

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

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Inferring from “Duplicates”: Fascicle 8’s Magic

<u>F</u>	<u>J</u>	<u>Fr</u>	
1	165	181	<i>A Wounded Deer</i> —leaps highest—
2	152	715	The Sun kept stooping—stooping—low!
3	166	183	I met a King this afternoon!
4	167	178	To learn the Transport by the Pain—
5	168	179	If the foolish, call them “ <i>flowers</i> ”—
6	169	180	In Ebon Box, when years have flown
*7	170	174	Portraits are to daily faces
8	171	169	Wait till the majesty of Death
9	172	170	’Tis so much joy! ’Tis so much joy!
10	173	171	A fuzzy fellow, without feet,
**11	174	172	At last, to be identified!
12	175	165	I have never seen ‘Volcanoes’—
13	153	166	Dust is the only Secret—
14	176	167	I’m the little “Heart’s Ease”!
15	177	168	Ah, Necromancy Sweet!
16	154	173	Except to Heaven, she is nought
*17	170	174	Pictures are to daily faces
18	178	175	I cautious, scanned my little life—
19	179	176	If I could bribe them by a Rose
20	180	177	As if some little Arctic flower

*Poem repeated in this single fascicle

**Poems repeated in Fascicle 21

Borrowing from Dickinson's method of reading "backward" and Riffaterre's of "reviewing, revising, comparing backwards," I move to a discussion of another of Dickinson's books, Fascicle 8. The two fascicles (8 and 21) share more than a duplicate poem ("At last—to be identified"). Both encircle the complementarity between the "business" and the power of the poet. Business and power might have been strange words to use in mid-nineteenth-century America, when, as Vivian Pollak reminds us, "an antipublication cult . . . was part of a larger pattern of cultural unrest about the departure of women from their proper sphere of influence and home" (1984, 233).¹ In Fascicle 8, however, "power," specifically that connected with "magic," is key. Along with uncorking, as it were, the power contained in Fascicle 8, especially the incrementally greater power it reveals when one reads its stunning separate elements in the context of the whole fascicle, this chapter has another purpose: to explore what is revealed about reading "poems in their places" through focusing on such "repeated" poems. "Duplicate" poems—a word I use with caution, for not only are the poems rarely perfect duplicates, but more significantly they accrue new identities *because* of their settings—and provide a particularly good testing ground for the effect of reading contextually.

How conscious Dickinson was of the different possibilities inherent in the two "At last, to be identified's" may be answered in part by reflecting both on what she demonstrated in Fascicle 21 of her aesthetic principles (poets de-still, de-stabilize, surprise us; they refuse to be closeted in a house of prose occupied by those with vacant/stolid eyes who stare blankly, who do not understand the "business" of poetry) and also on the equally potent nature of the poet she reveals in Fascicle 8.

Being Identified: Two Fascicle Versions

In fact, to write poetry is almost to perform an act of magic. If Fascicle 21 traced something like a narrative of the gathering of courage and boldness by the speaker, Fascicle 8, which explores notions of the power of poetry through another network of images, has little of narrative about it. Check out the pronouns. Fascicle 21 begins, ends, and is permeated by the first-person singular; even an exception to that, a poem such as Fascicle 21's exotic Malay/Pearl tale, suggests much about that "volatile" romantic first-person "I"—especially because of the company it keeps in the fascicle. Fascicle 8, on the other hand, begins with an observation that, however highly charged with autobiographical connotations, is relentlessly observant of something else, a wounded deer, an examination of which follows. First-person poems are scattered throughout the book, and they are particularly significant as Dickinson completes the collection, but most of the lyrics she has selected for Fascicle 8—

many of them different examples of transformations, even of necromancy—are seen by an almost objective observer, one capable of connecting the sign to the meaning.

Without claiming a narrative line in the fascicle, we are nevertheless alert to the intertextuality between poems because this fascicle holds some particularly tricky examples. As we observed in the progression of stories and images in Fascicle 21, this fascicle, too, is about self-identification. In different ways but no less powerfully by the end of the twenty-poem sequence we have witnessed something like a transformation of the observed wounded victim of the first poem to the confident poet/persona of the last. By its end not only has the speaker claimed her identity in the poem that she repeats in Fascicle 21, but, in the fascicle's last poem, she actually audaciously instructs her reader how to receive her individual acts of dexterous metamorphosis.

Validating and valorizing Allen Tate's remark (now almost a truism) that "Cotton Mather would have burned [Dickinson] for a witch" (1932, 167), Fascicle 8—as Fascicle 21 does not—surrounds just that image.² In the sense of "Derrida's cultural commonplace," that "language's operation is to identify otherness as self, to appropriate objects and transform them into subject" (Homans 1980, 36–37), all poets use such transformational witchcraft; their enterprise depends on the condensed magic of metaphor and simile, of metonymy and synecdoche, of irony and allusion and personification. Thus, to say that Dickinson uses magic is no news. However, to note that in this fascicle magical transformations are not only method but subject *is* new.

Fascicle 8's focus on witchcraft—on acts of transformation, necromancy, transport—is literally centered by the eleventh poem's declaration:

At last, to be identified!
At last, the lamps upon thy side
The rest of Life *to see!*

Past midnight! Past the morning star!
Past Sunrise!
Ah! What Leagues there *were*
Between our feet, and Day! (J174, Fr172)

This little poem, so rarely discussed, even by those who write specifically on the fascicles, is remarkable for the way it radiates through (or in-gathers) images from throughout the entire fascicle. For quite other reasons it does the same in Fascicle 21, where it is, as I have shown, differently lineated and punctuated and where it is placed (as it is here) halfway through that fascicle's passage from fear to boldness.

