

**Reading the Fascicles of
Emily Dickinson
Dwelling in Possibilities**

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point; in Fascicle 14, the exuberance implied by such a mark is not just muted; it seems stamped out by the round, large, final period. By such small marks she "hid herself" in Fascicles 3 and 40, both of which focus on—and reveal—the "Granite face" of Death.

"I Hide Myself" in Fascicles 3 and 40

When Dickinson selected "The Only News I know / Is Bulletins all Day / From Immortality" (J827, Fr820) as the opening of what appears to be her last fascicle, she alluded to both the timeliness and the timelessness of her poems and announced the general concern of both fascicles in which she "hid herself." The news that was not news was that of death. That Dickinson constantly tweaked the meaning and margin of death, of course, is no news, but in Fascicles 3 and 40 she explores the subject in such radically different settings that they form an appropriate conclusion to this study of the way context shapes meaning.

Readers of this book know well the numbers of young and old family members and friends whom Dickinson had lost by 1858, when she compiled Fascicle 3. By 1864, when she compiled Fascicle 40, she also had, of course, as a constant reader of her father's journals and a member of Amherst's first family, become familiar with national carnage. Yet Fascicle 3's vignettes of the grieving watcher at bed-sides reveals a Dickinson closer to that described by Cynthia Griffin Wolff: "[P]erhaps this God of absolute cold has concocted a cosmos that functions primarily as an experiment in human anguish" (1986, 321); Fascicle 40, on the other hand, in which Dickinson placed a poem almost identical to one in Fascicle 3, places her closer to the mystical Dickinson of Inder Nath Kher: "In the midsummer of mind," he says, "death is like 'The Summer closed upon itself / in Consummated Bloom'" (1974, 209).

Two years before Dorothy Oberhaus published her extensive study of Fascicle 40, I had engaged in a similar study. Frankly, I was amazed at the orthodox devotion reflected in this fascicle, so that I was not surprised at part of the Oberhaus theory. Although it may be a stretch to see all of the forty fascicles as forming "a single *œuvre*," in which Fascicle 40 is the climax of a "conversion narrative" (1995, 87), as Oberhaus does, her conclusions that this fascicle is "a meditation" (*ibid.*, 9) is inescapable. So thoroughly and elaborately has Oberhaus analyzed the fascicle we believe to be the final one (the proviso inherent in this sentence might be one challenge to complete acceptance of Oberhaus's theory) that this discussion focuses primarily on the different voice I hear in Fascicle 3, which contains a duplicate poem.

Both fascicles 3 and 40, separated by six years, almost hide the repeated poem in an identical position on the bottom of a sheet on the west side of the

booklet. Unassuming as it seems in isolation, however, the little "I hide myself" in this context seems a coded assertion of poetic identity, or rather, identities. As with "The feet of people" in Fascicles 1 and 14, this poem becomes a different artifact within its altered setting. In Fascicle 3 the impression produced by the voices is fiercely skeptical, the stance existentialist; in Fascicle 40, as Oberhaus shows so thoroughly, the voice is so meditative that Oberhaus claims the speaker to be Christ. Fascicle 3 conveys impatience; Fascicle 40, a serene anticipation of the end of finite time.

Speaking usually from the point of view of a small observer to death's puzzling manifestations, poems in Fascicle 3 speak of "Mystery," "riddle," and "enigma," each a synonym for the state that is beyond telling. Built into that structure are at least two of Dickinson's most idiosyncratic and potentially heterodox statements on death: "Some things there fly that be—" (J89, Fr68), the second in the fascicle, and "Sleep is supposed to be" (J13, Fr35), the third from the end (note the near symmetry). The loose narrative seems to reach a crisis in the sixteenth poem, the angriest poem in the fascicle, in which the bereaved mourner rails at her "Burglar! Banker—Father!" This "loose narrative" should not be confused with the kind of plotted narrative Shurr tells—or even with the kind of religious devotional Oberhaus finds; it is closer to a train of linked vignettes. Each succeeding poem picks up and turns to a new light an angle or image from the previous poem. Poem leads on to poem through associative clusters of words and images.

Fascicle 3 poses a barrage of questions about death. Is it ceasing to know? Is it knowledge that cannot be put down? Is it the view of the eye of the humble tourist? Is it captivity or victory? Flight or rest? The hidden or the revealed? Each poem poses a new question. Equally the fascicle queries the hortatory act: the tension between the telling and the keeping of silence. In seven of the poems this is a specific refrain, and it is implied in the other poems as well. Both concerns emerge in the first poem, "Delayed till she had ceased to know" (J58, Fr67).

