes the seeking and taking of all that is already our own, within ourselves or within our reach. In other words, this is not the agonized exertion to claim space or status relative to others, as described in "Success"; on the contrary, it is only the recognition and the taking place of our own "Extent" (*ADEL*: "Space or degree to which a thing is extended; hence, compass; bulk; size; as, a great extent of country, or of a body."). This extent of concern or being is reflected in what "the little Stone" does as it "glows alone / fulfilling absolute / Decree / In casual / simplicity -," and also what Christ's body does: in dying and rising again, Christ obtains his "own personal / Expanse" (*ADEL*: "A spreading; extent; a wide extent of space or body; as the expanse of heaven") as Christ, the saving grace of God. In this context, the poem is less didactic and distant, than it is creative and conspiring, as she aligns both herself and Higginson, in their respective realms (his: "with the 'Elms'"; hers: poetry), with the happiness, grace, and life obtained through one's "own personal / Expanse." The speaker can recognize the happiness of the "little Stone," because she knows her own. If, enclosed with the Niles letter, "How happy is the little Stone" works to disavow the "Careers / And Exigencies" of the literary marketplace, embedded in the Higginson letter the same poem works to claim the "personal Expanse" that comes in the wake of such disavowal.

Though others might try to "use" her "mind for the world," Higginson was different, or at least she coaxed him to be. As Higginson became a literary intermediary of a different kind—a gatekeeper of sorts—Dickinson's letters to him, in their depths of rhetorical elusion developed and enriched by their materiality, also became a medium through which to obtain her "own

Extent.” Dickinson’s correspondence with Higginson marks a turning point in Dickinson’s life as a poet; but not the turning point scholars have been eager to suggest—not because “Higginson discouraged Dickinson’s hopes for publication” (Loeffelholz 132), but precisely because he provided the means to make what she would call in another poem only “a little print / Opon the Floors of / Fame - “ (F 1009). In cultivating an amateur ethos with Higginson, she made it possible to remain just outside a relation to literary success or fame, an oblique proximity from which she would neither make an entrance on the scene nor directly reject it. In this sense, I think Crumbley is right when he says, “what Dickinson did want from Higginson was for him to save her life” (156). But it was not simply “that his open expression of both interest and awe restored Dickinson’s confidence in herself as a writer and gave her the courage to move forward with the daring experiments she was contemplating in her manuscript books” (158). She already had that courage. What Higginson offered was mediation—an authoritative body to keep the interventions of others at bay, so she could work toward “Obtaining but [her] own Extent.”

Chapter 4

Affectivity and the Rhetoric of Dickinson's Addressed Poetry

Blessed be letters - they are the monitors, they are also the comforters, and they are the only true heart-talkers...there you are, with only the soulless pen, and the snow-white, virgin paper...nothing is present but you, and your thought. Utter it then freely - write it down - stamp it - burn it in the ink! - there it is, a true soul-print.

— Ik Marvel, *Reveries of a Bachelor* (53-54)

And what is Ecstasy but Affection and what is Affection but the Germ of the little Note?

A Letter is a joy of Earth -

It is denied the Gods -

Emily,

With Love.

— Emily Dickinson to Mr. and Mrs. Eben Jenks Loomis (L 960)

Contained in this short life

Were *magical *Terrible *miraculous *tenderest - wonderful extents

— Emily Dickinson (F 1175)

Whether or not Dickinson ever seriously entertained the idea of publication during her life, one thing is certain: by 1862 she entered into a correspondence with an influential literary figure who would excuse her from publication as long as she wished. The amateur ethos that Dickinson negotiated through the material rhetoric of her letters to Thomas Wentworth Higginson proved

effective: by continually re-positioning herself at the threshold of her literary culture's gendered access points, without ever crossing into the role of authorial woman poet, Dickinson effectively forestalled her entry into public modes of poetic address indefinitely. That Dickinson did all of this deliberately is telling. Her action marks an assertion of control over her poetic address and suggests that having a public audience for her poetry was in conflict with her poetic practice or her poetry's function, as she envisioned it. In this final chapter, I explore this practice and function through the material rhetoric of the poems Dickinson sent as, in, or with letters to correspondents other than Higginson, and following Dickinson's coming out, as it were, as an amateur women writer to Higginson in April 1862.

The range of Dickinson's correspondents—numbering at least one hundred—indicates her keen, if selective and indirect, engagement with her surrounding culture, and the way in which her letters engaged those correspondents can tell us much about how she envisioned her place among them. In particular, Dickinson's practice of addressing poems to correspondents worked to negotiate enduring and intense social connection. As we saw in Chapter 3, for instance, the material rhetoric of poems enclosed with letters to Higginson, which helped to negotiate her amateur ethos, left him permanently uneasy about her readiness for publication. But while this correspondence kept her comfortably removed from participation in public forms of poetic address, this same correspondence also sparked a life-long friendship between Dickinson and her "Preceptor." Her practice of addressing poems in her correspondences as a whole reveals how deeply concerned she was with building and sustaining friendly connection through poetic address. Dickinson addressed her poems to at least 46 people during her life (around half of those known to have received letters from her), both those who knew her personally and those who did not know her at all. From a love poem sent as a letter to her sister-in-law, to poetic lines of consolation embedded in a letter to a woman she had never met, to a poem enclosed with a letter

thanking a publisher for a book recommendation, Dickinson's use of poetry in epistolary contexts reveals the extent to which Dickinson relied on her poetry to mobilize interpersonal connection. While this chapter does not offer an exhaustive account of the ways in which Dickinson's addressed poems functioned for each of the correspondents known to have received them, I do map key rhetorical patterns of her poetic address across all known addressed poems, in order to propose a reason for her larger turn away from public modes of poetic address. I argue that Dickinson was invested in realizing deep interpersonal affectivity through poetic address, and that this was only possible in correspondence with a specific, personal—not unspecific, public—addressee.

For the last two decades, there has been increasing scholarly attention to Dickinson's letters as not only literary artifacts but also as the primary or preferred mode in which Dickinson circulated her poetry during her lifetime.⁹⁹ Certainly this epistolary circulation shaped how she made meaning in the world, defined her proximities to other people and to literary and cultural forces, and shaped how she created, organized, and served her relationships. While the aim of Dickinson's epistolary circulation of poetry has been variously theorized as creating private community (Smith), developing social reciprocity (Hewitt), installing democratic independence (Crumbley), and disrupting gender and genre convention (Messmer), it has also been invariably

⁹⁹ Dickinson's letters and her addressed poetry as a group have not received the same scholarly attention as have other aspects of Dickinson's life and work. Orzeck and Weisbuch's 1996 edited collection, *Dickinson and Audience* began a more sustained critical discussion of Dickinson's letters. For more recent treatments of Dickinson's letters see Messmer's *A Vice for Voices: Reading Emily Dickinson's Correspondence* (2001), "Emily Dickinson's Lyric Letters" in Hewitt's *Correspondence and American Literature: 1770-1865* (2004), Esdale's "Dickinson's Epistolary Naturalness" (2007), Eberwein and MacKenzie's excellent edited collection, *Reading Emily Dickinson's Letters: Critical Essays* (2009), and "Epistolary Practices and the Problem of Genre" in Socarides' *Dickinson Unbound* (2012).

understood as an alternative form of publication, or as forming a deliberate counterpublic. Martha Nell Smith has argued, for instance, that Dickinson's letters represent "a consciously designed alternative mode of textual reproduction and distribution" (*Rowing* 1–2) of poetry.¹⁰⁰ Likewise, Domhnall Mitchell has argued that "Dickinson's own choice of publishing her poems" was "through a network of friends rather than through the media of newspapers and printed books" (*Monarch* 84), while Logan Esdale notes that in Dickinson's case "sending was a form of publishing, though publishing was not printing" (Esdale 13–14). Shira Wolosky suggests that this epistolary circulation of poems was "something close to the coterie circles of shared poetry in earlier, Renaissance, courtly worlds" ("Public and Private" 106–7). In each of these accounts of Dickinson sending her poetry to others through epistolary contexts, Dickinson's practice is understood as a circulation outside of print culture, but nevertheless a form of "publication," where publication denotes anything from making her poetry known to an individual to inaugurating a counterpublic or coterie circle.¹⁰¹ However, I find this use of publication to be

¹⁰⁰ Smith tracks Emily and Susan Dickinson's distinction between "print" and "publish" to make the point that, for Dickinson, publishing her poetry did not necessarily mean printing it: "In writings regarding Dickinson's poetic project, both Emily and Susan emphasized the distinction between the often synonymously used terms *publish* and *print*...Surrounded by lawyers (Dickinson's father and brother), these women are somewhat legalistic in their differentiations, using publish in the special sense 'to tell or noise abroad' (O.E.D.). That mutually careful specificity to distinguish between works printed and works published is not a negligible fact" ("Susan & Emily Dickinson: Their Lives, In Letters").

¹⁰¹ Dickinson's entire poetic corpus is often understood in relation to publication. Her binding of poetry into fascicle booklets, for instance, has been read as either as a book-making precursor or alternative to print culture publication. I do not believe the fascicles were ever intended to be shared with others, let alone a public. I agree with Virginia Jackson's characterization of the fascicles as "collections of Dickinson's own verse...collections from different occasions, various correspondences" (*Dickinson's Misery* 60), and also Alex Socarides' interpretation of the fascicles as, at least in part, a reiterative attempt to articulate (in a material sense) the problem of poetry itself, of poetry's elegiac attempt to navigate the

highly problematic, particularly as it tends to obscure what distinguishes—for Dickinson especially—epistolary modes from public modes of circulating poetry: the directionality and specificity of the poetic address. The specific, personal poetic address made possible by epistolary modes of circulating her poetry is precisely what made this mode preferable for Dickinson. For clarity and accuracy, then, I use publication to refer only to public modes of poetic address, which I distinguish from Dickinson’s practice. In fact, where the material rhetoric of Dickinson’s deployment of poetry in letters to Higginson reveals an active effort on her part to slow or even block her entry into public modes of poetic address, the material rhetoric of her deployment of poetry in letters to others reveals the extent to which she saw the epistolary circulation of poetry as far from publication as, well, “firmament to fin.”

Whether they were sent to family, friends, or literary professionals, all of Dickinson’s letters can be defined as what William Decker has called “familiar letters”: “texts that at some point in their histories are meant to pass in accordance with some postal arrangement from an addresser to an addressee, that in some way inscribe the process by which an author personally addresses a *specific* readership” (22, my emphasis). Key to the familiar nature of such letters is this specificity. The letter intends a particular addressee, though a familiar letter does not necessarily imply, to borrow Henkin’s phrasing, “a *sealed* intimacy between *two* correspondents” (103, my emphasis). As Decker points out, “[a]ddresser and addressee need not be singular; particularly among family correspondences, letters are written in collaboration to addressees who often collaborate as readers” (22). Such was the case, for instance, when Dickinson addressed Frances and Louise Norcross jointly in a single letter as “My dear little cousins,” or when they wrote

space-time that engenders absence, which so many of Dickinson’s poem discretely channel and respond to. Dickinson’s addressed poetry, to my mind, is a parallel project, but one that grew bigger than the fascicles because it was more realizable and more satisfying.

jointly back to her. These letters, despite their multiple addressees or addressors, are nevertheless personally and exclusively addressed.

Furthermore, though sharing familiar letters with those not addressed by the letter was, as Karen Dandurand points out, not “an uncommon practice in the nineteenth century, and one that Dickinson followed herself” (“Dickinson and the Public” 260)—so much so that “[t]he chain of transmission was potentially endless” (262)—for Dickinson, this chain of transmission merely exposed her poems to additional non-addressees. In other words, the familiar letter does not, in its exposure to non-addressees, inaugurate new addressees. As Decker notes, the familiar letter “always already speaks to non-addressees, to the contingency of being intercepted and published” (26), and, I will add, it speaks to them *as* non-addressees. Despite the potential for Dickinson’s addressed poems to enter into public circulation and to be received by a new and possibly very strange audience, they do so only by, to use Michael Warner’s phrasing, “go[ing] astray” (74), that is, by becoming dislodged and dislocated from their original, specific epistolary occasion and material context and, therefore, original addressee.¹⁰² By virtue of their material, if not explicitly textual, address to a particular person within the context of a letter, Dickinson’s addressed poems do not contain an “appeal to strangers” (74), which according to Warner is a defining characteristic of public address. Though a poem Dickinson sent in a letter may, to use Warner’s terms, “go astray” and “reac[h] strangers,” this was never “its primary orientation” (74). Dickinson’s poetic address was never public in orientation. She only addressed her poems to specific readers whom she could know, with whom her poetic address could be realized, however

¹⁰² Melissa White reads the passing of Dickinson’s writings between her friends as “semi-private,” “to denote this in-between [public and private], yet autonomous textual conveyance” (10). This “semi-private” conveyance would also be a kind of going astray.

imperfectly. Insofar as Dickinson's poetry addressed a specific recipient or was inextricably linked to a specific address (i.e., a personally addressed letter), it did not comprise "public discourse," since public discourse inscribes an addressee that, as Warner notes, "is always yet to be realized" (73). What the material evidence of Dickinson's poetic address in all its multiplicity can tell us is that she was deeply concerned with securing and affecting a specific reader who might or had already come into personal social relation with her, however vaguely defined that relation might be. Though Dickinson's poems made their way into public mediums and garnered a public audience during her life, it never did so by her address; rather, it made its way there via its specific addressee, and as such was always mediated by that addressee, and she sought to keep it that way.

While more than a thousand letters survive from Dickinson's correspondences, more than half of these letters included her own poems, in whole or part.¹⁰³ At least 46 different correspondents received a combined 654 poems from Dickinson—a corpus I am calling Dickinson's *addressed poems*. While this group of correspondents is largely comprised of Dickinson's immediate family, close friends, and neighbors, the modes in which her poetry was sent to these correspondents vary and are correlated with the relative intimacy of Dickinson's relationship with the correspondent.¹⁰⁴ In what follows, I discuss these modes and how they structure significant

¹⁰³ Precisely, 1049 letters (and 124 epistolary fragments) survive from her correspondence, which numbered at least 99 people.