In Fascicle 8, compiled some two years before Fascicle 21, "At last" seems

a gloss of the poems surrounding it. As we see in this chapter, its first words, repeated in the second line, convey the patient endurance and martyrdom of the fascicle's first (wounded deer) poem. Its second phrase—the passive infinitive "to be identified" implies supreme knowledge of self, augmented by the transforming recognition of that self by an other, perhaps the "savans" of the fascicle's fifth poem. "Lamps" shine everywhere in the fascicle, as do images of sight. "Opon thy side" (taking Franklin's lead, I am maintaining Dickinson's clear preference for this spelling) reflects the right hand of God of the fifth poem. The midnight of death, the morning star of new life, new beginnings—repeated in "Past Sunrise" and in the Leagues that *were* in a past life "Between our feet and Day"—mesh with other images of literal transport: the wagons of the "little king" in the second poem, the traveling tall-tale tellers of the twelfth, and the mysteriously conveyed alien arctic flower of the fascicle's last poem. Put another way, transaction/transport/magic occurs through pain (in the fascicle's first poem), through the effect of the sunset (the second), in death (the third), by an analogy with flowers (fourth), in relation to the ebon box (the fifth), as revealed by a caterpillar and by a volcano (tenth and twelfth)—and there are more.

Re-placing this modest poem in its fascicle context shows how it refracts from its proximate poems. Reading poems in their places is to engage in what Barbara Herrnstein Smith calls "retrospective patterning," reading backward:

[I]n the movement from poem to poem, connections and similarities are illuminated, and the reader perceives that seemingly gratuitous or random events, details and juxtapositions have been selected in accord with certain principles (Fraistat 1986, 8, quoting Herrnstein Smith on poetic closure in relation to reading contextually).

Reading backward, retrospective patterning, and reading contextually enable what Martha Nell Smith describes as collaborative (1992, 71–75). Such reading, as Sharon Cameron points out, encourages expanding the canon (1992, 19). Overlooked poems acquire greater interest; oft-published ones take on different dimensions.

And what do we learn if the poet has placed a poem in more than one place? If, as I believe, each fascicle has its own character, its own thumbprint, its own swirl of image clusters, and its own movement and character, a poem containing (almost) the same words in one fascicle will be a different artifact by virtue of the pressure of surrounding poems when it is placed in another. Cameron touches on this probability briefly, saying that "what looks like the same poem in two different fascicles may be recognized as the same words without being recognized as the same poem" (*ibid.*, 6). This is a bracing counter to one of the only other comments into the nature of the duplicates,

that of Ralph Franklin himself. In the long preface to the *Manuscript Books*, Franklin implies that duplications may have resulted from forgetfulness or carelessness: "[P]resumably . . . she failed to destroy a worksheet" (1981, xv-xvi).

Even among the few who have written on the fascicles, few remark on what seems a significant practice. With the exception of extensive discussions of "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers" (to which I add my voice in the next chapter), commentators seem to find unremarkable the fact that from her growing body of nearly one thousand poems then available (that is, written up to the time she seems to have stopped her publication project in 1864), Dickinson *chose* to repeat between seven and eleven³ of the poems in two different fascicles, four of which are part of this case study of the value of reading Dickinson in her own context.

Readers might possibly accept Franklin's almost exasperated conclusion (that the repetitions represented memory lapses) in the case of "I hide myself" (J903, Fr80), which appears in Fascicles 3 and 40 or "Bound—a Trouble" (J269, Fr240, Fascicles 9 and 36) because Dickinson apparently made her selections for the first pair of fascicles (3 and 40) some five or six years apart; the second pair (9 and 36) were probably separated by about three years. However, it seems less easy to believe that this woman who, as Christopher Benfy suspects, "knew all her own poetry by heart as well as huge passages of [others]" (1986, 61), forgot she had written "Ah Moon—and Star!" (J240, Fr262) into Fascicle 11 when not more than a year later she transcribed it into Fascicle 14. Just so, her use of "At last" in Fascicles 8 and 21, separated by two years, is far too canny to be the result of carelessness.

Moreover, two oddities about these repetitions argue for Dickinson's intentionality. If one accepts Johnson's numbering, emended by Franklin, as approximately correct, one discovers that most fascicles are constructed primarily from two sets of poems—that is, two (near) sequences of the Johnson numbers—often interwoven. Most have a few selections from outside the chronological order of the two sets, suggesting that the artist was choosing from her works those poems that were set off best by their placement in another group of poems from other periods. In all but one fascicle, Dickinson included one or two from a completely different numbered sequence, and of course, in one of the two appearances of a repeated poem, that poem is completely off-sequence. Thinking of the fascicles as scrapbooks, as Franklin's introduction implies, does not seem to fit this kind of construction. The patchwork-quilt metaphor more nearly does.