Although Higginson later selected this three-verse, common, particular poem as one of the fifteen he chose for his *Christian Century* article and although several have posited interpretations of this poem,⁶ most readers are baffled by the characteristic gaps and inconsistencies of "Delayed." For one thing, the gender of the subject is slippery; three times the one who has "ceased to know" is female, but by the end that subject (masculinized, then neutered) is "a king / Doubtful if it be crowned." For another, there's that missing direct object: "[T]o know" *what?* asks the reader. "It would be" *what*, and *what* is the "it" in the second stanza? Why the heavy beat of iterated Delayed/Delay/lay in the first stanza and the conditional mode of the "Had not" and "if there may be" of the next two stanzas? So much is missing in this poem that the reader thinks again of the Riffaterrean hypogram, that shadow

inherent in but unstated and hovering just outside the formal elements of the poem. Cristanne Miller's study of Emily Dickinson's grammar, particularly of Dickinson's "nonrecoverable deletions" that "allow a freedom of association and narrative movement" (1987, 30) is helpful, but perhaps the most helpful way to approach the riddles is to replace this poem in its fascicle context, where the jarring tone of "Delayed" continues in the second poem's riddle.

In "Delayed," the speaker hovers around the friend who has "ceased to know," attributing her own doubt to her subject, but she herself delays until the poem's last line—the overt statement of doubt. She could not "have guessed" what lies beyond. The unfulfilled yearning "to know," the inability to "guess," and the assertion that the subject is "Doubtful" yield to a similarly unorthodox ending of the fascicle's second poem, "Some things that fly there be—" (J89, Fr68). An elegantly structured poem—its three three-lined trimeter lines subliminally emphasize the trinities that are offered as "things that fly" ("Birds—Hours—the Bumblebee") and "things that stay" ("Grief—Hills—Eternity")—the poem moves along in easy triplets until the last stanza. Leaving out the "Some things," the speaker again uses threes but this time bases the trinity on alliterative sound: "resting," "rise," and, the scariest, "Riddle."

When the speaker asks the answer to the oxymoronic question of resurrection—how the "resting" can "rise"—she also asks an epistemological question, "Can I expound the skies?" Can she, to use her dictionary, "explain, lay open to meaning, clear of obscurity, interpret" the heaven she has been handed? If she knew, as she probably did, Emerson's "Brahma's" advice to "Find me, and turn thy back on heaven," she must have found congenial the exhortation to resist the handed-down assumptions about an afterlife involving spiritual polarizations such as heaven and hell. Just as she knew that "Parting is all we know of heaven / And all we need of hell" (J1732, Fr1773), she knew that Paradise is also here on earth; separation from this earth produced a grief she could not answer away by expounding the skies, at least not in *this*, the third fascicle.

Not one but two puns punctuate this second poem of Fascicle 3: "How still the Riddle lies!" That on "lies" has been noted (see, for example, Porter 1961, 80); less discussed—and never in relation to this fascicle, I believe—is the play on "still." Does she mean "how quiet" or "how long unanswered" the Riddle "rests in our minds" or "conveys untruths"? That we cannot know answers to the most central question of human existence and that it is always just a hand's reach away seem the purport of the third poem, nestled just below the riddle. Similar to those impatient poems of Fascicle 14, "Within my reach!" (J90, Fr69) conveys a kind of agonized frustration.

The fourth and fifth poems of the fascicle face the second and third; both echo and anticipate the concerns of other poems in the fascicle. The violet of the fourth ("So bashful when I spied her!" [J91, Fr70]) is wrenched like

Emerson's "Rhodora" from its secret place. When, later in the fascicle, the speaker says she "hides herself within her flower," she repeats the keyword, "hide," and she iterates the not telling ("I shall never tell") of the first and second poems. The wrenched violet merges into a mortal bird with a barbed tongue ("My friend must be a Bird—" (J92, Fr71). As with the natural characters of the first four poems, this one, too, concerns not knowing: "Ah, curious friend!" says the speaker, "Thou puzzlest me." Riddles and puzzles: These are not the concerns of Fascicle 40, in which a poem placed here and changed little appears. Context *does* affect interpretation.