¹⁰⁴ Modes can be determined for 593 of the 654 addressed poems. The mode for the remaining 61 cannot be known for certain; though documented as sent, neither the holograph nor manuscript transcript of these letters and their poems exist. One could hazard an educated guess for most of them, however. The majority of these lost addressed poems (50) were sent to Dickinson's cousins Frances and Louise Norcross and the transcripts of other poems sent to these cousins (21), as well as Dickinson's intimate relationship with them, suggest they either comprised a letter or were set within a letter.

relations between poetic and epistolary address within the context of Dickinson's correspondence, mostly after 1862 when, as I have argued, Dickinson began a life-long effort to halt her entry into the literary market. Developing Socarides' discussion of modes of relations between poems across Dickinson's oeuvre, I define and explore three modes in which Dickinson's poems were sent to her correspondents: (1) *as a letter* in itself, which accounts for 56% of known addressed poems¹⁰⁵; (2) *set in a letter*, which accounts for 34% of known addressed poems; and (3) *enclosed with a letter*, which accounts for 10% of known addressed poems. In the first mode, in which Dickinson addresses a poem as a letter, the poem itself is explicitly and unambiguously addressed to the recipient. In this case, the poetic and epistolary address are one and the same. In the second mode, in which Dickinson sets a poem in the body of a letter, the poetic and epistolary address become implicated in each other, and not entirely collapsed. The third mode, in which Dickinson encloses a poem with a separately addressed letter, contrasts with the latter two in terms of how they directly link poetic and epistolary address. Although enclosed poems are framed by the letter context, they do not directly address the letter's recipient, and the poetic address thus remains only ambiguously connected to the letter's addressee, suggested only by the poem's physical contiguity and possible symbolic resonance with the letter.¹⁰⁶ While any given

¹⁰⁵ While poems sent in this mode has been described variously as "letter-poems" (Hart and Smith), "lyrical letters" (Hewitt), and, most recently, "poems as correspondence" (Socarides), to better distinguish them from poems enclosed or set within letters, I will refer to them as poems that were sent *as letters*.

¹⁰⁶ Dickinson possibly lent her poems, as well, to her earliest friends. A letter to Henry V. Emmons from 1854 suggests she lent him some poems on the condition of his returning them promptly, which he evidently did not: "I look in my casket and miss a pearl – I fear you intend to defraud me. Please [do] not forget your promise to pay 'mine own, with usury'" (L 162). Franklin notes that the "little manuscript" Dickinson refers to "appear(s) to have been individual sheets, containing a few poems on each, unbound" (20) – i.e., like the unbound sheets she would eventually bind into fascicles. See also L 171, August 18 1854: "I find it Friend - I read it - I stop to thank you for it, just as the world is still - I thank you for them

instance of correspondence may have employed one of these modes or multiple modes at once, Dickinson often employed more than one over the course of an individual correspondence. That she often sent the same poems in whole or part to two or more people in different modes, furthermore, provides fruitful ground for comparing differences between or within modes and for highlighting patterns between mode type and recipient. Though one addressed poem may be a variant of a poem also placed in her fascicles or addressed to another recipient, following Cameron I assume “the material placement of the poem is essential to discerning its identity” (*Choosing* 6). In other words, each poem addressed to a specific recipient (either sent as, set in, or enclosed with a letter) forms a unique instance of poetic address and takes on a unique identity in that context.

While my delineation of modes is based on the ways in which a poem is materially positioned relative to a letter, I am primarily interested in how this material position shapes discrete modes of relation between Dickinson’s epistolary and poetic address, and in doing so attempts to control the poem’s affective resonance for a given recipient. Furthermore, I am interested in what this practice, taken as a whole, can tell us about Dickinson’s understanding poetry’s function, more generally. In what follows, I trace the material rhetoric of Dickinson’s

all - the pearl, and then the onyx, and then the emerald stone....Please send me gems again - I have a flower. It looks like them, and for it’s bright resemblances, receive it.” It is also likely she shared her poems through her correspondence with friend and former tutor Benjamin Newton, whom she acknowledged as “the first of her own friends” (L 110). In a letter to Higginson, Dickinson, referring to Newton, wrote: “my dying Tutor told me that he would like to live till I had been a poet” (L 265). The lack of enclosed poems associated with extant letters before 1862, and the suggestion that she shared record copies of her poems with Emmons and Newton, indicates any poems she may have sent were to very close friends, meant to be reviewed and returned (as her record copies), and by extension, neither directly nor indirectly addressed to them.

practice of addressing her poems, from the most intimate mode (poem sent *as a letter*), through the most complex mode (poem *set in* a letter), to the most extensive mode (poem *enclosed with* a letter). As I demonstrate, this material rhetoric puts into high relief poetry's function for Dickinson as a ground for interpersonal affectivity. It was Dickinson's concern for preserving and developing this function of her poetry that prompted her larger turn away from public modes of poetic address.

Poems Sent as Letters

Over half of the poems that Dickinson is known to have addressed to correspondents were sent as letters.¹⁰⁷ This mode of addressing poetry, as I am defining it, includes poems that were recorded for a specific addressee on a sheet of paper without separate letter or surrounding contextual note in Dickinson's hand. These poems are often framed by either a brief salutation (recipient's name or nickname; "Sue -" / "Dear Sister") or signature (Dickinson's name informally presented; "Emily" / "Emilie"), or both, on the same sheet as the poem. Unlike poems set in or enclosed with letters, this mode relies on and actively constructs an explicit intimacy between Dickinson and her recipient. Poems addressed in this way often traveled only short distances and were the least likely to have been conveyed through either the postal service or a stranger's hand, as they were often hand-delivered by Dickinson herself or by a trusted and discrete personal messenger, and were often not even enclosed in an addressed envelope. Notably, Dickinson typically used this mode of addressing poems with her most physically

¹⁰⁷ These 332 poems include seven poems that survive in draft form only in Dickinson's papers (a version of which may or may not have been actually sent to the recipient), and also one poem that is presumed but not confirmed to have been sent.

present familiars, that is, those with whom she had the most sensory contact day to day. As might be expected in correspondence to very familiar addressees, the epistolary address in this case is generally informal or understated, and it is often collapsed with the poetic address or merely implied. While at least 27 different people received a poem as a letter, the vast majority of these poems (nearly 70%) were sent to Susan Dickinson, her longest and most intimate friend, who lived in the house next door. Another 18% were sent to very close family and friends whom she encountered with relative frequency, including her nephews and Samuel Bowles. The remaining 12% was sent to immediate neighbors or close friends of the family who were staying at the Evergreens next door.

Dickinson's practice of addressing poems as letters began at least as early as 1858 and arguably develops from an earlier practice of sending valentines. For instance, a comic valentine Dickinson sent on March 9, 1850 to her father's law partner Elbridge Bowdoin, "Awake ye muses nine" (F 1), stands as the first known verse Dickinson addressed to a recipient. The humor in Dickinson's valentine works in large part because it relies on its reader for meaning.¹⁰⁸ Personally teasing Bowdoin as a bachelor—"a human solo, a being cold and lone"—the valentine tasks him with choosing a bride from among "six true, and comely maidens," referring to her girlfriends and herself. Like this and other early comic valentines, the poems Dickinson sent as letters are peculiarly enthymematic in that they become meaningful and cultivate deeper connection with a particular, knowing recipient. Jeffrey Walker's discussion of enthymemes, specifically as they work in Sapphic lyric, is useful here. Enthymemes are typically understood as syllogisms that omit certain premises already understood or assumed by the audience, and thus enthymemes rely on the audience to fill out their logic and can be quite powerful for that reason.

¹⁰⁸ Juhasz, Miller, and Smith in *Comic Power in Emily Dickinson* (1993) make a similar point about Dickinson's use of humor in her poetry as reliant on a particular audience to complete its meaning.

Drawing on the use of the enthymeme in classical rhetoric and poetry before Aristotle defines it as a syllogism, Walker finds the enthymeme is fundamentally mobilized by affect, and redefines enthymeme as an “emotively significant piece of reasoning as presented to and felt by an audience” (180). More specifically, he describes the enthymeme as a “strategic, kairotic [timely], argumentational turn that exploits a cluster of emotively resonant, value-laden representations and systems of oppositions made ‘present’ (usually) by an exetastic buildup, in order to generate in its audience a passional identification with a particular stance” (180). That is, enthymematic reasoning proceeds from knowledge of the addressee and appropriate timing to harness the addressee’s feeling about something and then pull them into a passion-based alliance with the addressor. Where the addressee needs warming up to be harnessed in this way, an “exetastic buildup” is necessary, which, as Walker describes, is a rhetorical movement consisting of a “concise, emphatic statement of an emotionally-charged opposition – one that serves not only to draw conclusions (in the sense of rational inferences) but also to project a stance or attitude toward the subject under discussion and to motivate the audience to identify with that stance” (177). In other words, it uses emotionally-charged, exclusionary language to nudge the addressee toward one side of the argument, before the punch. Where the addressee is already allied with the addressor, an exetastic buildup is not always necessary—all that is needed is the “turn” itself: an emotive “elliptical argument, that exploits what is taken to be already understood or given in the thinking of its audience” (254), will do. Enthymemes may take the form of epigrams that provide a “cap to a body of discourses and stereotyped narratives already inscribed, by tradition, in the audience’s heart” (253). They may also form “riddling or coded discourse,” an inside joke that “helps to intensify an exclusivist sense of the inside/outside while reaffirming and intensifying the inside group’s self-identification as a fellowship of like-minded comrades” (256). What is key about the enthymematic turn, as Walker defines it, is that it exploits an “affective

charge” that is already present between addressor and addressee or that is made present in the moment by an “exetastic buildup” of some kind, by recapitulating or establishing a fellowship based on a common ground of affectivity. Enthymematic in function, the poems that Dickinson addressed as letters and also, as will become clear, the poems she set in letters, work toward either recapitulating or building this common ground of affectivity. The key variable for Dickinson in this process is the relation she draws between her poetic and epistolary address: the more they are implicated in each other or correspond, the more intimate her relation with the addressee already is or might become.¹⁰⁹ Dickinson’s practice of addressing a poem as letter is linked to her most intimate relations, by which I mean particularly those with whom she came into regular physical contact or shared some sensory experience (laughing and crying, eating food, listening/playing music, or reading poetry together), such as Susan Dickinson or Samuel Bowles.¹¹⁰ In fact, the vast majority of poems associated with Dickinson’s exchanging or gifting of physical items, such as flora, fauna, print materials, food and drink, are addressed in this

¹⁰⁹ Thus, we can see how a recipient like Higginson, who received so many mixed modes of poetic address, as it were, might feel uneasy. The pull and push of Dickinson’s relationship with Higginson are occasioned in large part by how those modes functioned to establish and harness and then disrupt common ground. See also Cameron’s discussion of the correlation between intimacy with the correspondent and poetic elements in Dickinson’s letters: “in Dickinson’s letter we can observe that the more vested the relationship with the letter recipient, the more aphoristic, epigrammatic, and explicitly literary the letters become” (*Lyric Time* 12).

¹¹⁰ She also addressed poems as letters to family members Austin Dickinson, Ned Dickinson, Louise and Frances Norcross, Lucretia Gunn Dickinson Bullard, Perez Dickinson Cowan, Thomas Dwight Gilbert (Sue’s brother); neighbors, Elizabeth Street Dickerman, Jonathan Leavitt Jenkins, Ellen Mather, Olive Gilbert Stearns, Mabel Todd, Sarah Tuckerman; and friends, Elizabeth and Josiah Holland, Mary Bowles, Catherine Scott Turner Anthon, Mary Channing Higginson, and Helen Hunt Jackson. While the scope of this chapter prevents me from detailing these exchanges, without exception they involved or referred to a shared physical experience.

particular mode. Quite often the poem itself was part of, if not the whole of, Dickinson's gift.¹¹¹ What Dickinson was after in these cases, I argue, was to affirm and intensify a shared affectivity.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, *Springfield Republican* editor and proprietor Samuel Bowles became a close friend of Dickinson's brother Austin and his wife, Susan, by the late 1850s. By 1858, his friendship with Emily Dickinson was established enough that she began a correspondence that included letters and addressed poetry. The addressed poem that was intercepted by literary editor Fidelia Cooke in 1861 represents one of 26 poems addressed as letters to Bowles. Representing 66% of the total surviving poems Dickinson sent to Bowles, poems in this mode were intended as personal messages for him, meant to bid him goodbye or greet him on his visit, to demonstrate her affection, share a joke, or expand on an idea they had presumably discussed in person.¹¹² Highly personalized, each of these poems trades in what is already a shared sentiment between them and seeks to deepen an existing intimacy. In the summer of 1863, for instance, Dickinson sent the following note to Bowles alone on a folded sheet of stationery:

So glad we are - a
Stranger'd deem
'twas sorry, that we were -

¹¹¹ While it may be argued that some of the poems sent as letters to Susan may have been intended primarily for workshopping (as opposed to being primarily gifts or personal addresses to Sue), in the only proven case of Dickinson workshopping a poem with Sue ("Safe in their Alabaster Chambers"), she specifically notes her intention to make Susan "proud" of what her poetry can do and only alters the poem to better effect a "frostier" feel for Susan: "Is this frostier?" In other words, even in the workshop, Dickinson was addressing the variants to Susan personally.

¹¹² Based on surviving copies, at least 48 poems were sent to Bowles or members of his immediate family during Dickinson's lifetime. Many more were passed on to Bowles via Susan.

For where the Holiday
should be
there publishes a Tear -
Nor how Ourselves be justi-
fied -
Since Grief and Joy are done
So similar - An Optizan
Could not decide - between -

Emily - (F 608A; AC 687)

This poem articulates a mutual feeling of joy between friends that its physical expression would seem to cast doubt on, but that is reaffirmed through the poem's enthymematic address. Speaking on behalf of "we," the poem begins by declaring, "So glad we are," which registers both that "we" are "so glad" and also the possibility that what is "so glad" is the fact that "we are," that "we" gladly exist. If "we" in fact "are," it is the feeling of mutual gladness itself that proves it to the knowing pair. And yet as that feeling "publishes a Tear," it proves the opposite to an unknowing observer: to a stranger such a tear would appear decidedly unglad and be "deem[ed]" instead "sorry." Dickinson's use of "publishes" is specific to this context—the word is offered as a variant in the fascicle version, with "Bustles but" as the alternative phrasing.¹¹³ That the emotion "publishes a Tear" here, makes the stranger who "'d deem" it "sorry," not only an

¹¹³ The fascicle version recorded shortly before this letter includes some significant differences and variants, which draw attention to the choices Dickinson made in her message for Bowles, including, the option "Bustles but" for "publishes," and "discern" or "conclude" for "decide." Deliberately changed in the Bowles version is also "where" instead of the fascicle version "when." "Where" is a new addition not offered as a variant on the fascicle sheet.

estranged observer but also an unintended reader, and possibly a reading public. Neither this strange reader nor even an “Optizian” (optician)¹¹⁴ would tell the joy behind the tear. Though an optician (*ADEL*: “a person skilled in the science of optics”) might critically discern the possibilities of what “a Tear” might signify—the similarly tearful “Grief and Joy”—he “Could not decide - between” them because he has no access to the actual feeling that exists for the “we,” which in this case is the feeling affirmed between Dickinson and her particular recipient Bowles in the moment of the poem’s reception. The inability of either the strange or critical reader to know the affect that “publishes a Tear,” and their experience of only its reified expression is not so much a failure on their part or even a failure of empiricism as it is an achievement on Dickinson’s part: her “we” and all it affects is exclusive of the stranger by its very nature. The poem weakly hints that the inability to know from the outside might put into question “how Ourselves be justified” in knowing what is between “Ourselves,” but this exclusive “- between -” is precisely what defines a real full knowing. Ending the poem on this word, “between -” and following only with her name, Dickinson supplies the very bridge to such inside knowing: the one addressed by the poem will identify Emily and himself as “we,” because their joy was mutual, if not because they had actually shed tears of joy between them, perhaps during a visiting

¹¹⁴ Thomas Johnson notes that “‘Optizian’ is evidently a ‘made word,’ presumably meaning one skilled in the science of optics.” Dickinson’s use of the word is curious for its timing – she was on the verge of developing a chronic eye infection (L 290), and would eventually be treated by ophthalmologist Henry W. Williams. With a little stretch of the imagination, it might be the case that Dickinson was having trouble with her eyes as early as this note was sent and that Bowles was aware of that, which would add to the enthymematic force of this particular poem.