A second demurrer to Franklin's (and Porter's and Weisbuch's and others') tendency to see these productions as repositories for poems rather than (at least instinctively) organized wholes and the repetitions as accidents is the curious feature of the placement of almost all of the nine duplications. In no

case do they begin or end a fascicle, a fact that might seem to support Franklin's relegation of the poems to accidents or mistakes. However, in nine of fifteen fascicles in which duplications appear the poem is situated close to midfascicle and is almost always a gloss for those poems leading up to and away from it. "At last, to be identified," for example, is the eleventh poem in a group of twenty that compose Fascicle 8. Further, Franklin and others imply that selections (including repetitions) might have been used as fillers for empty slots below poems that ran into another page. As the chart in the appendix indicates, only two of the repeated poems were quatrains; the others were, for Emily Dickinson, the miniaturist, quite long, ranging from ten to twenty-four lines. Rather than filling blank spaces, they required more than one leaf. Moreover, Dickinson sometimes prefers leaving a page half blank, as she does in that "rest" in Fascicle 21. Remember that she had written many poems she had not gathered into her books. Clearly, as Robyn Bell says, although Dickinson "employs space thriftily, it is hardly a tyrannical concern" (1988, 5).

So I begin this discussion of the network of images in Fascicle 8 with the centered poem, one that is duplicated in Fascicle 21 with different inferences. Hold that highly charged word "inference" in mind, please, for the end of this chapter. As the repeated poem suggests, Fascicle 8 includes explorations of the past, the antiquated, the dusty—all explicit in no fewer than five poems and suggested in more. These images are linked to those descriptive of faces. All of these are clusters that intersect with and complicate the fascicle's primary design: to link the "business" of poetry making with the art and power of "necromancy." As it ends, Fascicle 8 begins with the drama of natural wonders seen in unfamiliar lights: "A *Wounded* deer—leaps highest—" (J165, Fr181).

The Transformational Power of Pain

Dickinson's wounded deer thrusts the fascicle into its transformational mode. The hunter, whom the speaker has heard "tell it" (the story) may be blending a number of stories. One is a literal hunt, something like that in a horrifying *Harper's* article: "We have known a deer to keep its position in front of a fleet pack of hounds for near a mile, running all the way. A stag was killed . . . that seemed for a while to have 'a charmed life'; for every new wound, however severe, seemed only to inspire it with renewed power to elude its pursuers" (Thorpe 1858, 619). The article, by a B. T. Thorpe, tells of one strong stag whose wound "was sufficiently large to admit a finger." Another source for this and many other Dickinson poems, note George Monteiro and Barton Levi St. Armand (1981), may be images contained in the Holmes and Barber *Book of Emblems*, which had moral stories and pictures, including one to

match this poem. Both the journals and the religious tract were readily available to the Dickinson household as were hymns such as "Rock of Ages," a culturally prominent source, which, as she often did, Dickinson seems to have subverted⁴—or trimmed and tailored for her own editing purposes.

Yes, both the literal deer and the large and obvious typological allegory are there, but the language of the poem and of those that follow underscores the intersection between eschatology and the poetic consciousness. This fascicle in which "Anguish" and "Transport" are iterative words and ideas begins with the blunt announcement about the energizing power of pain. The adjective "wounded" has an important place in Dickinson's vocabulary ("We will not drop the / Dirk / Because we love the wound," says the suicidal or murderous speaker of "Rehearsal to Ourselves" [J379, Fr664, F30], and a wound is so wide in "A great Hope fell" [J1123, Fr1187] that "all my Life had entered it / And there were troughs beside"), but the adjectives in the next stanza are strange for Dickinson and highly suggestive—not only of typography:

The *Smitten* Rock that gushes!
 The *trampled* Steel that springs!
 A Cheek is always redder
 Just where the Hectic stings!

According to Dickinson's dictionary, "Smitten" has only two meanings: "struck" or "affected with passion." It is a word she used in only two other poems, one of which would make a fine synopsis for Fascicle 8: "'Tis anguish grander than Delight / 'Tis Resurrection Pain— / The meeting Bands of smitten Face / We questioned to, again" (J984, Fr192). As for "trampled," which her lexicon defines as "to tread with contempt," this line is her only use of the word. That the pain of the wounded Deer—or whatever the deer stands for—is so particularly humiliating makes its final stanza all the more powerful. Denis Donoghue puts it mildly by saying that the speaker shows "the whirling ingenuity of the translator" of loss as gain (1965, 108) in these lines. As in the opening of another of her fascicles ("A Mien to move a Queen," J283, Fr254, F11), the real subject here is not simply a wounded character but one who must assume a defensive demeanor in the most terrible of circumstances. The speaker makes as broad a leap as did the told-about deer itself in the first stanza:

Mirth is the Mail of Anguish—
 In which it Cautious Arm,
 Lest anybody spy the blood
 And "you're hurt" exclaim!

Later in the fascicle the speaker (or another one) exults "'Tis so much joy! 'Tis so much joy," but "mirth" is another matter. For one thing, again according to Dickinson's Webster's, "Mirth differs from joy in always implying noise." Mirth, then, is joy expressed, or perhaps it is an ersatz joy that hides the anguish. "Mail" is both what the cautious do to defend themselves from the arms of others, or, paradoxically, it is something sent—the post from Tunis delivered by the hummingbird, the song of the split lark, the letter to the world that never wrote to the poet.