A thud of disappointment also ends the next (seventh) poem, "Went Up a year this evening!" (J93, Fr72). The speaker of this little story, a spectator at a death,⁷ goes through a number of stages, of which "wonder" is one, but the speaker ends the otherwise buoyant poem with this: "A Difference—A Daisy— / Is all the rest I knew!" As with "lies" and "still" in earlier poems, the "rest" resonates here, and the reader recognizes the frustration of the not knowing. Just so, the two poems that face this story, both of which might be read as cheerful nature poems,⁸ nevertheless have their own disquieting thuds. "Angels, in the early morning" (J94, Fr73) "parched" flowers, an image E. Miller Budick also finds disturbing (1985, 69–70). And the "nosegay" and "Captive" of the next (eighth) poem have their own unsettling resonances. The reader of the fascicles—and only the reader of the fascicle—will notice one of Dickinson's tricks on the bottom of the opened page, though what to make of it, I confess, I'm not sure. Could she just be having fun by placing across from each other these lines: from "Went out a year": "The *wondrous* nearer drew— / Hands bustled at the moorings— / The crowd respectful grew—" and, on the right, from "My nosegays": "To such, if they sh'd whisper / Of mornings and the moors / They bear no other errand. . . ." Mooring the poems together this way cannot have been a complete accident. In all of the 1,775 poems Dickinson uses some form of "moor" or "mooring" only seven times.

Way leads on to way within Fascicle 3. Turning the page from Angels and nosegays, the reader discovers another graveyard scene, one reflecting simple acceptance, perhaps, of the death of a loved one to whom the flower and bird (both, to repeat, metonymies for poems) provide directions—and they are better than the directions of "Cato."⁹ Below that, "Sexton! My Master's sleeping here" (J96, Fr75) is a reminder of the limits of knowledge, as is "The rainbow never tells me" (J97, Fr76), the ninth and tenth poems of Fascicle 3.

In spite of the limits of knowledge—or because of it—"Angels," the fascicle's seventh poem, seems to be a poem of faith. The common meter "Angels" might just as well fit Fascicle 40, but it is followed by a poem that, because of the verb in the first line, reminds us of the fascicle's opening ("Delayed till she had ceased to know"); it is "One dignity delays for all—" (J98, Fr77). This rather long poem, too, seems devotional but for that problematic verb and its

dark observation that death is inevitable for all. There's a "meek escutcheon" on the crowned dead, reminding the fascicle reader of the "meek appareled thing," the dead in the fascicle's first poem, and looking toward the nineteenth poem, "The morns are meeker than they were—" (J12, Fr32).

Meanwhile, Dickinson has other (it seems to me intentional) surprises in store. Following the relative orthodoxy (if we ignore the Cato reference) of the twelfth poem, she situates the speaker of the thirteenth, "As by the dead we love to sit" (J88, Fr78), by a bedside or graveyard, grappling with the tension between knowing and believing. The grappling has to do with the mathematics of loss, a notion that is followed in the next poem by the mathematics of gain: "New feet within my garden go—" (J99, Fr79) with its itemization of things "new," which cannot make up for the sadness of the end, "And still [that pun again] the pensive Spring returns— / And still the punctual snow!"

These are the poems that prepare for and all but hide the poem that Dickinson considered important enough to place in two fascicles. The speaker (or speakers) of these graveside poets, having "grappled" with death for thirteen poems, says

I hide myself within my flower
That wearing on your breast—
You—unsuspecting, wear me too—
And Angels know the rest! (J903, Fr80)

As with other repeated poems, this one seems both centrally located and pivotal in terms of language and idea. As are earlier and subsequent poems in the fascicle, it is about knowing; the poem (the fascicle?) contains what the poet knows and conveys to the listener/the reader/the wearer of the verse. What she does not know, what only the angels (there are several in this fascicle) know is "the rest," that simple word, which has already appeared three times in the fascicle. Both the Johnson and the Franklin variorum editions note that the poem in one of its versions seems to have accompanied a literal flower. Regardless of whether this is true, it does not belie whatever meaning she attached to it when she selected it for placement here.