“Holiday” just preceding this letter, then over this kind of correspondence. Bowles was likely very glad to receive what he so often requested from her, a “gem” of a poem.¹¹⁵

It is notable that this particular “gem” misspells “similar,” as “slimilar” but crosses out the “l” lightly with three small pen strokes. Since the small note would make very short work to rewrite, even on the next blank leaf, and since she would often rewrite her letters (as surviving drafts make clear), it is unusual she did not choose to in this particular case. A spelling mistake in a poem she enclosed to Higginson around the same time will help to illuminate Dickinson’s odd choice here. In this singular instance of Dickinson annotating an enclosed poem—“Of Tribulation these are They” (F 325; BPL 1093.14)—she notes at the bottom of the enclosed sheet beneath the poem, “I spelled - Ankle - wrong,” referring to the thirteenth line in the poem: “Our panting Ankle barely passed -.” As Emily Seelbinder suggests, Dickinson may have been allusively directing Higginson to the use of that spelling of ankle in the *King James Bible* (76). Higginson, however, did not notice any allusion; rather, he noticed her “pains to correct the spelling”: “I tried a little — a very little — to lead her in the direction of rules and traditions; but I fear it was only perfunctory, and that she interested me more in her — so to speak — unregenerate condition...I called her attention to the fact that while she took pains to correct the spelling of a word, she was utterly careless of greater irregularities” (“Emily Dickinson’s Letters” 448). Nor did Dickinson dispute this spelling as a “mistake,” when called out: “You say I confess the little mistake, and omit the large - Because I can see orthography - but the Ignorance out of sight is my preceptor’s charge -” (L 271). Allusion or not, the “mistake” was also useful for

¹¹⁵ Bowles asked Dickinson directly and through others to send him her “gems” on a number of occasions. For instance, in a letter from Bowles to Dickinson brother, Austin, he writes as apostscript along the edge of the sheet: “When next you write, tell Emily to give me one of her little gems! How does she do this summer!” (qtd. in Habegger, “An Annotated Calendar” 16)

Dickinson's larger strategy with Higginson, which was to create an intrigued unease in him that would negotiate for her an amateur ethos. In both the Higginson and the Bowles cases, Dickinson draws attention to her scene of composition and yet in very different ways: in the Higginson example, she directs her recipient to the mistake without correcting it and practically announcing its deliberate nature, while in the Bowles example, she merely corrects it directly on the page. Rather than being simply "apologetic references" (180), as Brita Lindberg-Seyersted has argued, Dickinson's spelling mistake in the Higginson enclosure contributed to the relationship she was negotiating with Higginson, and the mistake in the Bowles letter probably did the same. Leaving the mistake visible under her correction in the Bowles example, possibly as a private joke, but even as a quite humorous marring of the "gem" she promised him, it likely made Bowles laugh in delight and thus capped the very "Holiday" (*ADEL*: "a festival intended to celebrate some event deemed auspicious to the welfare of a nation") that the addressed poem was meant to inscribe. Down to the very marks on the page, it seems, the Bowles note is so packed with elliptical, enthymematic rhetoric that it performs what it posits, inscribing the mutuality of "we" through the affective extents it affirms.

The fascicle in which this poem is recorded (#26; AC 84) is preoccupied, among other things, with attempts to justify or evidence a state of being, as though the poems as a whole were an experiment to explore the doubt proffered, mainly, in the act of identifying what that "being" is. The first poem in this fascicle, which begins, "They called me to the Window, for / 'Twas Sunset' - Some one said" (F 589A) describes "only" seeing a sequence of dissolving landscapes ("a Single Herd - / Of Opal Cattle - feeding far / Upon so vain a Hill -"; the "Mediterranean") instead of what the speaker was told to expect. Also in this fascicle, the poem beginning "I am alive - I guess -" (F 605 A), presents a catalogue of evidence to prove her "guess" that she is not dead—she holds flowers in warm-fingered hands, her breath can fog a glass, she is not on view in

a parlor like a dead body, and she does not have a grave. The evidence works, and she proves her guess with relief (“How good - to be alive!”). As a kind of *cogito ergo sum* performance, the thing that actually justifies her “guess” is the deductive logic that the poem itself records. The record copy of the poem sent as a letter to Bowles (“So glad we are - a Stranger’d deem”) appears in the last sheet of the fascicle, which contains four other poems (Bowles’ being the third), each taking up the theme of justifying certain understated or underappreciated states of being.¹¹⁶ The poem that begins the sheet, “Except the smaller size” (F 606A) explores this as fruitful “Lives” that “slower grow - / And later hang -,” but are “Larger” and native to the “Summers of Hesperides.” Though they “Present awkward Rind,” these larger, slower fruits are also “Hugest of Core” and perhaps, like the golden apples of Hesperides, give of immortality. The first half of this poem was sent as a letter to Susan (Fig. 4.1) around the same time as Dickinson’s note to Bowles.

Except the smaller
size

No Lives are Round -

These - hurry to a Sphere -

And show - and end -

The Larger - slower grow -
And later hang -

The Summers of Hesperides

¹¹⁶ A total of eight known addressed poems have their record copy among the 21 poems included in this fascicle: six serving as letters to close friends (to Bowles [1], her Norcross cousins [1], and Susan [4]), one embedded in and another enclosed with a letter to Higginson. Both of the Higginson poems are variants of those sent previously to Susan.

Are long -

Emily - (F 606B; H 1118.3 [250])

Sending only the first half of the poem to Sue, Dickinson's juxtaposition of "smaller size" with "Larger" in the poem is deliberately highlighted, but the details that clarify both as kinds of fruit ("Rind"; "Core") are also deliberately left out, being unnecessary—the poem was sent with actual fruits of a "smaller size," which Thomas Johnson suggests were apples. In fact, fold lines on the manuscript sheet show it was folded in thirds with two triangular slits cut along the bottom fold, presumably to secure it horizontally to something, such as the side of a woven basket. Given that Dickinson refers to "picking the Baldwin apples" (L 285) in a letter to her cousins around the same time and even sends some Baldwin apples to Bowles in what she called a "little Barrel of Apples" (L 284),¹¹⁷ it is very likely that referent of the addressed poem ("the smaller size" fruit that "hurry to a Sphere - / And show - and end -") are Baldwin apples: small, firm, round apples native to New England, that were often used for making pies and cider.

This concrete material referent does not necessarily determine the meaning of the poem in general, for Dickinson or for her readers, but it does provide an occasion for the poem—or at least the part of the poem she addressed—and allows the poem to function in a particular way for Susan. An intimacy is marked by the addressed poem's direct association with an exchange or gifting of a physical thing, in this case apples. Dickinson arranged this gift by hand and very likely hand-delivered it to Susan. Encountering the apples contiguously positioned in relation to the poem, and thus as the most readily apparent referent of "the smaller size" life identified in the poem, situates Susan to read "the Larger - slower grow[ing]" life that is "No[t] Round" but

¹¹⁷ Dickinson sent the "Barrel of Apples" to Bowles on behalf of her mother: "that He accept from Her the little Barrel of Apples - 'Sweet Apples' - she exhorts me - with an occasional Baldwin - for Mary, and the squirrels."

proper to the “Summers of Hesperides,” as something just as readily apparent. But what, in this context, would that have been? Primed to interpret the referents of the poem in literal terms, given the basket of apples, Susan may have found the material poem itself as the next most readily apparent referent.

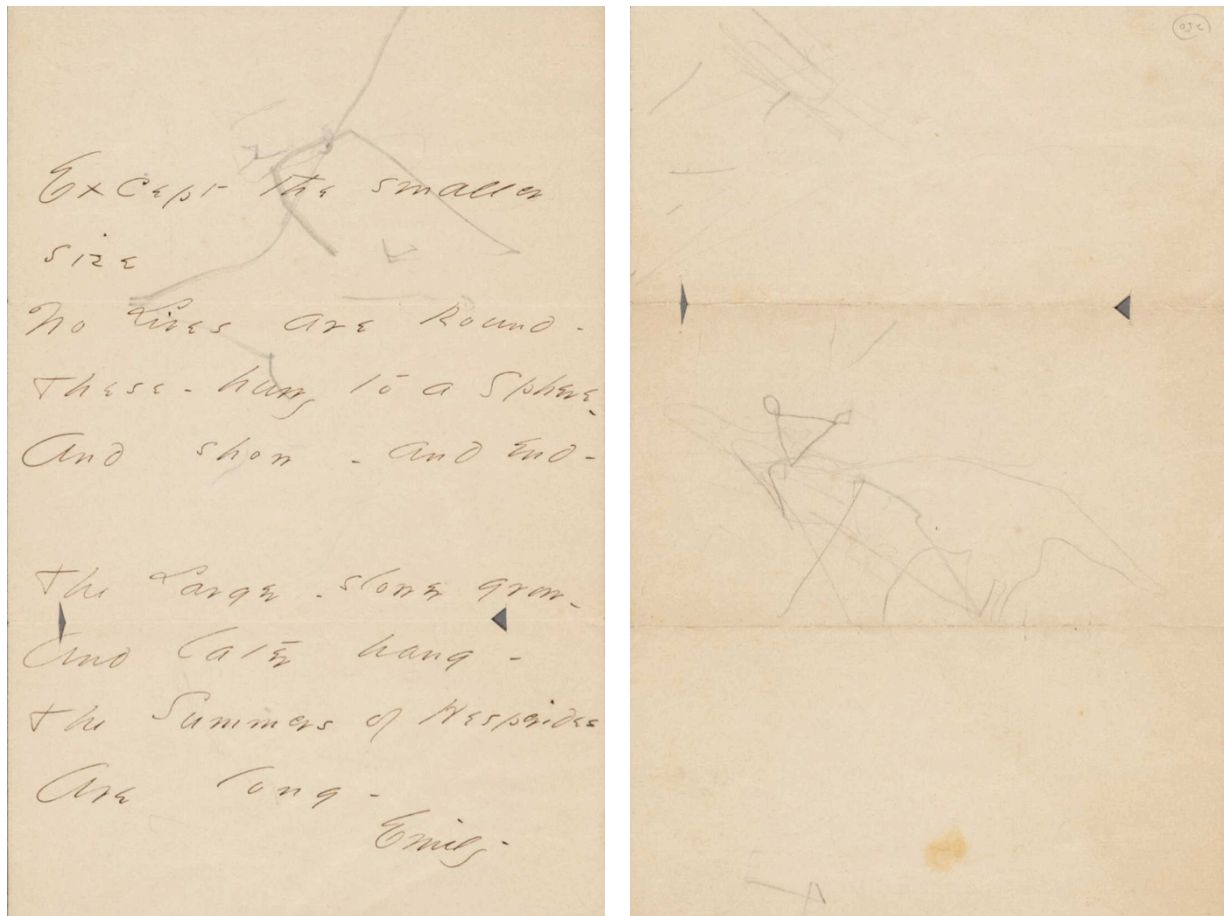


Figure 4.1 “Except the smaller size,” poem addressed to Susan Dickinson. Front (p. 1) and back (p. 4; rotated 180 degrees) of folded sheet of stationery (F 606B; H MS Am 1118.3 [250]). By permission of The Houghton Library, Harvard University © The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

It is certainly not unusual for Dickinson’s poems to refer back to themselves, and this poem invites such interpretation. Miller observes that the final lines of this poem unusually “follow word boundaries rather than meter” (*Reading* 234 n.43). Dickinson’s established pattern of 6- and

4-syllable poetic lines is disrupted with the final two lines, which are 8 and 2 syllables, respectively. Organizing “The Summers of Hesperides” on one line disrupts the expected meter of that line and, in doing so, Dickinson emphasizes the nature of the larger, slower growing “Lives” as exceeding expectation, being in excess of the rule, and not so readily consumed. Such “Lives” do not simply “show - and end” but grow to become something more prized and lasting, something giving of immortality (as the golden apples in Hesperides), however unceremoniously they may come to fruition. In rhetorically associating a longer and slower poetic meter with the image of a long summer in Hesperides, Dickinson is positioning the poem itself as the beating life of that place, one of its golden apples. The poem’s later iteration, set within a letter addressed to Higginson some three years after it was sent as a letter to Susan, bears out this self-reflexivity. In the Higginson letter, the poem is embedded within Dickinson’s overt if anxious repositioning of herself as an amateur writer, following the surreptitious publication of her poem “A narrow fellow in the grass” (printed anonymously as “The Snake”) in the *Springfield Republican*.¹¹⁸ Citing this publication only to distance herself from its publication, Dickinson writes:

Lest you meet
my Snake and
suppose I deceive
it was robbed
of me - defeated <page break>
too of the third line
by the punctuation -
The third and

¹¹⁸ This poem was also reprinted in the weekly edition of the *Springfield Republican*, February 17, 1866: 7. This would be the last Dickinson poem to be smuggled into the newspaper during her lifetime.

fourth were one -
I had told you
I did not print -
I feared you might
think me ostensible.
If I still entreat
you to teach me,
are you much
displeased?
I will be patient -
constant, never
reject your knife
and should my <page break>
my slowness goad
you, you knew before
myself that
Except the smaller size
No lives are round -
These - hurry to a
sphere
And show and end -
The larger - slower
grow
And later hang -

The Summers of

Hesperides

Are long.

Dickinson (L 316; F 606C; BPL 1093.23).

Embedded in this letter, the poems's depiction of "larger - slower" "lives" is directly linked with Dickinson's description of her own stammering ("my / my") "slowness" in learning to write poetry via his teaching, which she entreats Higginson to excuse since, as he "knew before," being deliberately "patient" in learning to write poetry—maintaining a "Barefoot - Rank" and "delay[ing] 'to publish'" (L 265)—can bring about an immortality not known to "lives" that, having or chasing fame, "hurry to a sphere / And show and end." Dickinson uses the same excerpt of the poem she addressed to Susan to renegotiate an amateur ethos for her work in Higginson's eyes. To reposition the apparently effortless publication of her poems, she first refuses to even call it a poem, naming it "my Snake," and then she distances herself from the editorial revisions, which improved its readability in ways that would have matched the work of Higginson's editorial "knife." Similar to Dickinson admitting to Higginson that she "spelled Ankle - wrong" (F 325), admitting that "her Snake" needed such revision at all demonstrates her unreadiness for print, at least in Higginson's professional opinion. As he advises all young contributors, "send your composition in such a shape that it shall not need the slightest literary revision before printing" ("Letter to a Young Contributor" 402). Dickinson then follows this strategic admission with the eight lines of poetry beginning "except the smaller size," which, framed as a reminder to Higginson here ("you knew before myself that except the smaller size..."), obediently rehearses, in her own words, his advice from "Letter to a Young Contributor": "Disabuse yourself especially of the belief that any grace or flow of style can come from writing rapidly. Haste can make you slipshod, but it can never make you graceful." In doing

so, she wears her learning through her lines of poetry, justifying her role as a “slower grow[ing]” poet under his tutelage, on the way to becoming a golden apple. The amateur ethos Dickinson shaped through her correspondence with Higginson is in full performance here and supplies her poem’s referent in this context. While the self-referentiality of this poem is also apparent in Susan’s copy, albeit in different form (as a letter itself) and to vastly different effect (the material poem is itself the golden apple it refers to), the specific context in which Susan’s copy was addressed and the poem’s materiality in that context contributes a unique frame of reference for the poem, which is meant to affect Susan directly.