By the final verse, the speaker "stands before the bitterest contingencies of chance, unabashed . . . not imperturbable or fearless" (Donoghue 1965, 109) but empowered by the "eerie transformation of anguish into energy" (Gilbert 1983, 28). Sandra Gilbert's reading of the poem is one of many, ranging from those who connect the wounding of the deer to Christian typology to those who link the wound to Dickinson's rage at her loveless father (Sewall 1980, 65, and Knapp 1989, 142–43) or to a protective stance toward her brother (Pollak 1984, 53). St. Armand links the poem to a Thoreauvian comment (1988, 232). All of these readings cast light on the poem as each scholar holds it in his or her own light, but no one has yet read the poem in Dickinson's own context, as the opening of Fascicle 8. No one has noted, for example, that the military language of "mail" and "armor" reappear in the next, the fascicle's second poem, and that three poems later we read almost another take on the wounded deer: "To learn the Transport by the Pain—" (J167, Fr178). Or that all of this leads to the pleasurable surprise of "At last, to be identified" (J174, Fr172), that poem that reappears with other connotations in Fascicle 21.

Just so, the second poem in the fascicle, "The Sun kept stooping—stooping—low!" (J152, Fr182) has been treated to a colorful reading by Camille Paglia, who sees in it a drama of rape or war and who sees Dickinson's speaker as a sadist who "avenges the feminized passivity into which God thrusts mankind" (1991, 624, 651). Indeed, this second poem *has* bloody imagery: The sunset seeps red into every corner of a kitchen in which the speaker/observer watches it. But the tone, especially when one remembers that the speaker of the previous poem was armed in "mirth," is hardly as violent as in Paglia's interpretation.⁵ This sunset appears later in the fascicle in the little poem "Portraits / Pictures are to daily faces" (J170, Fr174), the poem that is situated twice within the fascicle as a kind of refrain. Sunset is to the world it touches what pain is to the deer: transformational. As the witness puts the change, it is "Transaction!" We see the scene much as we saw the wounded deer leaping, through observant, imaginative eyes. Through those eyes we see the "stain" taking over "the Hills" outside "Until the Tyrian / Was crowded dense with Armies— / So gay, so Brigadier—" that, says the speaker, "I felt martial stirrings." The speaker, observer, perhaps a kind of

Cinderella with yearnings toward glamour, is so moved by the (not terrible) vision that she "charge[s], from [her] chimney corner" to find that "Nobody was there!"

She is the only one in the room; she must be "Nobody." Rarely negative to Dickinson (or to her Transcendentalist brothers), "Nobody" is a term of power. The word is used in only twelve poems: Two of those uses are in this fascicle. In the thirteenth poem in the series it is "Nobody" who knows the secret of death. A related word, a negative-turned-positive "Naught" also appears in the fascicle's sixteenth poem as we will see. Nobody needs to be reminded that in one of Dickinson's most anthologized poems the speaker crows, "I'm Nobody! who are you? / Are you—Nobody—Too? (J288, Fr260, F11). "Nobody" is heterodox and alive. "Nobody" is Emerson's transparent eyeball. "Nobody" is Keats's Negative Capability.⁷ That Dickinson herself possessed such a gift of emptying herself in order to be capable of great observations is clear from a story her neighbor MacGregor Jenkins told of her: "She had a habit of standing in rapt attention as if she were listening to something very faint and far off," he said. "We children often saw her at sunset, standing at the kitchen window, peering through a vista in the trees to the western sky" (1984, 264). St. Armand, who quotes the Jenkins story, adds that "the daily observance of the setting sun [was] an almost holy duty" (*ibid.*, 265). By being so open, so "Nobody," one may transform a sunset into a bustling, exciting battlefield. For that is the tone. The sun is "so gay" and "Brigadier." The cockade makes of a military insignia a cocky-sounding plume. Along with all of this, one clue to tone is that the poem shares space in a fascicle that includes the birth of a butterfly from a caterpillar and—in the next poem—of a king from a barefoot boy.

Translations, transactions, transport: quick transformations of palpable fact to meaning, of the physical body to spirit, of the individual to the universal. This action is the refrain of the fascicle. So far a deer has been wounded and thus charged with power, and the vivid panoply of sunset has become "Nobody." The fascicle's third poem, "I met a King this afternoon!" (J166, Fr183), embodies magic, too. In this one it is a barefoot boy's wagon that "transports" the speaker. But once again, the speaker is not the subject: What she saw is. This time the transforming power of the poet sees the barefoot boy, crowned with "A little Palm leaf Hat," become more and more grand. "Nobody" becomes "somebody" in the third stanza, moving through a litany of ranks (Earl, Marquis, Czar, Pope). In the fourth verse he is a "freckled Monarch" (Dickinson was freckled, too), holding the reins of a "transporting" wagon (perhaps poetry?) that can also transport royalty. In its "Barefoot Estate" (one thinks of Emerson's rousing end to "The Poet" once again, that the poet is the owner of all land tax free), the little wagon is equal to "the Royal Coach." When it was published in 1893, this poem was dubbed "My

little king," a title that diminishes its grand scale of the imagination's transforming power. Just as the freckled king holds the reins to keep the vehicle in check, so the poet holds the meter at an even tetrameter until "Dare I presume to see" in the fifth verse. Daring to see, we recall, is the enterprise of the observer of the wounded deer and of the bloody sunset.

The reader may also "dare presume to see" the intricate connections between the first three poems of Fascicle 8 and the fourth one. This poem serves as a kind of pivot, reprising in the first half images of the earlier poems and then moving the fascicle in a related but more specifically literary direction in the second half. The fourth poem is "To learn the Transport by the Pain—" (J167, Fr178). Its first line harks back in meaning and mood to the fascicle's first wounded deer image; its second line ("As Blind men learn the Sun!") to the synaesthetic effect of the sunset in the second poem, and the third through sixth lines about the "homesick—homesick feet" seeking "native lands . . . And blue—beloved air!" might be the barefoot boy of the previous poem, robbed of his wagon and "Barefoot Estate."