After declaring that she "hides [her]self," she includes four poems in a row that begin with the first-person singular. We know that the "I" of her poetry may be a "supposed person," but the almost hammered-out use of the pronoun and the tone of the poems suggest that maybe she *was* both hiding and revealing herself in this fascicle. "I never told the buried gold" (J11, Fr38), the fifteenth in the series, begins this string of poems. In it, the speaker declares lightheartedly that she wants to join forces with the plunderer (of the sunset), a kind of Captain Kidd, and will earn the right to share the "booty" she has greedily watched him hide. Comic relief it may be, but it also reminds us of the mathematics of gain

and loss, the tension between knowing and not knowing and between telling and not telling. And there's another surprise in the last verse: It faces the little poem (the fourteenth, which is repeated in Fascicle 40) in which the speaker "hides" herself: There the speaker wonders "Whether to keep the secret— / Whether to reveal— / Whether as I ponder / 'Kidd' will sudden sail—"

There's a seriousness to this fun: Fascicle 3 moves to the next poem, potentially one of her fiercest assaults on orthodox belief. To anticipate that, perhaps, Dickinson the editor copied the last verse of "I never told" at the top of the page. The lines form almost an introduction to "I never lost as much but twice" (J49, Fr39): at the end of the fifteenth poem, the one that hints at the larceny of Captain Kidd—and the urge to larceny by the speaker for the "buried gold," the speaker wonders "Could a shrewd advise me / We might e'en divide— / Should a shrewd betray me— / Atropos decide!" The Atropos reference, a quotation from Shakespeare directly related to the death poems¹⁰ but so different from the reference to Kidd in the same poem, is only a little less puzzling than the object of the verb "decide." Barton Levi St. Armand explains "the shrewd" as the reader or viewer; the treasure as the transformed beauty of the landscape—the work of the artist, whose work becomes "the spoils of aesthetic adventure" (1984, 267). Yes, that works: this is a fascicle in which the artist hides him- or herself (his or her skill) in the flower (poem about the sunset). The question of what is to be decided can only be guessed by the proximate poems and then only through a suggestion that we might again liken to that hypogrammatic shadow.

Below the unfinished thought in "Could a shrewd decide" is the poem that might indeed be the fiercest in the fascicle—though it has been called funny (Budick 1985, 126) and "far from rebellious" (Rapin 1973). Following a number of crowded pages, this poem, introduced by the "shrewd" verse, is set off with plenty of space above and below it as though its author/editor wants it to be clear:

I never lost as much but twice—
And that was in the sod—
Twice have I stood a beggar
Before the throne of God!

Angels—twice descending
Reimbursed my store—
Burglar! Banker—Father!
I am poor once more! (J49, Fr39)

To the reader who began this little collection with the sense that the riddle of resurrection "lies" "still," if you will; that birds have barbs; and that whatever treasure or "buried gold" may be swept away—whether that be the

power to write of sunsets or simply the disappearance of beauty—the lines seem highly charged. What this says about the philosophy or theology or state of mind that Dickinson had “hidden” in her work is, of course, as open to interpretive possibilities, as the views of Budick and Rapin suggest. Three women, two of whom knew Dickinson, weigh in this way. Sue, Emily’s most intimate friend, told Daniel Chester French that “Emily remained a docile child of God and a rebellious heir of his kingdom” (Bianchi 1932, 57); her daughter Martha Bianchi said something rather different: “Though Emily took liberties with her Puritan vernacular and dogma when venting her baffled patience with the inscrutable, these impish flashes were no more to the underlying God-consciousness than one gargoyle on the roof is to the heart of the cathedral within” (ibid., 55). “Rebellious heir” or “God-conscious” with “impish flashes”: Neither seems quite sufficient to describe the effect of that sharp “Burglar! Banker—Father!”

Speaking of “The Daughter and the Awful Father of Love” in her *When a Writer Is a Daughter* (1982), Barbara Mossberg lingers on this poem as a reflection of “the earth-bound Emily-Edward relationship”: “At first glance this is a dutiful daughter poem. . . . But instead of regarding God as the rightful owner whose authority and judgment in matters of life and death must be accepted on faith, Dickinson purports to consider God a ‘Burglar.’ . . . Thus she challenges the legitimacy of his power” (114). Replaced in its intended sequence, the line (as the entire poem) merges with the imagery of the taunting deity who keeps conditions for knowledge and certainty just out of reach (as in the third poem). If *He* is a “robber,” reducing the speaker to “a beggar” (in the fourth poem), *she* (the poet/persona) is as well, having once “robbed the Dingle” (in the fascicle’s fourth poem). There was a “plunder” of sunset, and the poet wished to be an accomplice to the piracy. If *He* (God) is a Banker, he is “shrewd,” like the one to whom the speaker appeals in the lines from “I never told the buried gold” and so forth. The poem hurls its accusation at a usurious deity who demands much too much too often and who extorts. What creates such anger and sadness? The next poem offers the suggestion that appears throughout the fascicle: Mortal separations are too painful to voice directly, as the poet says in “I haven’t told my garden yet—” (J50, Fr40), the seventeenth poem in the fascicle and the third in the congruent series of poems that begin with negatives (“I never told”; “I never lost”; “I haven’t told”).