Sent over to Susan’s house in 1863, accompanied by a gift of apples that would likely be baked in a pie for her husband Austin (Dickinson’s brother) and their two-year old son Ned, the literal referent for the golden apple described in the poem might be the poem itself, but it might be something else too. If one imagines Susan unpacking the gift of apples in the kitchen with her toddling son and perhaps giving him one of those apples to chew on, that blonde-haired son, the sole progeny of the entire Dickinson family at the time, suddenly supplies another literal referent for the golden apple described by the poem. Coincidentally, the manuscript itself is literally marked up by the child: penciled lines in Ned’s hand are scribbled across the bottom of the poem and on the back of the sheet is the triangular face of what appears to be Ned’s doodle of a horse, possibly with help from his mother. These scribbles indicate that Dickinson’s addressed poem, like others Dickinson addressed to Susan, was made accessible to Ned (and later his sister Mattie), in this case providing him with space to inscribe physical evidence of the golden apple the poem seeks to distinguish from “the smaller size” apples in the gift basket.

If the particular address of this poem to Susan and the material rhetoric of appending it to a basket of apples obligates us to read it within its material context of reception, it also reveals the extent to which the realization of this poem’s particular personal referent (in this instance of

addressing it) depended on its reception by Susan in her domestic context. While we may read the abstract “Lives” that the poem distinguishes into any number of concrete referents, accounting for the referential context in each instance of the poem’s material address enables us to see how the specificity of address—and context of address—was so integral to its readerly affect. In sending poems as letters to Susan, Dickinson relied on and reinvigorated a specific interpersonal affection already known between them.

The physicality inscribed by (and even on) poems that were addressed *as letters* is unique among Dickinson’s addressed poems. The collapse of epistolary and poetic address that characterizes this mode allows her poems to affectively charge the relation between her and her addressee, and in doing so articulate and preserve an interpersonal connection much more directly and intensively than a letter alone could do. The other two modes (poems set in a letter and poems enclosed with a letter) demonstrate how the relative distance and distinction of epistolary address from poetic address within the letter context works to negotiate or modify the intimacy between Dickinson and her addressees, for different ends.

Poems Set in Letters

Poems set in the prose of Dickinson’s letters represent the second most common mode in which Dickinson circulated her poetry, and comprise one third of the total known poems (198 out of 594) that Dickinson sent to correspondents, in which the mode is clearly discernable.¹¹⁹ My choice of “*set in letters*” as a categorical term for this mode calls for an explanation. I speak of poems set in letters because of its wide potential for interpretation and to best encompass the

¹¹⁹ 15 of the 198 embedded poems appear in drafts of letters found in Dickinson’s papers, copies of which may or may not have been eventually sent to the recipient, as no documentation of reception exists.

multiple ways Dickinson's poems were incorporated within the bodies of letters. Thus, whereas Socarides identifies embedded and inserted poems as two of at least six modes of relation among poems in Dickinson's writings as a whole, for the purposes of this study, "embed" and "insert" both describe extents to which Dickinson *set* poems in her letters. My use of "set" is not meant to collapse distinctions between the instances in which Dickinson included poems in her letters; to the contrary, it is meant to highlight a variability in the material rhetoric of Dickinson's letter writing that we must account for if we are to understand the function of poetry in this context. "Set" highlights the sense of a poem's taking place in an epistolary context, positioned as part of Dickinson's address to her recipient, while allowing for the fact that virtually all of these poems extend beyond a particular letter's context of address by also appearing in, as, or contiguous to, other letters, either before or after, and in different forms in Dickinson's retained papers, which often reveal variants not chosen in the letter version. Referring to a poem as set in a letter also suggests "setting" and thus highlights the letter as immediate physical context for the poem, providing a more natural umbrella term for the poem's middling relation to epistolary address, wherein poems are contextualized by the prose in the letter and may appear on the same sheet as an explicit address (e.g., recipient's name; "you"), but do not necessarily directly follow from or correspond to this address.

While, in numbers, there are only half as many set poems as there are poems that served as letters, set poems were sent to a much more diverse audience, and as such can be said to be her primary or default mode for circulating her poems across her correspondence. Whereas only 4% of total known correspondents to whom Dickinson circulated her poems received poems enclosed with letters, and 59% received poems that served as letters, a full 80% of correspondents received poems set within letters. This mode thus defines a diverse group of recipients, comprising both those personally known to Dickinson and those whom she never met in person.

The letters in which these poems are set are equally diverse in context, content, and affect: from an intimate note addressed to her sister-in-law Susan Dickinson, to an inside joke for her nephew, to a sparse reply to a gift from fascinated neighbor (and Austin Dickinson mistress) Mabel Todd, who tried but never caught a glimpse of Dickinson, to a congratulatory message for her brother's estranged childhood acquaintance, Daniel Chester French. Likewise, the signatures that close off the letters run the gamut, including the affectionate and informal "Sister," "Emilie -," and "Emily, with love -," as well as the more formal "Emily Dickinson," "Dickinson," and "E. Dickinson." Given such diversity, setting poems in letters seems to have offered Dickinson a versatility in poetic address and communication that neither sending poems as letters nor enclosing poems with letters would allow.

Like poems sent *as letters*, poems *set in* letters also function enthymematically; however, they are couched in broader and gentler terms of address that serve to set the tone, and even woo the addressee before the poems enact their affective punch. If a poem sent *as a letter* could perform this task without such "exetastic buildup" (Walker 53), owing to the relation that Dickinson had already established with the recipient, or the particular gift or occasion the poem directly and materially served, a poem *set in* a letter used the letter's prose to build the common ground that may have otherwise been missing between Dickinson and her recipient. Thus, this mode could be used to reach people with less existing affective connection to Dickinson, or to offer condolence less intensely or more approachably, or to develop new terms of affective engagement with those to whom she was deeply connected.

The versatility of this mode extends beyond its flexible reach to how poems were incorporated within the letter. Dickinson set poems within letters in a variety of ways. For instance, she might include one or more poems in their entirety, as single stanzas, or as excerpted lines at various places within the prose of an addressed and signed letter. Often the poetic line is

subtle and difficult to distinguish, either because of how it follows from prose or due to the nature of Dickinson's handwriting. These visual features of the manuscript have given rise to one of the most debated facets of Dickinson's letters and her manuscripts more generally: where generic boundaries lie, if at all. This debate, in fact, has fueled the impetus to read Dickinson as transcending her nineteenth-century context; the more difficult it is to distinguish between prose and poetry in Dickinson's manuscripts, the more Dickinson is taken as transgressing nineteenth-century genre convention or reforming genre ("letter-poem"), and the more she is taken to be exceptional and proto-modernist. As Mitchell has demonstrated, however, conscious if subtle genre markers do exist in the letters: "A series of strictly material coordinates helps readers to recognize the change [from prose to poetry], and amounts to generic separation: not only meter and rhyme, but also the sustained use of meter and rhyme accompanied by the deployment of nonessential capitals, as well as the presence of redundant horizontal spaces and vertical intervals that correspond to lines and stanzas, not to sentences and paragraphs" (*Measures* 190). Socarides has recently argued against collapsing Dickinson's deployment of poetry in letters into a singular mode, noting that there are important distinctions to be made in how poems are more or less covertly embedded in the prose, as when poetic line and prosaic line flow into one another so smoothly as to complete the sense of the other. For Socarides, poems that appear embedded in the prose of a letter draw out new possibilities for communication and intimacy for Dickinson: "[w]hen Dickinson does not simply include poems in her correspondence, but actually embeds them within these letters, turning the letter into both the context and vehicle for the poem's circulation, she changes the status of both the epistolary prose and the lines of poetry" (70). What is at stake here, however, is not genre, per se; it is address. Embedding a poem in a letter, Socarides suggests, Dickinson plays on a distinction that would otherwise exist between the

“I” of the verse and the “I” of the epistolary prose, implicating one in the other and, by extension, implicating the address of one in the other.

Dickinson’s poem “As if I asked a common Alms -” (F 14) which Dickinson included in her fascicles in 1861, sent to Higginson in 1862, and also addressed to an unknown recipient in 1884, offers Socarides a case in point. The “I” of the poem, abstract and lyrical in its fascicle context, becomes, in the Higginson letter context, almost seamlessly integrated with Dickinson’s epistolary “I,” and thus with the historical Dickinson who writes the letter: “By taking lines that were once poetry and embedding them into her letter, Dickinson allows herself to inhabit the “I” of her poem and make its once abstract critique her very own” (73). Embedded within this particular letter, the lines of “As if I asked a common Alms -” become an extension of Dickinson’s personal address to Higginson and implicate Higginson in the poem’s figure of address. This 1862 addressed poem, as Socarides points out, represents the first time Dickinson embeds a poem in an epistolary address and has important implications for her practice as a whole: “the act of embedding poems into letters is something that Dickinson does not simply do once or twice, but is a practice that she initiated in her correspondence with Higginson and is something that she continues to do over the course of her life and eventually with correspondents other than Higginson” (76). Since the push-pull nature of Dickinson’s letters to Higginson, to which this embedded poetry contributed, are what helped Dickinson negotiate an amateur ethos, then her letters to Higginson were both the way out of public modes of poetic address and the way to new personal modes of poetic address.

Though setting poems in letters was not a fashionable convention in mid-nineteenth-century U.S. epistolary culture, as Socarides notes, it was a common practice among Dickinson’s peers (68). These especially took the form of excerpts to enhance the reading experience or console the reader, and the majority of the poetry was not the letter writer’s own.

While Dickinson often alludes to poetry or other works of literature in her letters and even occasionally quotes a line or two from a poem or favorite passage from the Bible or Shakespeare, she, in contrast with her peers, rarely quotes at length or exchanges poems that are not her own. There is only one known example, for instance, in which Dickinson inserts an entire poem that is not her own within a letter. In this early letter (ca. Aug 1856) addressed to Mary Warner Crowell, the anniversary of the death of Mary's sister provides the occasion for the letter: "Dear Mary - I send the verses of which I spoke one day - I think them very sweet - I'm sure that you will love them - They make me think beside, of a Little Girl at *your* house, who stole away one morning" (L 183; MS Am 1118.4 [L35]). The "verses" of which she "spoke one day," are quoted above the note to Mary and consist of the entire ten-stanza elegy, "My Child," by New England pastor and poet John Pierpont (1785–1866), though Dickinson omits both title and author name in her letter. Dickinson's note suggests that she spoke of these verses to Mary when they were last together or in a previous letter, which might warrant Dickinson's omission. It is also possible that Dickinson recited the poem at a gathering at which Mary was present. In any case, this example is exceptional in that it provides an entire poem written by another, which is set within the letter preceding—and thus distanced from—Dickinson's epistolary address to Mary, and which is qualified by Dickinson's interpretation ("I think them very sweet"; "they make me think..."). Signaling "the verses" as not her own, Dickinson presents them to Mary as recommended reading in memory of Mary's sister. If the verses are "sweet," it is because they narrate a father's inability to "make him [his child] dead," because the memory is too strong that his death is forgotten. After finding, repeatedly, that his child "is not there," however, the father-speaker finally tries to bear that death as a memory, too, forming a vision (in the form a prayer) of a reunion in heaven: "So help us, thine afflicted ones, to bear, / That, in the spirit-land, / Meeting at thy right hand, / 'Twill be our heaven to find - that he is there!" The prayer that ends this

poem, as recorded in Dickinson's letter, is followed immediately by Dickinson's address to Mary, and is thus not simply shared with Mary but directed to her as a form of condolence. What is significant here is that Dickinson's act of condolence lies in providing Mary with a poem that serves not as a memorial for the dead, *per se*, but as a way to cope with the mind's constant forgetting of the loved one's death, and ensuing unbearable realization that they are not there, and thus as a way to face the ultimate moment of that realization: death's anniversary.

While Dickinson regularly set poems within letters for the purpose of condolence throughout her life, this instance of setting an entire poem that is not her own within a letter is very unusual. In other cases when Dickinson set poems by others within her letters, unlike the above example, she embeds only excerpts between or inserts them following prose sections of her letter, using the poems to amplify, extend, or prepare the way for other sentiments or ideas that may form the basis of the exchange. In one notable case—another letter occasioned by the anniversary of a death—she set within a single letter (L 967) both an excerpt from William Cullen Bryant's poem "June" and her own poem beginning "Go thy great way!" (F 1673). Together, within the context of the letter, these poems work to draw Dickinson and her recipient, Benjamin Kimball, into greater sympathy as mutual friends of the recently deceased Judge Otis P. Lord (1812–1884), while revising the ways in which Lord might be remembered. Benjamin Kimball was Lord's cousin and the executor of Lord's estate, and Dickinson's letter represents the first of three known letters to Kimball following Lord's death. The letter in full reads:

Dear friend -
To take
the hand of
my friend's
friend, even
apparitionally,

is a hallowed
pleasure -
I think you
told me you
were his
kinsman -
I was only his
friend - and
cannot yet
believe that
“his part in all <page break>
the pomp that
fills
The circuit of
the Southern Hills,
Is that his
Grave is green.”
His last words
in his last
note were “a
Caller comes.”
I infer it to
be Eternity, as
he never re -
turned -
Your task must
be a fervent
one - often one
of pain - <page break>
To fulfill the will of a power-
less friend su-

persedes the
Grave -
Oh, Death, where
is thy Chancellor?
On my way to
my sleep, last
night, I paused
at the Portrait -
Had I not
loved it, I had
feared it, the
Face had such
ascension.
Go thy great way! <page break>
The Stars thou
meetst
Are even as
thyself,
For what are
Stars but
Asterisks,
To point a
human Life?
Thank you for
the nobleness,
and for the
earnest Note -
but all are
friends, upon
a Spar.