The second half of the four-stanza poem introduces another cluster of words, images, and ideas that web with similar diction through the rest of the fascicle, diction suggesting in writerly terms those who have suffered that "Sovereign Anguish!" (of not being able to see the sunset but learning it through pain, of being deprived of home—and through such pains and deprivation of experiencing "Transport"). The lines refract off the earlier poems, helping us to understand that the power imposed by the wound to the deer, the wonder of the sunset's arrival and disappearance, and the ability of the barefoot freckled "Monarch" to Transport as he reins his cart carefully all have to do with the magic of making poetry. So does pain, as the "these," unclear referent of the "patient 'Laureates'" suggests (those in pain, those blind, those homesick for "blue—beloved air"). Here are the lines that end the fourth poem:

These are the patient 'Laureates'
Whose voices—trained below—

Ascend in ceaseless Carol
Inaudible indeed,
To us—the dullest scholars
Of the mysterious Bard!

Self-reflexively, these lines contain the language of the writer's business (signals, voices, carols, scholars, Laureates, and Bards); they point in the direction toward which the speaker wishes to be "identified" later in the fascicle. They also imply that the important hierarchy is not, for example, between all

of the ranks listed in the previous barefoot-boy poem but in the huge gulf between writer (especially one who has learned "the Transport by the Pain") and reader (who hasn't), between the "patient 'Laureates'" and "us—the dullest scholars."

That hierarchy—or dichotomy—continues in the fifth poem, "If the Foolish call them *Flowers*" (J168, Fr179), in the distinction between the "foolish" and the "wiser," between those with "beclouded Eyes" (those who do not "dare" to "presume to see") and "learned angels" or "savans" (the "laureates" of the previous poem). In her even 8's and 5's, the self-consciously Belles Lettres of this poem exhibits her own "flowers" of prosody.

The next two poems reveal even trickier linguistic play, play observable only to the fascicle reader. Dickinson, the canny editor of this book, hints at that play when she speaks of the Mysterious Bard in the previous poem. She seems mischievous, a tone borne out partly through this fifth poem's ("If the foolish") last stanza. Having berated (as she did more than once) the God who would "deny" "Old 'Moses'" his view of "Canaan," she uses heavily freighted words in the final two verses, speaking of "superfluous" sciences and "scholastic skies," and ends with the necessary comical mispronunciation of "Galaxies" at the poem's close: *Try* saying it in an orthodox manner in the grip of the poet's established rhythm as she prays:

Low amid that glad Belles Lettres
 Grant that we may stand—
 Stars amid profound *Galaxies*
 At that grand "Right-hand"!

Below these lines and the heavy black line at its close is one of Dickinson's clearest statements about the possible legacy of being—or watching—such stars.

The Text: The "Promised Land"

Here's the trickiness of reading poems in their places, and here is an instance where the reader of this book will be greatly aided by looking at the manuscript books themselves; a sample of what one finds follows these pages. Exactly opposite the second stanza of "If the foolish call them flowers" (the stanza beginning "Those who read the 'Revelations'") is the opening of a prophetic poem about the legacy of the writer. The sixth poem in the fascicle begins "In Ebon Box, when years have flown" (J169, Fr180). As do the paired poetry/prose poems in Fascicle 21, Fascicle 8's paired poems resonate across the pages. On both the left ("Those who read the 'Revelations'") and the right ("In Ebon Box") pages the speaker is a reader who is using the old arti-

fact (Revelations / an old letter) to justify her own ongoing project. "Those who read the 'Revelations'" are in the situation of those who "wip[e] away the velvet dust" on the Ebon Box. Those who stand in for Moses as he "scans" his landscape and his longing are the same who hold the "tawny" letter to the light "to con the faded syllables / That quickened us like wine."

Scanning and conning syllables: These are the actions of the attentive reader, interested in the merging of form and meaning. Reading across as well as down the page enlarges the meaning of both poems. The faded letter, held to the light, is literally parallel to a promised land. Those who deem the sciences "superfluous" are those who recognize that literal flowers ("shriveled" but surviving the "mouldering hand") are symbols of the "gallant" human soul. "In Ebon Box" continues on the next page, and so does the startling and witty evidence of care in arrangement. In addition to the musicality in the next line—the r's repeated strategically in each line, the swish of the doubled "sh" in the last line—the reader is drawn to the witty conjunction of images, for the fourth verse continues the imagined inventory of the Ebon Box:

A curl, perhaps, from foreheads
 Our Constancy forgot—
 Perhaps an Antique trinket—
 In vanished fashions set!

Just as scanning and conning and the promised land and a letter held to the light linked the fifth and sixth poems ("If the foolish" and "In Ebon Box"), so the last portion of the sixth poem resonates against an image in the eighth (yes, there is a tiny poem in between, about which more later), "Wait till the Majesty of Death" (J171, Fr169). Opposite the lines about the curl found in the Ebon Box are these four from the eighth poem:

Wait till the majesty of Death
 Invests so mean a brow!
 Almost a powdered Footman
 Might dare to touch it now!

These pages contain too many coincidences to discount the intentionality of the poet. On one pair of pages a "text" (the letter) is parallel to the promised land denied to Moses (remember the typology of Moses' "Smitten Rock" of the fascicle's very first poem). And on the next this little acrobatic stunt occurs. Although the concordance shows twenty-two other uses of "forehead" and seven of "brow," here they meet, brow to brow. Furthermore, the brows are joined by this little quatrain concerning physiognomy, the seventh poem in the series:

If the foolish call them "flowers"
 And the wise, call
 By the "Savans" classing them
 It is just an error.