Other secrets hide in the fascicle’s final poems. In the next poem (“I often passed the village” [J51, Fr41]) the speaker wanders through the village of the dead, remembering passing as a schoolgirl before she “knew the year . . . in which my call would come.” Facing this proleptic poem are two others that may be seen as proleptic as well. The fascicle has moved from poems in which the speaker grieves for others to one in which she imagines her own death. “The morns are meeker than they were—” (J12, Fr32), though often read as a light-

hearted evocation of fall, even parodic,¹¹ in this sequence seems a bit eerie. It rests between the notion of a still, cool, submould existence in "I often passed" and the little poem that might partly be based on a Holmes and Barber emblem (see Monteiro and St. Armand [1981]) and that here holds the word we have already met—twice—in the earlier poems: "Whether my bark went down at sea—" (J52, Fr33), in which the speaker imagines herself out upon whatever sea of eternity it is she has been contemplating all through the fascicle. "By what mystic mooring," she asks, "She [the little bark / the soul / the dead] is held today—"? As elsewhere in the fascicle, there is no answer to the question, simply a reiteration of the need to know: "This is the errand of the eye / Out upon the Bay." She returns to the examination in the fascicle's twenty-second poem, another one that might have originated in humor,¹² "Sleep is supposed to be" (J13, Fr35). Moving toward the implied assertion that morning will occur, the poem recites two views of death. First, it is a rest: "the shutting of the eye"; second, it is some kind of heavenly place: "the station grand," surrounded by witnesses, resurrection (morn). Dickinson's lineation, however, belies the orthodoxy, however parodic, of those views. Although she might as easily have lineated the poem in five verses of three lines each, she broke one line away from that structure: "Morning has not occurred!" The lines that follow, which imagine that paradisiacal day, have a conditional cast.

The last page is crowded with text. "If I should die" (J54, Fr36) imagines life without herself. Everything in the poem again is conditional except "That Commerce will continue— / And Trades as briskly fly." There is nothing in the penultimate poem to override the conclusion of the one that preceded it ("Sleep is supposed to be") that "morn" in the theological sense might not occur. However (possibly) heterodox the end of "If I should die" might be, there's a lilt in that poem in which the poet moves from bedsides and graveyards to the world of the living, and there's a lilt in the tiny poem at the end. It may, in fact, be the answer to all of the doubt hidden within the fascicle, in which the poet seeks to discover how to be moored in her own faith. It seems as grand an assertion about the enterprise of the poet as any she ever wrote:

By chivalries as tiny,
A Blossom, or a Book,
The seeds of smiles are planted—
Which blossom in the dark. (J55, Fr37)

Look at the fascicle. This little poem is in an identical position and is identical in length and nearly so in meter to the little poem, "I hide myself," the one she pulled out to copy, some six years later, into Fascicle 40.

Fascicle 40, as Dorothy Oberhaus has shown us, is devotional.¹³ There is a stillness, a certainty, far from a bland placidity, not found in earlier fascicles

in the one we believe to be her last book. Nothing shows that quieter mood better than to contrast it with Fascicle 3. Here I differ from both Shurr and Oberhaus, who, in their very different readings, find a serial story from Fascicle 1 to 40. In Fascicle 3, as we have seen, the Dickinson persona spurns Cato and stamps her foot at the “Burglar!—Banker—Father!” who leaves her “poor once more.” She imbeds the quatrain “I hide myself” between a cemetery poem and a reverie on how much larceny the poet is allowed (compared to Kidd’s). And she ends with a celebration of mortal life and the role of the poet in that life (to live on in the “Chivalries so tiny” and make those who follow, those who inhabit the world of trade and commerce and everydayness, smile).

In Fascicle 40, however, the speaker looks with “compound vision,” backward and forward, on moments of reverse and advance, claiming the power over her material (“I make his Crescent fill or lack”) even as she moves beyond her own “Color—Caste—Denomination,” beyond “locality.” In this last fascicle there is a stillness even in the eerie sadness that hovers over what I take to be an elegy for the war dead (“Midsummer, was it when they died—” [J962, Fr822]).¹⁴ There is a perfection in these death (and life) poems quite literally. The word “perfect” itself, in fact, is iterated three times, appearing more frequently here than in any other fascicle. Not prominent in the Oberhaus study is the fact that in the very middle (again) of this fascicle—so different from the third in tone and image clusters—on the west side of the opened volume (again) Dickinson inscribed the little poem that otherwise astute readers (citing the earlier version) call “banal” and “precious” (Griffith 1964, 153–56). To fit the new context Dickinson altered “I hide myself” (J903, Fr80) more radically than either of the two variorum editions (Johnson’s and Franklin’s) indicates, though not, certainly, as radically as she had the “Alabaster Chambers” of Fascicles 6 and 10. The changes call us to attention.