Gratefully,

E. Dickinson -

Conversational in tone, Dickinson greets Kimball “apparitionally,” through the medium of a letter, which, as she once said to Higginson, is “the mind alone without corporeal friend” (L 330). But in taking “the hand of my friend’s friend,” Dickinson not only reaches Kimball’s hand apparitionally, in epistolary greeting, but also, in responding to Kimball’s own greeting, his handwriting, consolations, and the memories he shares, she reaches toward the apparition that brings them together: the ghost-like memory of their deceased friend. Dickinson’s quotation of Bryant’s poetic line, moreover, effectively likens her and Kimball’s meeting in memory of Lord’s death with the meeting described in the final scene of Bryant’s poem, in which the speaker imagines his beloved friends meeting at his gravesite, some June after his death, and lingering in the fine weather to speak of him:

But if, around my place of sleep,
The friends I love should come to weep,
They might not haste to go.
Soft airs, and song, and light, and bloom
Should keep them lingering by my tomb.

These to their softened hearts should bear
The thought of what has been,
And speak of one who cannot share
The gladness of the scene;
Whose part, in all the pomp that fills
The circuit of the summer hills,
Is—that his grave is green;

And deeply would their hearts rejoice

To hear again his living voice. (lines 41-54)

Incorporating Bryant's poetic line within her prose, Dickinson assumes Kimball's familiarity with the poem as a whole, despite a deliberate if grammatical misquoting of "his" (in "his part in all the pomp that fills") for Bryant's original "Whose," and inserting "Southern Hills" for Bryant's "summer hills." It is also possible that Dickinson is quoting Kimball's use of or reference to this poem, perhaps as a gesture of consolation from his previous letter. Since Kimball's side of the correspondence is missing, this latter possibility can only be speculation. In any case, Bryant's poem was popular consolatory sentimental verse and Dickinson is channeling this use.

In the midst of the first page of Dickinson's letter, the poetic line suggests the letter itself is a version of the very scene that Bryant's speaker envisions, a lively and fertile summer memorial site where friends of the deceased gather to speak of him. And yet quoted here, this scene and its particular vision of life after death are also problematized. Though Lord's two friends come together and "speak" of him, they do so in winter; a "circuit of the summer" has come and gone since Lord died in March 1884, and though his grave may have been green in June, it has since turned white again. When Dickinson indicates that she "cannot yet believe that 'his part in all the pomp that fills / The circuit of the Southern Hills, / Is that his Grave is green,'" she suggests two conflicting ideas: she has yet to believe Lord's part, his "living voice," is limited to a perennial greening of his grave that dies again each winter; and she has yet to believe he has a part in (life after) death, at all, because she does not "hear again his living voice"; for Dickinson, the Judge "never returned." In both cases, Dickinson acknowledges a lingering disbelief in the poetic consolation offered by Bryant, or at least doubt in the life after death envisioned in the poem.

For Dickinson in 1884 this is a old disbelief: more than twenty years earlier in a poem she apparently never addressed personally to anyone, she articulated a similar doubt in Bryant's

hopeful vision of a green grave. The poem, which begins, “The Color of the Grave is Green -” (F 424A; H Ms Am 1118.3 [141b]) sketches a scene in which “the fond” who might try to find the grave “would not know it from the Field - Except it own a Stone.” Evacuating the green grave of its significance as a bastion of remembrance, Dickinson links its color rather with forgetfulness and loss. If it were not for the headstone, the mourners would not know where to find the dead, in order to gather in their memory. Indistinguishable among the field of green, there is no sign of the living voice of the dead in Dickinson’s poem: being “too infinite asleep” they cannot even “tell them where [the grave] is.” It is no better in the winter, when “[t]he Color of the Grave is white...You would not know it from the Drifts.” However, when the sun melts the snow in winter and

Has furrowed out the Aisles -

Then - higher than the Land

The little Dwelling Houses

rise

Where Each - has left

a friend -

Here, in contradistinction to Bryant’s green grave on a summer day that makes rise again the living voice of the dead to those who gather, Dickinson offers a white grave on a winter day that makes rise, not a “friend,” but only the “Dwelling Houses” where the friend is left, affirming not faith but doubt.

Well-worn by the time Lord dies, Dickinson’s doubt is not quelled but drawn out by the unfinished—or rather interrupted—report from Lord on his own departure, which she recalls in her letter to Kimball. A final note to Dickinson in Lord’s hand, in which he reports only that “a Caller comes,” becomes, in retrospect, her experience of Lord’s “last words,” that is, the last of

what she knew to be his “living voice.” In reporting this to Kimball, Dickinson’s second-hand knowledge of this “Caller,” whom she cannot hear or see and must “infer...to be Eternity, as he [Lord] never returned,” becomes in turn Kimball’s third-hand, inferential knowledge of the “Caller” as “Eternity.” As Dickinson wrote to Samuel Bowles some 20 years before, “‘Faith’ is a fine invention / When Gentlemen can see - / But Microscopes are prudent / In an Emergency” (F 202A). Here, Dickinson, left with an emergency of faith, turns her microscope on Lord’s last note and his lack of further reply to infer something already known by the faithful, those soothed by Bryant’s consolatory verse. If Kimball’s task is “a fervent one - often one of pain - “ so is Dickinson’s, as she bears fraught and partial witness to what was for her the Judge’s final testimony. Dickinson’s witnessing is especially fraught because it occurs via a letter, necessarily removed from the event as it unfolded. Lord’s death may have occurred while the letter was in transit to Dickinson, in which case the very materiality of his living address on its way to her denies her the possibility of replying in time. “To fulfill the will of a powerless friend supersedes the Grave,” she tells Kimball, acknowledging his task as executor, by linking it to the fulfillment envisioned in the Bryant piece, wherein the “Soft airs, and song, and light, and bloom” keep his friends “lingering by [his] tomb” to “hear again his living voice.” This statement also registers Dickinson’s own difficulty in fulfilling Lord’s will. She does not share Bryant’s vision of remembrance, nor is she able to act officially on Lord’s behalf, being “only his friend,”¹²⁰ but she has been tasked with something: to respond to his “final words,” to fulfill the “epistolary pact,” as Altman calls it, “the call for response from a specific reader” (89). The trouble is that a direct

¹²⁰ This is a bit of an understatement on Dickinson’s part. Based on surviving drafts of her correspondence with Lord, who was originally her father’s colleague, Dickinson’s relationship with the Judge was one of the most intimate she ever had, and certainly most intimate after the 1870s. In the years before Lord died, the possibility of marriage between the two was considered, at least informally.

response to Lord's letter would have always arrived too late; Lord would not be there to receive it. Fulfillment would indeed mean "supersed[ing] the Grave." And yet she does carry out her task indirectly, via the person who could receive the response in Lord's stead. Her letter to Kimball thus presents itself as a call for response from Kimball, but not any response; it is a call for him to witness her response to Lord, on Lord's behalf, and thereby to validate it. Kimball's "task" to "fulfill the will of a powerless friend," refers to his task as executor of Lord's will and, in the context of Dickinson's letter, it also refers to his task as specific reader of Dickinson's letter. The powerless friend to whom Dickinson refers is thus both Lord and herself facing the death of Lord and the reciprocal gesturing of their correspondence.

Dickinson had once before felt this same powerlessness. In May 1882, Lord fell gravely ill at his home in Salem (over 100 miles from Amherst). The news reached Dickinson as she was writing back to Lord, "Happy with my Letter, without a film of fear" (L 752). Dickinson had a visceral response to the news: "I grasped at a Chair - My sight slipped and I thought I was freezing." After much scrambling, she sent a telegram to his family through her neighbor, and received news back about Lord's improved health. Relieved, Dickinson followed up with a letter to Lord about her "rapture at [his] return" and enclosed the prior "Letter" that would have never been received had Lord died: "To remind you of my own rapture at your return, and of the loved steps, retraced almost from the 'Undiscovered Country,' I enclose the Note I was fast writing, when the fear that your Life had ceased, came, fresh, yet dim, like the horrid Monsters fled from in a Dream - " (L 752). What is remarkable here is that the "Note" she enclosed is meant "to remind [him]" of her "rapture" (*ADEL*: "Transport; ecstasy; violence of a pleasing passion; extreme joy or pleasure") at his return from near-death. While we do not know what this "Note" was, exactly (what he received was destroyed at his death; only an incomplete draft of this cover letter survives in Dickinson's papers), it is probably a version of an existing draft written

immediately before she learned of Lord's severe decline in health, which responds hastily ("Please excuse the wandering writing. Sleeplessness makes my Pencil stumble. Affection clogs it -too") to his reply about having a bad "Cold," and confesses, "I do - do want you tenderly. The Air is soft as Italy, but when it touches me, I spurn it with a Sigh, because it is not you" (L 750). In other words, her "Note" that almost went unsent and unreceived is a love letter, which she presents to him not only as her earlier response to him, but as the material souvenir of both her responsive act and the restored possibility of his, a reciprocity that gives her rapture.

When Lord actually dies and this reciprocity is rendered void, Dickinson calls on Kimball to bear witness to its closure, which she enacts through two apostrophes,¹²¹ first to "Death" in prose ("O, Death, where is thy Chancellor?") and then to Lord in poetry ("Go thy great way!"), this time her own. By "Death" Dickinson is addressing the "Caller" that came for Otis Lord, and in asking after Death's "Chancellor," she is asking after Lord, who was a Judge in life. However, her question also resonates on a much deeper level. Dickinson's apostrophe to "Death" is also an allusion to the *King James Bible* translation of 1 Corinthians 15, in which Paul quells the Corinthians' doubt about Christ's resurrection with a letter that discusses the resurrection as

¹²¹ I use apostrophe in the sense that Douglas Kneale has defined it, as denoting a turn away [apo-strophe / *aversio*], a "turn or diversion from the original hearer" (14), and thus a second address. Citing the use of apostrophe in classical oratory (where audience was known and present) and the long tradition of its rhetorical definition, Kneale distinguishes apostrophe as not simply direct exclamatory address, or personification (prosopopoeia), but *redirection* of voice: "by describing apostrophe as a turning from an original (implicit or explicit) addressee to a different addressee, from the proper or intended hearer to another, we emphasize the figure as a *movement* of voice, a translation or carrying over of address" (17). To read apostrophic address in this way is to attend to the poetics of turning away from an initial addressee to another addressee and also to what that turn away dismisses or inaugurates.

victory over death and the transformation of all living and dead mortal bodies into “spiritual bodies” (15:44) at the Last Judgement. As Paul reveals: “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinth. 15:50-52). The consolation this offers is even farther removed than Bryant’s conception of his life after death as a green grave, which Dickinson could not “yet believe.” Paul’s rhetorical question, “O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?” (1 Corinth. 15:55), is in fact a quotation from Hosea 13:14, which he exegetes for the Corinthians, saying that death’s sting is sin, which Christ’s victory (resurrection and ascension into heaven) vanquished. In other words, death’s sting is no longer there and has been replaced by human victory over death, through Christ. With their souls now saved from sin and death, however, the bodies of the faithful living and the dead must wait to become “imperishable” with the second coming of Christ on Judgement Day, much like Dickinson’s “meek members of the resurrection” that lie sleeping “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers” (F 124). As we have already seen, this kind of sleep does not offer warm consolation to Dickinson, and, as in her quoting of Bryant, she is not simply reiterating Paul’s consolation.

In alluding to Paul’s exegesis of Hosea, Dickinson does not provide further interpretation (as she does with Bryant, offering her doubt), but she does alter Paul’s word “sting” to “Chancellor,” metaleptically transforming the resonance of this phrase to suit this particular context of address. In questioning death’s “Chancellor” she is not simply calling Paul’s sin-turned-victory “sting” by a different name; rather she is replacing it with an equity “Chancellor”—someone who might “supersed[e] the Grave” by providing relief from common law. As Dickinson’s addressee and Lord’s executor, Kimball obliquely becomes that Chancellor:

he bears witness to Dickinson's reply to Lord and, in doing so, relieves Dickinson from the law that would make that reply impossible.

The line "Go thy great way!" turns away from Kimball in its apostrophe to Lord, but not entirely; instead of troping Lord or Dickinson's own poetic voice, "thy," embedded in a poem that is set in a letter addressed to Kimball, returns to call on Kimball as its realizable if imperfect addressee, who receives the poem on Lord's behalf. Via Kimball, Dickinson's apostrophe to Lord remains grounded in what Virginia Jackson has called the "historical, as opposed to the fictive, material of address" (158). Instead of transcending, it affirms the very scene in which Dickinson's letter is received by Kimball, and in which Kimball materially fulfills the "fervent" task of completing the affective circuit of Dickinson's broken correspondence with Lord, by receiving Dickinson's reply to Lord's last words. Set within the addressed letter, the poem functions to send Lord off on his "way," properly close their correspondence, and replace the sentimental and ultimately figurative "living voice" of Bryant's verse with a realized material consolation.

William Decker writes that "[r]epeatedly [Dickinson] seeks compensation in the capacity of language to formulate bereavement and invoke the full if ever doubtful presence that is immortality. Succeed though she may in condolence, her way is generally to widen the void and intensify the grief more conventional letter writing seeks to occlude" (145). The material rhetoric of addressing poems, as we have seen, does not simply "widen the void and intensify the grief," however; it exposes the void to make a more materially realizable compensation possible. If, as Decker argues, "Dickinson's epistolary purpose, as she matures as a letter writer...[is] to affirm love and to offer condolence for the death that our earthly absences from one another anticipate, earthly absences that no mere bodily contiguity can quite overcome" (165), sending poems as, in, or with epistolary correspondence functions to mitigate that absence entymematically by materializing an affective connection between herself and a specific addressee. When

materializing this affectivity required some context, either because Dickinson's correspondent was on less intimate terms with her, or Dickinson was engaging in more intense subject matter (death or health matters), she chose to set her poem *in* a letter, rather than send it *as* a letter. This put some distance between her epistolary address and poetic address, allowing her to warm up her addressee, to "dazzle gradually," as it were:

Tell all the truth
but tell it slant -
Success in Circuit
lies
Too bright for our
bold
infirm Delight
the Truth's superb
surprise
As Lightning to
the Children eased
With explanation kind
the Truth must
dazzle gradually
moderately
Or every man be
blind - (F 1263A; AC 372)

Her practice of setting poems in letters is perhaps as linked to opportunity as it is linked to occasion: when Dickinson set poems in letters that marked an occasion such as physical recovery (e.g., "Through the straight pass of suffering" [F 187B], in a letter to Bowles in June 1861),

professional accomplishment (e.g., “There came a day at summer’s full” [F 325A], in a letter to Edward S. Dwight in January 1862), or travel (e.g., “Parting with thee reluctantly” [F 1667A], in a letter to Eben Jenks Loomis in autumn 1884), she was, I think, primarily interested in the opportunity such an occasion provided for extending her affective reach. This is not to say that Dickinson was uninterested in simply acknowledging others; to the contrary, when she decided to address poems in this mode, she was, in addition to personally acknowledging her addressee (via her epistolary address), experimenting with interpersonal affectivity (via her poetic address).