Those who had the "Revolution"
 Must not criticize
 Those who had the same Evolution
 With occluded eyes.

Could we stand with that "Old" Mrs.
 "Canaan" Amiel -
 Scan like him, the stately landscape
 On the other side -

Scoutless, in those times
 Many Sciences,
 Not pursued by learned Angels
 In scholastic skies!

Four poems seem to unfold into each other in Fascicle 8, a fascicle dated by Franklin as compiled about 1860. The interconnected threads of the poems, fifth through eighth in the series of twenty poems, reveal themselves to the observer who reads with attention to the suggestion of images and wordplay. "If the foolish call them 'flowers'" (J168, Fr179), "In Ebon Box, when years have flown" (J169, Fr180), "Portraits are to daily faces" (J170, Fr174), and "Wait till the majesty of Death" (J171, Fr169), read in the context of each other and the rest of the poems in this fascicle, involve images of transformation and, even-

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For Amid that glad Bell's letter
 Grant that in my station
 Stars Amid profound Galaxies
 At that grand light band:

In your Box, when years have flown
 To recently been
 Wiping away the velvet dust
 Summers have sprinkled there:

To hold a letter to the light -
 Brown tawny snow, with time -
 To can the various glazes
 That quicken us like mine:

Perhaps a former's Abstract Chart
 Among its stars to guide -
 Quicker far may some morning
 By Gilbert, smouldering brand:

tually, of power. According to Franklin the paper is "wove, cream, lightly ruled, and embossed Parsons Paper Co." Fascicle 8 and Fascicle 21 (chapters 1 and 2), fascicles with quite different image clusters and concerns share one poem, "At last, to be identified!" (J174, Fr172); in addition, "Portraits are to daily faces" also appears as "Pictures are to daily faces" later in Fascicle 8. The four poems on these pages appear in the *Manuscript Books I*, 134-37. Printed by permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

A Court, perhaps, you forbade
 Our constant forget.
 Perhaps, an English Minister,
 In various fashions set!

Send them to say them quiet. Pass
 And go about it. Care.
 As if the little Ebon Box
 Were none of our affair:

Portraits are to daily faces
 As an evening West,
 To a fine, pedantic Sunshine—
 In a Satin Vest!

Portraits are to daily faces
 As an evening West,
 To a fine, pedantic Sunshine—
 In a Satin Vest! (J170, Fr174).

Wedge between the sixth poem ("In Ebon Box"), in which a text survives the death of its writer, and the eighth ("Wait till the Majesty of Death"), in which a "mean" or average brow is transformed by death in ways that parallel the transformation of the barefoot boy of the third poem—although, perhaps,

I said till the Majesty of Death
 Meets to mean a brow!
 Almost a ponderous Pediment
 Might dare to touch it now!

I said till in Everlasting Roles
 "This Government is Archaic."
 Then I said about "Progressive"
 And "Station," and the rest!

Around this quiet Courtier
 Obsequious Angels wait!
 Full seal is his Religion!
 Full purse is his estate!

A Lord, might dare to lift the hat
 To such a modest Day.
 Since that my Lord is the Lord of Time
 Recieve understanding!

with greater acerbity—this little poem becomes more understandable than when isolated from its context. In the face of certain death, "Portraits" seems to say, art is, as Frost later put it, the momentary stay against confusion.

If the "Portraits" quatrain were as simple as, say, an opposition of Sunset/Sunshine, Evening/Day, as it may appear to be, why did Dickinson, the tricky editor of Fascicle 8, repeat it in the same book? No one, in fact, seems to have asked why, with one alteration, these lines return in a similar placement as a bridge between two longer poems. To begin to answer the question, the fascicle reader notes that in this first appearance the question

bridges poems concerning the physical appearances of the dead leftover artifacts of life. The salvaged curl—remember that Dickinson herself had at least one (in L5 she speaks of having a lock of Abiah Root's hair "as precious as gold")—lasts longer than the physical modest brow; the Portrait, the created artifact, will outlast both. Yet the dichotomy implied in the poem between the actual and the artistic appears balanced as it reprises the opening poems. Art has both its splendor—it may be as lush as "an Evening West"—and its limits: It is not the life itself, not, in other words, an actual "fine, pedantic Sunshine / in a Satin Vest." To the fascicle reader the apparent balance is skewed. That "pedantic Sunshine" and that "Satin Vest" of "Portraits" smack of the prose world, the dead shut up in Alabaster Chambers in fascicles that the next chapter treats. Sunset's colorful possibilities, on the other hand, are vividly remembered from that second poem in this fascicle.

The cluster of tricks alerts the reader for more. We are not quite halfway through this fascicle of transformations and transport. Although it is longer than most poems, the fascicle's eighth entry, "Wait till the Majesty of Death" (J171, Fr169), deserves more attention than that of the coincidence of the "brow." With its inflated language (note the heavy use of adjectives—"powdered Footman," "Obsequious Angels," "purple . . . Retinue" and "purple . . . state," and, finally and most tritely, "Modest Clay"), the poem smacks of the expected and not-quite-believed. The poet surprises our horizon of expectation by offering us the unsurprising. Nothing transforms so well as death, the poet says on the surface; death makes ordinary "Democrats" into royal personages, fit to be received "unblushingly" by "the Lord of Lords." However, the inflated (to my ears) language and the quotation marks around so many of the religious phrases tip the reader off to the possibility of parody as the poet offers other transformational images, images worthy of that particularly delicious one, the letter held to the light that, by virtue of a proximate poem, becomes something like the Promised Land.