In this version the four lines, reworded, appear as seven:

I hide myself—within
 My flower,
 That fading from your
 Vase—
 You—unsuspecting—feel for
 Me—
 Almost a loneliness—

Lineation is no small matter. Martha Nell Smith (whose website makes it visible) has said that Dickinson’s careful holographs with their jokes and significant flourishes reveal her “performance script.” She cites Susan Howe’s response as a poet: “Try to copy Dickinson’s calligraphy; retrace one sweep-

ing s, a, or c, and you will know how sure her touch was / is. . . . Messages are delivered by marks" (Smith 1992, 62–63). Here "My flower," "Vase," and "Me" stand out, almost as if in apposition to each other or at least calling the reader to consider the connections among the three: The flower she so often equated with poetry, the vase that her dictionary reminds us has not only domestic but also sacred uses as a vessel for sacrifices (Oberhaus expands this [113]), and herself as source and object of feeling are joined in ways available only to the reader of the poem in its fascicle place.

Along with the lineation, the words present the poem in a new light. The concern with angels and with knowing in the last line of the earlier version ("and angels know the rest") are transformed into the loneliness of this fascicle, in which the signs of the physical world—flowers, bees, trade, and commerce—are largely replaced by the language of an almost abstract vastness: "immortality" ("The only News I know" [J827, Fr820, the first in the series]; the "ungracious country" [J961, Fr821, the second]; the "nearness to Tremendousness" and "Illocality" [J963, Fr824, the fifth]). This fascicle has none of the exasperation (or the playfulness) of Fascicle 3, in which the speakers variously doubted, raged, or quoted (parodically) from scripture. In Fascicle 40 the universe the poet reflects has room in its paradise for those who seek to "Occupy My [probably Christ's] House" ("Unto me," J964, Fr825, the sixth in the series).

Just as there was almost a mate or a second verse, perhaps, to the earlier version of this poem ("By Chivalries so tiny), so there is to the version in Fascicle 40. It, too, occupies physically a place that underscores its connectedness. The eleventh poem of Fascicle 40 is the only one (other than the repeated poem) in *this* fascicle about flowers:

Between my country
 And the Others—
 There is a Sea—
 But Flowers—negotiate
 Between us—
 As Ministry. (J905, Fr829)

Chivalries so tiny—flowers, poems, and poems that become new in fascicles, those bundled leaves of grass Dickinson left to intrigue—no, awe—the rest of us: This is the Ministry of Emily Dickinson. Whatever else we do with the poems Dickinson left for sister Vinnie to find, whatever other ways we (as her early editors and as most scholars still do) group her poems, we must also read and teach Dickinson through her own context. She cared about context.

Nothing shows what Robyn Bell calls the "passionate certainty" (1988, 353) of the craftsmanship of the fascicles better than the final pages of the

project. Much as in Frost's "Oven Bird," who "knows in singing not to sing" of the "diminished thing," Dickinson does not so much explain as inscribe in the writing itself what she acknowledges to be "Unfulfilled" and "Incomplete." It is in the way the last poem speaks to the first on the opened book. Dickinson speaks of "a Revolution / In Locality," which itself revolves visually to the "Bulletins of Immortality." She speaks of "Suns [that] Extinguish" in order that a "New Horizon" be "Embellish[ed]." She implies that the other sun of the new horizon is what illuminates "The only Show" worth seeing: Immortality. In the end, the fascicle says (again) with Hamlet, in effect, that "the rest is silence." But the silence is not dreadful, any more than is the darkness.

The last words of Dickinson's fascicles might seem like a drop into nihilism: "Fronting us—with Night," but this is a fascicle (and in many ways a project) that has provided "Compound vision— / Light—Enabling Light" and the night fronts—palpably fronts as one looks at the open book—"Bulletins from Immortality." The Bulletins, then, are the last word. The poet promises, "If other News there be— / Or Admirabler Show— / I'll tell it you—." Telling it was always the burden of her poetry. Inferring is our burden—and joy.