Poems Enclosed with Letters

The breadth of Dickinson’s correspondence that survives indicates that she enclosed her poems with letters primarily (perhaps only) when she was writing to acquaintances who produced poetry for a reading public and who made a living doing so—in other words, literary professionals. These included critic and author Thomas Wentworth Higginson, author Helen Hunt Jackson, and Roberts Brothers’ publisher and editor Thomas Niles. Based on surviving manuscripts, Dickinson’s practice of enclosing poems in her letters seems to have begun with her correspondence with Higginson.¹²² Dickinson not only sent Higginson more enclosed poems than

¹²² It is possible that one poem sent following the death of Samuel Bowles (in 1878) to Bowles’ friend, Maria Whitney, and another following the death of Judge Otis Lord (in 1885) to Lord’s friend, Benjamin Kimball, may have been enclosed with letters. However, since all other poems that Whitney (to whom Dickinson wrote frequently after Bowles’ death) received were either set in the prose of her letter, or sent as letter, suggests that this poem was, in fact, sent as a letter (possibly handed to her directly by Dickinson or a mutual friend). The Kimball poem, if it was an enclosure, and we cannot definitively say either way, would then stand as the only existing anomaly. It is possible though unlikely that poems were enclosed with letters to Dickinson’s cousins, Frances and Louise Norcross. All manuscripts of letters and poems exchanged between Dickinson and her cousins were destroyed. Based on transcriptions of letters provided

anyone else, it was through these enclosures that Dickinson came to correspond with both Jackson and Niles. Though Jackson and Dickinson knew each other as children, both growing up in Amherst, Higginson, who served as mentor to both, brought them into conversation as adults as he shared Dickinson's enclosures with Jackson and encouraged a direct exchange of poetry between the two. As is often the case with Dickinson's correspondences, the entire body of letters and poems she exchanged with Helen Hunt Jackson will never be known; at least some (and perhaps many) of the letters and poems have been lost or destroyed. The bits of correspondence that do survive indicate Dickinson set poems in letters to Jackson on at least five occasions, sent a poem as a letter on at least one occasion, and enclosed poems with letters to Jackson on at least two occasions. Of the eleven poems known to have been sent to Jackson, two were certainly enclosed with letters: "Spurn the temerity -" (F 1485) and "One of the ones that Midas touched" (F 1488). A third poem, now lost, which Jackson refers to as the "Blue Bird" (probably "Before you thought of spring" [F 1484]), was likely also an enclosure. Each of the enclosed poems were sent in the spring of 1879, a few months following Jackson's submission of Dickinson's poem "Success is counted sweetest" in the No Name Series volume *A Masque of Poets*, which was edited by Thomas Niles.

Jackson did not have a copy of "Success" in Dickinson's hand when she submitted it; rather she had come to "know by heart" a version of the poem Dickinson enclosed with her letter to Higginson, and which Higginson had apparently shared with her and possibly allowed her to

by the cousins to Dickinson's first posthumous editor, Mabel Loomis Todd, it is clear that Dickinson embedded in letters many of the poems she sent to them. A list of additional poems sent to the Norcross cousins, listed by first line only, was also given to Todd. While it is possible some of these were enclosures, it is more likely that Dickinson sent these as letters themselves, as she did with the majority of poems she sent to her correspondents.

copy.¹²³ If Dickinson's enclosures to Higginson had brought Jackson and Dickinson together, it seemed they also brought Niles and Dickinson together. Following publication of "Success" in *A Masque of Poets*, Dickinson initiated a correspondence with Niles, through which she would address at least eight poems to him, beginning with the enclosed "How happy is the little Stone."¹²⁴ In total, six of the eight poems known to have been sent to Niles were enclosed with letters sent in April 1882 and March/April 1883. These poems sent to Niles represent the last known instances in which Dickinson enclosed her poems in any correspondence.¹²⁵

While Dickinson's practice of enclosing poems was exclusively tied to her correspondence with literary professionals, however, this practice was neither the only mode in which she sent poems to these individuals, nor was it necessarily a professional gesture on her part (i.e., intended for professional review like manuscripts submitted to a prospective editor). After her first year of corresponding with Higginson, for example, Dickinson began regularly to set poems within the prose of her letters to him. As their relationship grew more intimate and after they had met in person, the practice of setting poems in letters to Higginson increased. And yet, she never stopped sending him letters with one or multiple enclosures; there was no lessening of this ostensibly more formal, professional practice despite the growing intimacy of her relationship with Higginson. The enclosures she sent him were, moreover, not necessarily intended for

¹²³ In 1876 (a year into her correspondence with Dickinson), Jackson told Dickinson she kept a "little manuscript volume with some of your verses in it" (L 444a). As Mitchell has noted, it is likely Jackson is "referring to anthologies of her own where she transcribed favorite poems, including ones sent to her privately (*Measures* 338, n66). She likely also transcribed the poems Higginson had received from Dickinson.

¹²⁴ See Chapter 3 for an detailed account of this enclosure.

¹²⁵ Although she continued to send poems to many recipients, including Higginson and Jackson, until her death in 1886, these poems were not enclosed; they either were *set in* or sent *as* a letter.

professional review—or, at least, professional review was not their exclusive function. As Chapter 3 makes clear, even when Dickinson explicitly invites Higginson to provide a professional opinion on her enclosed poems, the enclosures are more deliberately complex in their deployment and function than this kind of request implies. If enclosures defined a more professional or formal mode of sending poems to others (along with, say, formal salutation and signature, and less personal subject matter), we would expect to see enclosures more often with letters to those outside of her familiar correspondents. In fact, the least familiar, most personally removed addressees, when they received poems at all, received poems *set* in letters. Though Dickinson remained formal (especially in salutation and signature) in her correspondence with Niles, her correspondence with both Higginson and Jackson initiates some of the most intimate, informal exchanges Dickinson was to have in her life. If Dickinson's enclosures are not specifically associated with a more formal epistolary address and more removed or professional relations, then how do we make sense of their exclusive link to literary professionals? To answer this question, we must look closer at the material rhetoric of Dickinson's practice of enclosing poems.

The poems Dickinson enclosed with her letters can be defined by their distinctiveness from the epistolary address of her letter as much as by their conscious arrangement in contiguous relation to the letter, within a single addressed envelope. In all cases, the enclosed poems are what R. W. Franklin has called a "fair copy," or a finalized variant of a poem (in some cases one of multiple variant fair copies she made and kept or sent to others), recorded on a folded sheet of stationery (two leaves; four pages). In the rare case that a poem ran longer than a four-page folded sheet could hold, Dickinson finished it on an additional leaf or folded sheet. If Dickinson enclosed more than one poem with a letter, each poem appears on its own folded sheet. The enclosures are unique in this way from Dickinson's other addressed poems in that each poem is discrete and separated from other poems, notes, lines of separation, address, signature, or

material attachments. In the cases of poems that served as letters, for instance, the sheet almost invariably includes one or more of the following: the recipient's name as salutation preceding the poem, or some other form of address, occasionally embedded in the poem itself; Dickinson's signature following the poem; glued, pinned, threaded, or enfolded flora, fauna, or print cuttings; and/or an indication that the sheet was fastened to a larger gift (i.e., flowers, fruit, seasonal basket). In the case of poems set in a letter, moreover, the poems were couched in the epistolary context, either preceding, following from, or punctuating the letter's prose and terms of address. The difference of the enclosed poems is physically apparent, and this physical difference contributes to their functional difference.

Whereas the poems Dickinson sent *as letters* directly addressed the recipient, and the poems she *set in* letters addressed her recipient indirectly, all were addressed to that recipient specifically, and in their unique epistolary contexts functioned enthymematically to materialize a common ground of interpersonal affect with her addressee. The poems Dickinson *enclosed with* letters functioned quite differently: instead of affirming an affective link between Dickinson and her addressee, they displaced Dickinson's poetic address at the moment of reception. Insofar as this mode brought poetry into contiguous relation with a personally addressed letter, making it at once resonant with and separate from the terms of that epistolary address, it left a gap—both physical and interpretative—for the addressee to fill (with body and mind), and in which that addressee could materialize, in a sense, as the poem's surrogate author. In doing so, I argue, Dickinson allowed the poem to disavow her as its addressor and, with that disavowal, release her from the poem's possible, yet to be realized addressees.

The 1883 letters to Niles demonstrate how the material rhetoric of Dickinson's enclosed poems develops beyond her correspondence with Higginson. Similar to her 1882 exchange with Niles, the 1883 exchange follows from Dickinson's inquiry (again) about Cross's rumored *Life of*

George Eliot. Though Niles still has no news on the Cross book, he mentions a forthcoming biography on George Eliot by Mathilde Blind and the following week sends Dickinson the Blind book itself. In return, Dickinson sends Niles a letter (L 814; AC 831) with one poem set within it and the other enclosed with it. The set poem (“Further in Summer than the Birds”[F 895E]) is bounded by prose and Dickinson’s signature:

Dear friend.

I bring you a chill

Gift - My Cricket -

and the Snow -

A base return

indeed, for the

delightful Book,

which I infer

from you, but

an Earnest one -

<embedded poem: “Further in Summer than the Birds”(F 895E) >

With thanks,

E. Dickinson.

The enclosed poem (“It sifts from Leaden Sieves” [F 291E]) appears on its own sheet of stationery, which was folded separately from the letter. Since the sheet contains no additional text

or other markings, the poem is bound only by the edge of the sheet itself. The poem begins on the top page of the stationery:

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
Figures situates
Upon a baseless
Arc - <page break>
It traverses
yet halts -
Disperses as
it stays -
Then curls
itself in Capricorn -

Denying that it

was -

The poem describes the action of “It”—i.e., “the Snow”—in terms of how it falls on and blankets the landscape, and then how it drifts and melts across that landscape. While in its falling action, the snow takes presence by gently transforming the contours of the landscape, its drifting movement on the ground is severe and seemingly contradictory as it “scatters” but also “condenses,” “situates” on something “baseless,” “traverses yet halts,” and “disperses as it stays.” This contradictory action culminates in its own undoing (“[d]enying that it was -”) which is hastened by its tendency to melt.

Describing the snow as “curl[ing] itself in Capricorn,” Dickinson likens this snow to the constellation’s fish tail winding back upon itself, presumably as it twists and disappears in its own melt water. Capricorn also functions metonymically here as the winter solstice, a moment marking birth or rebirth as the days begin to get longer (and warmer), which makes this melting as much the reappearance of water as the disappearance of snow. In other words, the snow’s seemingly paradoxical denial is based in its very nature as a changing state of water; it can “den[y] what it was” precisely because it has not disappeared but only transformed, and forgotten itself in the process. It is in this final act that the snow is most like the “Juggler’s Figures,” or the tricks of an illusionist. In Dickinson’s poetry, jugglers perform spectacular disappearing or reappearing acts; hence a sunset is the work of the “Juggler of Day” (F 321). But the snow is also only “like” these tricks, and since there is no Juggler in the poem (only a comparison to his Figures), what “the Snow” is, is more of an unwitting performance or effect, if anything.

In the first known version of this poem, written by Dickinson twenty years earlier in 1862, the snow’s performance was less unwitting and had everything to do with the Civil War. As

Richards convincingly argues, in the earliest version, the snow that “powders” and “fills” the “wrinkles” of a landscape also performs a much more gruesome function: it seems to cover up “amputated limbs in the snow of amnesia” (“Weathering the News” 121). When Dickinson created a new variant of the poem around 1865, she removed all but the first four and last lines and created a new shorter middle that, rather than extending the frozen body parts conceit, diminished it to a vague cosmetics application on the land, and then turned to focus entirely on the snow as a kind of movement. “In shortening the poem,” as Socarides rightly points out, “Dickinson did away with much of the description of what the snow does to the landscape and replaced it with lines that describe the movement of the snow itself...the poem moves more quickly to the heart of the matter: there is, we might say, something about the erratic and unpredictable movement of snow that allows for its ability to deny itself” (11).¹²⁶ This shortening and focusing of the poem contributes to what Jane Eberwein has called Dickinson’s “poetics of distillation” (Eberwein 138). In this distillation, Dickinson does away with the suggestion of “amputated limbs in the snow of amnesia,” or rather just does away with suggestion of amputated limbs. Focused on the nature of the snow’s “Denying that it was,” the later variant has the snow stage its own amnesia.

Enclosed with the Niles letter nearly two decades after the war, this poem is not only radically revised from the first Civil War version, but it is so far removed in time from that earlier context that it may be said to have forgotten its first thinly-veiled wartime subject matter. In addition to this latter version’s focus on the snow’s own amnesia, it distills a connection between the nature of snow and the nature of poetry that was only latently present in the earlier variant. For Dickinson at least, both snow and poetry are chilling, and snow is, among other things in this

¹²⁶ For a more detailed account of the compositional history of this poem, see Socarides: 6–12.

series of variants, as in many other poems, Dickinson's metonym for poetry's chilling effect. Uniquely in the Niles letter "the Snow" is, along with "My Cricket," Dickinson's "chill Gift" to Niles, which she calls "[a] base return indeed, for the delightful Book," suggesting a reciprocal material offering that pales in comparison to Niles' offering.¹²⁷ Thus, "the Snow" refers at once to the enclosed unpublished poem, the poem's referent, and its chilling effect.¹²⁸ But "the Snow" as an enclosed material object, also bears out the nature of the snow that is described in the poem. As a separate enclosure that contains only the poem without any identifying features, such as title, signature, address, or even concrete referent for the "It" of the poem, it risks losing all significance if it becomes separated from the letter. Without the letter, the enclosure is practically a folded sheet with a riddle on it, merely a trick or effect. Enclosing the poem as such, Dickinson allows the poem to be "Like Juggler's Figures situate[d] / Upon a baseless Arc -," and to "Den[y] that it was -" any thing, including the figures of a juggler/author such as herself. Playing on the word "base," from her earlier description of the poem as a "base return indeed," Dickinson also suggests that if her reciprocation of Niles' offering is a lowly gesture, then the enclosure as it is situated is not. If it were to "go astray," especially via the hands of someone who could easily bring it to the public, and who had already happily published her poetry, the poem might easily garner a wide audience. Was she encouraging this? What was Dickinson doing with her "chill Gift"?

¹²⁷ In calling her poem a "base return," Dickinson gestures toward what, in a letter to Higginson, she once called "my Barefoot - Rank" (L 265)—i.e., her amateur status.

¹²⁸ The association of snow with Dickinson's poetry or the affect produced in reading her poetry, is also made in an earlier letter to Samuel Bowles: "If you doubted my Snow - for a moment - you never will - again - I know - Because I could not say it - I fixed it in the Verse - for you to read - when your thought wavers, for such a foot as mine" (L 251). Embedded in the letter is the poem beginning, "Through the strait pass of suffering" (F 187B).