What makes me hear parody most distinctly is another of the tricks one can observe only by reading poems in their places. Recall that in the seventh poem, the one that precedes this one, the last line—about the "pedantic Sunshine" is that it is "*In a satin Vest.*" This eighth poem about those who "prate about 'Preferment'" and so forth begins "Wait till the Majesty of Death / *Invests* (italics mine) so mean a brow!" Serendipitous or intended, such a diction discovery must have delighted its author as it does its reader.

If the eighth poem is self-consciously parodic, the ninth, "'Tis so much joy! 'Tis so much joy!" (J172, Fr170), is also highly contrived in its prosody. Consider its relentless Common Particular Meter (88686); its mathematical ordering (three verses of six lines with three subjunctive clausal sentences); its anaphoric clauses; its perfect balance of value against value and word against word. The poem is not long, but it has true rhyme, and slant rhyme, and

internal rhyme. It has alliteration and assonance. It is thus an example of the kind of art that rearranges and makes permanent the passing emotion. The word "art" or "poem" has not entered the fascicle, but all of the poems in the sequence surround just that subject.

Curiously and artfully Dickinson balances the contrivances and tricky structure of "'Tis so much joy!" against its own meaning:

Life is but Life! And Death, but Death!
Bliss is, but Bliss, and Breath but Breath! . . .
Defeat means nothing *but* Defeat.
No drearier can befall!

Having deflated—or at least leveled—the words usually inflated by nineteenth-century poets, Dickinson turns the mood with the suddenness of the *Gun at Sea*, the Bells of the final stanza's meditation on "gain," which ends:

For Heaven is a different thing,
Conjectured, and waked sudden in—
And might extinguish me!

The heightened rhetoric of the first verse, balanced with the understatement of the middle stanza, yield to cautiously conjectural closing lines ("if I gain!" and "Heaven . . . might extinguish me!"). The effort, the "throw" ("Poor as I, / Have ventured all upon a "throw!") leads to waking sudden in a "Heaven which might be for the remains of the lovely corpse (in "the Majesty of Death" of the previous poem) or, because so many poems are about laureates, which might be the immortality of poets.

The abstractions and absences of the ninth poem are made concrete, humorous, and palpable in the tenth, "A fuzzy fellow without feet" (J173, Fr171). In this series of poems about transport, translation, and necromancy, Dickinson seems to have interposed this closely observed feature of nature between "'Tis so much joy!" and "At last," the poem that is its clear match. Perhaps she decided that between the two rather breathless expressions of transcendent experience, both of which speak of the leagues out to sea and are insistently first person, she needed this poem about "the unknowing seekers of God [who] must live without assurances, meekly, dumbly" (Keller 1979, 145). In keeping with the fascicle's focus on transformation, the homely, fuzzy lowlife has two other lives. First it takes "*Damask Residence / And struts in sewing silk*": This is the cocoon life that Jane Eberwein, who calls the poem a "seeming reversal of industrious Yankee values (1985, 169), likens to the dull everydayness Dickinson seems to be mocking. Finally it emerges "finer than a Lady" with a mission: "to tell the pretty secret of the Butterfly."

Revelations of "Identity"

Dickinson must have had great fun placing the last four lines of this poem of transformation or rather of *revelation* of a true identity on the top of a page on which she placed the poem she considered to be significant enough to enter into two fascicles. The butterfly is at last identified and can tell the pretty secret, just as in "At last, to be identified!" (J174, Fr172), the eleventh and central poem of the series, the speaker is (or will be) revealed with "the lamps upon thy side." In both poems the secret is "the rest of life *to see!*" We remember the observer of the barefoot boy/king (in the fascicle's third poem) who dared "presume to see" and of the admonition not to read "Revelations" with "beclouded Eyes" (in the fifth). Just so, we anticipate linkages in the poems in the last half of the fascicle.

The irregular rush (an interrupted common meter) of "A fuzzy fellow" and "At last" is tempered and strictly controlled in the regular trochaics of 8/5 ballad meter in "I have never seen 'Volcanoes'—" (J175, Fr165), the twelfth poem in the series and an almost perfect parallel to the first. Manner and matter merge in this compressed poem about the compressed, barely suppressed potential violence of volcanoes and, by implication, of human emotions. Outside of its fascicle placement the poem attracts much critical attention. John Pickard, for example, calls it "an abstract examination of transport and awe" (1988, 87). For Cristanne Miller it is "a pathetic cry of joy and mingled trepidation" (1987, 136); for Brita Lindberg-Seyersted it is an "ecstatic soliloquy" (1968, 45); and, most famously, for Adrienne Rich such poems are "explosive, destructive" and heterodox (1978, 177). Whether read separately or in the context of this fascicle, "I have never seen Volcanoes" is full of all of those possible readings. In Dickinson's own context, however, its power increases incrementally. "Phlegmatic" mountains bear within "appalling" violence, says this speaker, who, like the one who tells of the caterpillar becoming a butterfly or of the wounded deer leaping highest, is reciting a twice-told tale. The anthropomorphic mountain is capable of "taking Villages for breakfast" and—repeating the word but this time as a verb—of "appalling men." (She uses its root in the last stanza's "*palpitating* Vineyard.") Having implied the comparison between volcano and human, the speaker makes the comparison overt, driving the comparison home through her double rhyme:

If the stillness is Volcanic
 In the human face
 When upon a pain titanic
 Features keep their place—

"Faces," a subtheme of the fascicle, opened the book in "mirth is the mail of

anguish"; they are brow to brow in two other poems; and they appear in the two portrait/picture poems. Just so, faces appear in at least three poems following this twelfth poem. Check Fascicle 21 for a similar gathering of such images and you will not find it. Although no poem of Dickinson may be divorced from any other poem, those within fascicles have commonalities and intertextualities that give a fascicle its particular character or thumbprint.