What we know from Dickinson's practice of enclosing poems to Higginson, as I discussed in Chapter 3, is that it helped to contribute to Higginson's view of Dickinson as an amateur, which kept him uncomfortable enough to suggest she defer publication, at least where he was concerned. Though known to have read Dickinson's poetry to others and to have shown her enclosures to Jackson, Higginson only circulated Dickinson's enclosures after her death and, notably, after the positive critical reception of his and Mabel Loomis Todd's edition of Dickinson's *Poems*. For instance, a substantively similar variant of the poem enclosed to Niles ("It sifts from Leaden Sieves -") was sent to Higginson as an enclosure (F 291D; AC 73) 12 years prior in 1871, and was passed by him to Mrs. Lucien Howe in late January 1897. A note on the back of this poem records its transmission history: "Sent by Emily Dickinson to T. W. Higginson, & by him given to Mrs. Lucien Howe. Cambridge, January 31 1897." Enclosed in the Higginson letter, Dickinson may have allowed it to "go astray"; however, by virtue of the relationship she negotiated with Higginson through those very enclosures, it did not stray, and Higginson only passed the poem on to Mrs. Howe years later, because its provenance as a poem addressed by a "Poet of the Portfolio" to her distinguished editor was, by then, authorized and valuable. The poem's personal epistolary context thus remained an indelible part of its function, even after it circulated beyond this context. What this tells us is that, at least in the Higginson correspondence, Dickinson's practice of enclosing poems with her letters, paradoxically ensured that if they left Higginson's hands, they would bear the mark of its transmission out from an epistolary context (even if that mark was the absence of a contextualizing letter and address), if only to relieve Higginson of seeming to sanction her as anything but a "Poet of the Portfolio." Insofar as these enclosures worked to implicate their addressee in ambiguous and uncomfortable ways, that addressee would not allow them to be mistaken for public address.

But could this have been the case with Niles (or even Jackson)? Certainly Dickinson was not actively negotiating an amateur ethos with Niles as she did with Higginson; however, it is possible that the ambiguous poetic address of Dickinson's enclosures would have given Niles pause. Not knowing how exactly to receive the poems, Niles may have been uncomfortable with circulating it further. In fact, this seems to have been at least partly the case. At some point following Dickinson's "base return," probably as an additional thanks for the "delightful Book," Dickinson sent Niles her personal copy of Curren, Ellis, & Acton Bell's *Poems*, which Niles then returned back to her, insisting "I would not for the whole world rob you of this very rare book," asking instead for "a M.S. collection of your poems, that is, if you want to give them to the world through the medium of a publisher" (L 813b). That he requests she submit poems which could be "to the world" through a medium of his choosing, as their "publisher," suggests Niles did not take "the Snow" as a poem meant for "the world." Due to missing correspondence, it is unclear what transpired next, but Dickinson seems to have replied by sending him, not a "M.S. collection," but a single poem about a "Bird," which Niles clearly preferred over other poems sent either with or before it.¹²⁹ She replies by thanking Niles for his opinion of "the Bird" and enclosing other poems

¹²⁹ The Niles letter is lost, so his opinion is assumed based on Dickinson's reply. The suggestion by both Johnson and Franklin is that "No brigadier throughout the year" is "the Bird" poem in question; however, this identification rests on the spurious clue that the only "Bird" poem Dickinson recently composed and circulated was "No brigadier throughout the year" (F 1586; sent to Susan in the same year). While a possible candidate, as Franklin notes, "the poems she was sending to Niles at this time were generally older ones" (1398). In fact, it seems more likely that the "Bird" poem was one of two older poems that Dickinson sent in different forms to multiple recipients in the previous decade: "Before you thought of spring" (F 1484; three recipients, including Jackson); or "After all birds have been investigated" (two recipients, including Higginson's wife). Both of these poems, moreover, are about an early spring "Blue Bird." In contrast, "No brigadier throughout the year" is about a "Jay" who plays in winter, "With shrill

like “him”: “Please efface the others and receive these three, which are more like him - a Thunderstorm - a Humming Bird, and a Country Burial” (L 814).¹³⁰ Though sent on the heels of his request for a collection of publishable poetry, they were never explicitly enclosed for publication, though they were also not explicitly discouraging or disparaging of publication. The only thing that can be said about them is that, like her earlier enclosure of “the Snow,” they are each identified with a name and are enclosed with the letter, seeming much like the “chill Gift” Niles had received in the past. In any case, Niles did not seem to have taken them as a submission and he never did publish these. They may have been confusing to Niles because they occupied an odd intersection between reciprocal gift, manuscript for publication, and depersonalized object, without actually being any of those, and this confusion might have prevented their publication. In any case, if this confusion was intentionally designed to keep them out of the public eye, it was a risky move, and nothing like the elaborate scheme that kept Higginson “unnerved.” The letters in which these poems are enclosed are too terse, unaffected, and formal in their address to Niles to have personally unnerved him—and the gifts were too “chill.” In short, Dickinson could not have relied on Niles to not publish these, even if they were gifts. What is the meaning of this loophole in what was otherwise Dickinson’s active avoidance of publication?

felicity / Pursuing Winds that censure us / A January Day.” Dickinson often matched her addressed poems to seasonal events, and the latter does not seem as suited to an April letter.

¹³⁰ Dickinson’s use of descriptive nouns to refer to the poems she sends as, in, or enclosed with letters is rare within her correspondence as a whole and around this time, specifically. Her correspondence with Niles is significant in that she does this on at least two, probably three occasions. More thinking is needed on the question of why Dickinson “titled” the poems here or elsewhere, but the material rhetoric of her correspondence to Niles suggests they are not merely titles. In the case of “the Snow,” for instance, the descriptive noun helps to distance Dickinson as author of the poem and to define the material object of the poem in the hands of the reader.

First, this loophole was not of her own making, or not directly. Her correspondence with Niles and Jackson sprung inevitably from her relationship with Higginson. She was, as a friend of their friend Higginson and also as a friend of Jackson, obliged to respond to Jackson's and Niles' requests for her poetry, which they both enjoyed for its aesthetic quality, apart from any economy of personal address. Dickinson certainly did not want to *reject* their advances outright, but she did not want to concede to publication either; her relationship with Higginson was painstakingly built, after all, to allow her room to resist such advances. She did not exchange poems for art's sake alone; to do so would have courted more solicitations to make her poetry public, which would, in turn, defeat the interpersonal aims of her poetic address. Second, Dickinson used this loophole to her advantage; the Niles correspondence presents a very different but no less complex case of Dickinson controlling the terms in which her poetry could become public. Committed to hands in which the poem might "go astray," Dickinson may have left it open to publication, but she ensured that it was very much out of her hands by then and no longer her own poetic address. To develop this final point, I will look again at her first "chill Gift" to Niles, which works to disrupt very subtly whatever it is that Niles thinks he is getting.

There are four extant copies of "It sifts from Leaden Sieves": one from the Civil War, and three copies of a revised version dating from 1865, one of which was enclosed as "the Snow" to Niles. Although the copies of the revised version are substantively similar, the Niles version uniquely calls the snow "Juggler's Figures," where the other two (a record copy and Higginson's enclosure) call the snow "Juggler's Flowers." Where the latter trope is more specific, it is also more deeply resonant with the nineteenth-century metaphor for poems—especially affectively

charged women's poems—as flowers.¹³¹ Hence “Juggler's Flowers” readily functions in this case as a metaphor for poetry and, by extension, Dickinson's own poetry. Within the context of Dickinson's correspondence with Higginson, the poet-as-juggler metaphor makes sense: she was training Higginson to see her poems as the work of an evasive, enigmatic, and ultimately playful rather than serious poet. The Niles enclosure, which replaces “Flowers” with “Figures,” revises the trope significantly. While “Juggler's Figures” in the Niles version can still, if vaguely, suggest poetry, it is really Dickinson's action of calling the enclosure itself “the Snow” in her letter to Niles that links “Jugglers Figures” to poetry. That is, called “the Snow,” the poem-as-enclosed, like the snow, is “like Jugglers Figures.”

This does not, as we have seen, necessarily identify the Juggler in this instance as Dickinson, especially given the enclosure's tendency to “deny that it was,” itself giving no explicit indication of its original author or its context. In juxtaposition to the possessive name she assigns the poem that was *set* in this letter to Niles (“*My Cricket*”), Dickinson only calls the enclosure “*the Snow*,” making it seem all the more removed and even less authored by her, hardly owning it.¹³²

¹³¹ For more the relation between women's poetry and floral imagery or the “language of flowers,” especially as it concerned Dickinson, see Petrino, Chapter 5.

¹³² “*My Cricket*” is the poem beginning “Further in Summer than the Birds” (F 895) which was circulated to multiple correspondents: set in the letter to Niles, sent as a letter to three others, enclosed with a letter to Higginson. All addressed variants, except Higginson's enclosure, contained some indication of the poem's referent: in the Niles letter she explicitly refers to it as “*My Cricket*” (AC 831); in a letter to Gertrude Vanderbilt (AC tr59) she includes the word cricket in the poem itself; in two letters (to Frances and Louise Norcross (AC tr43) and to Mabel Todd (AC 66) she omits the word “cricket” but attaches the literal referent, i.e., a dead cricket. Higginson received an enclosure without either the word “cricket” or a literal specimen, and the manuscript reveals Higginson's confusion at what the referent is: in the top left corner is a penciled question in Higginson's hand: “insect sounds?” (BPL 1093.22) This exclusion in Higginson's case, I suggest, was in keeping with Dickinson's strategy with Higginson: it worked toward his confusion with her “wayward” verse.

Dickinson's disavowal and the enclosure's potential amnesia about its context of address does not deny the poem an author, however; instead, authorship is bequeathed to the addressee at the moment of reception, and this function is entirely contingent on the materiality of the poem as a disavowed, amnesiac enclosure and its reception by Niles in the context of their correspondence as a whole. The poem as enclosed to Niles covers two pages of the folded sheet of stationery, similar to Higginson's enclosure, but whereas the first page of Higginson's breaks following the word "Situates," the first page of Niles' enclosure breaks following the word "Arc -." Thus, after Niles read "Like Juggler's Figures situates / Upon a baseless Arc -," he would have opened the folded sheet of stationery to the inside page to continue reading and in doing so would have caused the page to arc in the air as it opened. The page itself, as it is read, thus "situates / Upon a baseless Arc -," becoming like "Juggler's Figures" in the reader's hands, and not just any reader: specifically an editor with a history of making her poem's original address disappear.

As the sole and direct recipient of Dickinson's "chill Gift," Niles, editor of the Roberts Brothers publishing house, was the person who printed her poem in *A Masque of Poets*—where its original identity as a poem addressed by Dickinson was "doubly" erased via Jackson's copying (or memorizing) of the poem and then via Niles' printing of the poem. Read in this context, "the Snow" alludes to its own potential disappearance in the dexterous hands of Niles, the editor, and this, I argue, was Dickinson's strategic response to the loophole through which her poetry might make its way to the public. That is, the enclosure actively works to first disavow Dickinson as the author/addressor, and then implicate Niles as its new author/addressor, so that if he decided to publish it, by virtue of this mediation, it would not ever be Dickinson's poetic address to the public. Not quite a gesture of thanks, not quite for publication, not quite a M.S. collection of poems, Dickinson's enclosures to Niles do function as "gifts" in the sense that they were given over entirely to him, evacuated of Dickinson's intention.

This functioning of the Niles enclosures can, I think, be extended to Dickinson's practice of enclosing poetry in general, and though this functioning gestures toward the public reception of her poetry, it ultimately closes Dickinson off from that reception. It does so by disassociating her from the address of the enclosure at the moment of its reception. That Dickinson's practice of enclosing poetry apparently began with her first letter to Higginson supports the idea that she used this mode both to negotiate with literary professionals and to close the loophole those negotiations created. Her first enclosures to Higginson can be understood as her first experiment not only in bringing poetic and epistolary address into contiguous and ambiguous relation, but also in making the authority of poetic address entirely contingent on context and transferrable. Further study on Dickinson's play with authority in this and other instances of enclosing poems with her letters to Higginson could map the development of this experimentation.

Read alongside her practice of sending poems *as* and *in* letters, Dickinson's practice of enclosing poetry tells us that address was a primary concern in her poetic projects. Dickinson's concern with address highlights the extent to which, as Elizabeth Hewitt has argued, "social mediation is the foundation for all of Dickinson's poetic discourse" and the extent to which she "seeks through poetic correspondence to describe distances that bind her to others" (171). Whereas Hewitt sees Dickinson dwelling in those distances, however, in order to "give an account of the impossibility of correspondence itself" (162), I believe Dickinson was more interested in filling those distances with an affective charge that only the materiality of a personally addressed poem could spark. In light of her active avoidance of publication, Dickinson's attention to poetic address suggests she was invested in directing her own away from public reception, and toward the personal and the specific—toward a realizable addressee with whom Dickinson could materialize an interpersonal affectivity.

Conclusion

Portrait of Dickinson's Addressee

The difference between Shakespeare and his contemporaries is not that he is read twice, ten times, a hundred times as much as they: it is an absolute difference; he is read, and they are only printed.

— Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "A Letter to a Young Contributor"

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you - Nobody - too?
Then there's a pair of us!
Dont tell! they'd banish
 advertise
us - you know!

How dreary - to be - Somebody!
How public - like a Frog -
 one's
To tell your name - the livelong
June -
To an admiring Bog!

— Emily Dickinson, 1861 (F 260)

I do not think we have a right to withhold from the world a word or a thought any more than a *deed*, which might help a single soul.

— Helen Hunt Jackson, 1884 (L 937a).

What is striking about Dickinson's deployment of poetry as, in, or with her letters is the way in which it mobilizes affective connection with her reader. Although the mode in which she deploys poetry is different from what we see in the deployment of women's poetry in newspapers in the mid-nineteenth century—Dickinson addresses her poetry in specifically personal (epistolary), non-public modes—her deployment certainly proceeds from the same faith in poetry's affective mediation. This faith is thrown into high relief in a letter that Dickinson sent to the Hollands

during what I have been arguing was the watershed period in Dickinson's developing relationship with her literary market. The letter underscores, in particular, how Dickinson understood this relationship and her own poetic project. Sometime between 1860 and 1862—it is unclear precisely when—Dickinson wrote to Elizabeth and Josiah Holland, but was left waiting for a reply.¹³³ After hearing from a “visitor in town” that Elizabeth was “not strong,” Dickinson, apparently flummoxed that she had not heard back from her friends, follows up with another letter, expressing both her concern for Elizabeth and her justification for being persistent:

I write to you. I receive no letter.

I say “they dignify my trust.” I do not disbelieve. I go again. Cardinals wouldn't do it. Cockneys wouldn't do it, but I can't stop to strut, in a world where bells toll.

I hear through visitor in town, that “Mrs. Holland is not strong.” The little peacock in me, tells me not to inquire again. Then I remember my tiny

¹³³ It is not known what the original letter was or why the Hollands did not write back, largely because dating the follow-up letter has proved difficult. Johnson dates the letter to summer 1862, but notes the date is “by conjecture only” (*Letters* 413), since no manuscript (only a transcript) survives. The Hollands' granddaughter, Theodora Ward, dated it originally to 1859, but later changed her mind to 1862, based on similar phrasing in a letter to Higginson from this time (413). However, repetition of phrasing is not a robust way to date letters written by Dickinson, who in some instances repeats phrasing decades later. A letter (L 227) dated to 1860 offers the best clue (no letters survive between 1860–1865); in it Dickinson inquires after Elizabeth's new-born son Theodore who, born in 1859, had surgery in 1860 to correct a congenital deformity in his foot (*Letters* 369). Dickinson writes, “How is your little Byron? Hope he gains his foot without losing his genius. Have heard it ably argued that that poet's genius lay in his foot - as the bee's prong and his song are concomitant. Are you stronger than these? To assault so minute a creature seem to me align, unworthy of Nature...I should be glad to be with you, or to open your letter.” Dickinson's report in letter 269 that she learned “Mrs Holland is not strong” via indirect channels, her reference to “Herod” (who in the Bible is associated with the “Massacre of the Innocents”) which suggests Theodore's surgeon, and her continuing desire to open a letter from them, suggests to me that belongs directly after letter 227, in 1860.

friend - how brief she is - how dear she is, and the peacock quite dies away. Now, you need not speak, for perhaps you are weary, and “Herod” requires all your thought, but if you are well - let Annie draw me a little picture of an erect flower; if you are ill, she can hang the flower a little on one side!

Then, I shall understand, and you need not stop to write me a letter. Perhaps you laugh at me! Perhaps the whole United States are laughing at me too! I can’t stop for that! My business is to love. I found a bird, this morning, down - down - on a little bush at the foot of the garden, and wherefore sing, I said, since nobody hears?

One sob in the throat, one flutter of bosom - “My business is to sing” - and away she rose! How do I know but cherubim, once, themselves, as patient, listened, and applauded her unnoticed hymn?

Emily.

Not wanting to disturb Elizabeth who may be too weak to reply, Dickinson suggests Annie (the Hollands’ eldest daughter) signal Elizabeth’s wellness through a drawing of a flower. This alternative would supply news of Elizabeth but would also be a sign of receipt, something equally important to Dickinson who feels out of the loop. She does not “stop to strut” (ADEL: “To walk with a lofty proud gait and erect head; to walk with affected dignity”); acting insulted wastes time and is potentially not warranted. She does have a “little peacock” inside of her, however, which makes her nearly too proud to beg for reply, but which “dies away” at the thought of Elizabeth, so vulnerable and dear that a child’s drawing of a flower would suffice to represent her. In the first part of this letter Dickinson articulates her response to finding no reply to her letter in terms of the behavior of birds—not the strut of “Cardinal” or a “Cockney,” but the fanning pride of a “little peacock” inside, which is overruled by loving concern. In the second half of the letter

Dickinson uses the behaviour of a songbird to explain her unabashed attempts to be received (and to have the receipt acknowledged) by her addressee. Similar to the bird who continues to sing though her “hymn” may go “unnoticed” because its “business is to sing,” Dickinson continues to write though she has received no reply to her last letter because her “business is to love.”

It is tempting to draw direct parallels here and claim that Dickinson is presenting herself as a version of the bird, and thus aligning herself with what the bird represents; however, Dickinson’s identification with the bird is selective. Dickinson is clearly drawing on her culture’s association of bird song with poetry and birds with poetesses (e.g., nightingales), to suggest her business, like the bird’s “unnoticed hymn,” is poetic business. However, beyond these businesses being poetic, they are not identical. What is identical, however, is the striving to do their poetic business, their mutual inability to stop. Both Dickinson and the bird are engaged in business that “Cherubim” might find worthy of applause because it is divinely inspired: it is faithful not to a creed or a higher being, but to the nature of its agent, faithful to a vital act and the impulse to “go again” despite a lack of acknowledgement. Here Dickinson is playing the martyr, but this is where her true likeness to the bird ends, and with it the likeness of the bird’s “unnoticed hymn” to her own loving letter.

Whereas the bird goes on singing an “unnoticed hymn” that “nobody hears” (except perhaps Dickinson, who overhears), Dickinson goes on addressing the Hollands and inviting their reply. She does “not disbelieve” that she will be received, but she ultimately relies on her recipient’s acknowledgement. Unlike the bird who sings for nobody, Dickinson has an addressee and her addressee is the whole reason for her business. She “can’t stop” her business of loving (addressing her words and awaiting reply), though she might be laughed at, taken as a fool, or

because her addressee cannot reply.¹³⁴ Laughing or indisposed though they may be, Dickinson directs her love to them nevertheless, striving to materialize the affective connection. The bird, in contrast, does not address anyone and awaits no reply. When directly acknowledged, the bird sobs in the throat, flutters in the bosom, and flies away to continue her business elsewhere. Though the bird and Dickinson may both be poets, they are not identical and Dickinson is careful to make the distinction; though her response to the Hollands' silence and her impulse to "go again" is bird-like, Dickinson is no bird, after all. The major distinction between Dickinson and birds lies in the distinction between Dickinson's loving and the bird's singing, and this distinction registers precisely the complicated alignment between Dickinson and her literary culture that I have sought to demonstrate throughout this dissertation. Dickinson shared a concern with the context of poetic address and a faith in poetry's affective intervention with those invested in negotiating an authorial ethos for American women's poetry in the mid-nineteenth century, and yet to sustain the particular intervention of her own poetic address—an interpersonal affectivity—she could not be aligned with such ethos. She also could not stop for that ethos. But unlike the poet-bird, who cares neither for careers nor for anyone else, Dickinson does not fly away to merely sing to herself. Dickinson opts instead to position herself on the path

¹³⁴ Dickinson also famously echoed this phrasing in a letter to Higginson in 1862, "Perhaps you smile at me. I could not stop for that - My Business is circumference -" (L 268). Dickinson's "circumference" is one of her most ambiguous, though most quoted terms. In the context of the Higginson correspondence, and in light of the different terms chosen in the Holland letter, the business of circumference might be a sneaky way of articulating the business of getting around the business of publication (which is what her business with Higginson was, after all), and in that way it would be semantically (and not just syntactically) analogous to the business of loving, which, as I define it here, was Dickinson's way creating interpersonal affect through personal poetic address. Dickinson's word "business" is flexible enough to apply to her personal work (loving), the bird's work (solitary singing) that she distinguishes herself from, and the professional work she avoids (publication) through her work with Higginson (circumference).

of an amateur woman writer, on the way to becoming a professional poet but never quite there, a position in which, at worst, she might be laughed at, but from which she might still be in business to love.

In Dickinson's letter to the Hollands, the bird's "unnoticed hymn" is heard by "nobody," overheard by Dickinson, and possibly receives a nod by "Cherubim." Dickinson's letter (and by extension, her poetry) is, in contrast, clearly intended to be received by readers—it is a loving gesture. While the poet-bird sings for singing's sake, and is thus indifferent to who receives the "hymn," Dickinson loves for loving's sake and is indifferent, not to who receives her affectionate gesture but to their laughter. In juxtaposing (but not opposing) the bird's "hymn" and her words, Dickinson is telling the Hollands that although she is a poet, she is not merely singing—it matters to her that they receive her words as a loving, personal gesture and not something directed to just anyone or nobody. In doing so, they validate her business, which is to love. Highlighting the interpersonal affectivity of her poetic business, and its dependence on a specific addressee, Dickinson is also distinguishing herself not only from poet-bird who sings to itself alone, but also from public poets, who, though they are in the business of singing to others, address their song publically, without specificity. In Dickinson's specific address, she acknowledges that the Hollands and possibly "the whole United States" may laugh her at. This suggestion is remarkable because it quite directly acknowledges the scope of her readership as including both her specific addressee and also those eavesdropping on the personal exchange. Here she is almost winking at a possible public (e.g., if the letter finds its way into the newspaper) and also posterity as if to say "laughing or not, I am not addressing you." The wink is, however, indirect and thoroughly marks "the whole United States" as non-addressees. Though she makes explicit that she will not stop for a laughing reception, public or otherwise, she does so through her personal address to the Hollands—the "you" she addresses here remains specific.

Dickinson's indirect aside to "the whole United States" which positions them as non-addressees usefully illustrates the move she was making to control her poetic address in the early 1860s when she found her poetry not only being overheard by a public, but also materially transformed to seem as if it were addressing that public. In Chapters 1 and 2, in which I investigated the ethos of women's poetry as it was negotiated in Dickinson's surrounding literary culture between 1830 and 1864, I showed that Dickinson's poetry was not only published within the very contexts of public address in which the struggle to negotiate an authorial ethos for women's poetry played out—namely periodicals in the 1860s—but it was also positioned to further this ethos. Chapter 1 argued that the function and reception of women's poetry in the mid-nineteenth-century U.S. literary market depended on its alignment with a gendered ethos that the material rhetoric of American periodicals helped to establish. I read the *Drum Beat* as an example of how the periodicity and contingent placement of diverse rhetorical texts in daily newspapers during the Civil War gave women's poetry new ways to matter, particularly as a mediating force that brought affective renewal and delivered hope to war-weary readers. Building from the fact that the publication of Dickinson's poetry in the *Drum Beat* helped further the paper's aims to support a gendered ethos for women's work, I turned in Chapter 2 to a more direct example of Dickinson's uptake in the negotiation of gendered ethos for women's poetry: the publication of two Dickinson poems in the early 1860s in *The Springfield Republican*. In the hands of the *Springfield Republican's* literary editor Fidelia Hayward Cooke, Dickinson's poems, published alongside original women's poetry in the paper, came to serve to mediate the war news for *Republican* readers. In doing so, I argued, Dickinson's poetry was transformed significantly, but not in the way that many scholars have suggested—it had not just become a printed document in which her poetics were altered; it was now implicated in a public mode of poetic address that was not her own. Looking ahead to Chapters 3 and 4, in which I investigated the ethos Dickinson herself

negotiated as she sent poetry in letters to correspondents between 1862 and 1884, I claimed that this transformation threatened the possibility of Dickinson's own poetic projects and prompted decisive action on her part to limit any further publication.

In Chapter 3, I recast the Dickinson-Higginson correspondence, which has historically been read as marking Dickinson's desire for publication, as Dickinson's attempt to prevent further publication. Dickinson found in Higginson an unlikely (and unknowing) ally in her fight to remain unpublished; negotiating an amateur ethos through the material rhetoric of her letters and poetry addressed to him, Dickinson made Higginson feel always too uncomfortable to recommend, as Helen Hunt Jackson did, that she share her poetry with the world. In fact, Higginson was so predictable that Dickinson was able to turn to him repeatedly to help her furnish an excuse to resist the solicitations of admirers like Jackson and her publisher, Thomas Niles. Ironically, of course, Higginson published Dickinson's first volume of poetry following her death, but I do not think this betrayed her. Dickinson was not threatened by a possible public to come after her death but instead by a publicity and authorial ethos in her life that would obstruct or diminish her poetry's capacity to be received by those she chose to address. As Chapter 4 demonstrated, Dickinson's concern with poetic address permeated her correspondence, within which she personally addressed nearly 600 poems to her recipients (and very likely many more). Detailing three modes in which Dickinson addressed her poems—as letters, set within letters, and enclosed with letters—I argued that she was primarily invested in personal, non-public forms of poetic address that had, for her, a realizable addressee, and I situated her active avoidance of publication (via Higginson) directly in relation to this investment. By virtue of Dickinson's avoidance of publication and by virtue of her practice of addressing poems to specific recipients, Dickinson was able to build and sustain what was in her estimation the highest aim of poetry: interpersonal affectivity.

Scholarship on nineteenth-century American women's poetry is now at a point where it can assuredly say, as Cristanne Miller puts it, "not publishing was a choice" (*Reading* 176) for Dickinson. This is because the business of singing, so to speak, for women poets was not only alive and well, but women themselves also often ran it. Dickinson moreover not only had the access, opportunity, and encouragement to print; she also had the luxury of saying no—she did not have to write to sustain her economic livelihood, for instance. My dissertation has sought to articulate the fact that "not publishing was a choice" for Dickinson more clearly by situating that choice within the material rhetoric of the very mediums in which her poetry was addressed to others both publically and personally, during her lifetime. My material rhetoric approach represents a crucial intervention in conversations about the rhetorical function and consequence of women's literary work in the mid-nineteenth-century U.S., by mapping the material basis for the dramatic shift in the ethos of women's poetry that occurs during this time, as well as Dickinson's implication in and response to that shift, which has been overlooked in scholarship characterized by a critical tendency to read Dickinson as indifferent to her literary culture.

In doing so, I also make a substantial contribution to feminist historiographies of rhetoric that seek to define the rhetorical spaces available to nineteenth-century American women and the consequences of their rhetorical texts, as well as the nineteenth-century American studies that seek to read Dickinson in context. Material rhetoric makes it possible to trace the gendered stakes of publication and authorship for individual women poets, especially those deemed representative or those whom criticism sets apart. Indeed, my study offers proof that rethinking nineteenth-century women's poetry in terms of material rhetoric can reveal complex interactions among even those poets deemed wildly opposite. I have situated Dickinson, for instance, precisely where scholars have found her ill fit—amidst her peers as they struggled to realize cultural legitimacy as writing women.

In situating Dickinson in her context, I have tried not to reiterate Dickinson's difference from her peers, though this is, to some extent, impossible to avoid. Dickinson chose not to publish her poetry. In this choice, we cannot help but see a marked difference from most of her women poet peers, but perhaps the reasons for that choice are not so unlike their choices, after all. Like her antebellum and mid-nineteenth-century peers, Dickinson's unit of meaning for her poetry was, we might say, its affectivity, that is, its capacity to affect its reader. In saying this, I am consciously intervening in the ongoing debate in Dickinson studies over whether her unit of meaning was primarily aural in nature (e.g., rhythmic variation among her stanzas) or visual in nature (e.g., "spatial prosody" in the manuscripts), by suggesting that she manipulated both to maximize the poem's potential affectivity.¹³⁵ For Dickinson, unlike more public women poets, it was not just anybody that she wanted to affect; invested in how her poetic address could mediate her relationships with others, moving them into an interpersonal affect with her, she directed her verse specifically. Her difference resides in, or rather follows from, the directionality and specificity of her poetic address. In this directionality and specificity, however, Dickinson is nevertheless extending her culture's faith in poetry.

It is by way of this commensurability that I am hoping to push the study of nineteenth-century women's poetry to be more inclusive of its supposed outsiders or anomalies, and also to expand our understanding of public modes of poetic address through case studies of the ones who, like Dickinson, found public address insufficient for their task. I am also hoping to push the study of Dickinson into a new mode of analysis—working from the materiality of her poetry, not to prove its disjunction with convention, its rupturing of genre and gender, its

¹³⁵ For more on the two sides of this debate, see Miller, "The Sound of Shifting Paradigms, or Reading Dickinson in the Twenty-First Century" and Hart, "Alliteration, Emphasis, and Spatial Prosody in Dickinson's Manuscript Letters."

challenge for the reader, but to recognize where it leaves us, her readers. If Dickinson's poetry may seem to deny closure—to deny us closure—is that, perhaps, because we are not addressed by the poetry, or at least not addressed by Dickinson? When we try to know Dickinson's address as it was, will we only know it by the death of her reader? That is a question I leave for future study.

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