In this fascicle's context one need not see either the Volcano as literally "the encroaching menace of [Dickinson's] mental illness" (Cody 1971, 301) or its form as "female genitalia" (*ibid.*, 409). It is enough, in the context of this little book, to regard the Volcano as symbolic of an "eerie transformation of agony into energy" (Gilbert 1983, 29). Controlled intensity of metrics and imagery, along with the actual content, pairs this with the fascicle's first poem. In the first, pain prompts a high leap; in this poem the speaker acknowledges a tightly lidded but felt pressure. The "Pain Titanic" of the third verse (and, in other words, of the leaping, dying deer) becomes the "smouldering Anguish" of the final verse. "The hectic cheek" of the first poem previewed the stern rigor when in this twelfth poem "Features keep their places." In the human and the mountain, however, there is trouble within. Not only are both poems twice-told ("the hunter tell[s]" and "travellers tell"), but also, in both, gunfire appears along with "Still"ness. Both end with a movement away from the hurt animal/roiling volcano to the witness of it: In the first, the deer's mail of mirth guards against the sympathetic observer's "you're hurt," and in the twelfth the focus turns to "some loving Antiquary" who, "on Resumption Morn, / will not cry with joy, Pompeii! / To the Hills return."

The Antiquary appears on the second page of the poem. He or she is an epilogue to the story that has ended with the "palpitating Vineyard" being thrown "In the dust." This ending leaves the reader with dust thrown in her eyes. The poem actually has no syntactical resolution and very little in "sense"—unless one reads it in its fascicle placement. It begins with what the traveler tells and moves to three subjunctive clauses: The first ("If the stillness is Volcanic") is of the violence contained; the second ("If at length the smouldering anguish") is of violence unleashed; and the third is of a future far beyond the eruption, not a "Resurrection" morn (Dickinson's more usual phrase), which would suggest transformation and elevation, but rather "Resumption" ("If some loving Antiquary, / On Resumption Morn, / Will not cry with joy 'Pompeii!' / To the Hills return"). Resumption implies simply placing back what has been disordered, picking up an interrupted action. These hills, says the speaker, will never, as in a film reversed, resume their stillness, beauty, fruition. They are spent, just as the deer in the first poem is dead—except in the memory and art of the "teller."

In this poem the teller merges with "the Antiquary," a word anticipated in

the “antiques” of the earlier poem enumerating the contents of the Ebon Box. Used by Dickinson only in this poem, “antiquary” is a word worth playing with, as Wendy Barker does (1987, 130–32) in relation to another form of the word in another setting. One might consider, for example, antic-wary, anti-quarry, antic-query, and so forth. Dickinson’s dictionary’s list for the words involved in the potential pun increases the possibilities for play within the fascicle. To quarry, as a verb, may be related, her Webster’s says, “to dig, to run violently, to leap”; “query” is “to seek, to inquire . . . to examine by questions, to doubt of.” However many functions the antiquarian of the fascicle’s twelfth poem has, what he or she discovers “On Resumption Morn” is found “in the dust.” And so the poem (J153, Fr166) that follows this begins this way:

Dust is the only Secret—
 Death, the only One
 You cannot find out all about
 In his “native town.”

Whatever specific death might originally have inspired Emily Dickinson to send this poem (as many others in this fascicle) to Sue, this thirteenth poem in its own book setting begins on the same page as the stanza of the previous poem about the Antiquary. “Dust” tells the life story of the mysterious, industrious, frighteningly efficient Yankee figure, “Death” (who may or may not be the same as the Antiquary, with all of his punning possibilities, of the previous poem). The genealogy with its “Nobody knew ‘his Father’” calls to mind that important absence/presence in the bloody sunset poem, the second in the series; the “native town” reminds us of the longed-for native lands of the homesick feet in the fascicle’s fourth poem; and, most tellingly, the understated nature of Dust and Death in this, the thirteenth poem, calls us back to the “Life is but Life! And Death, but Death” of the ninth poem.

Understated and wry as this poem is, it nevertheless paints a grimly oxymoronic picture of death. Death is both “Industrious” and “Laconic.” It is “Bold as a Brigand” (in Dickinson’s lexicon, a “lawless fellow . . . robber . . . freebooter”) but also “Stillier than a Fleet.” How still, one wonders, is a “Fleet”? A fleet of what? Perhaps a “fleet” of birds, given that the next line is “Builds like a Bird, too!” But the Brigand/Bird has an opponent with similar traits: “Christ robs the Nest— / Robin after Robin / Smuggled to Rest!” In a poem marked by its slant rhyme (One/town, Boy/history, Sedate/Fleet), the true rhyme at its end (noted by Judy Jo Small [1990, 190]) suggests a resolution not present in other poems within the fascicle.

The poem’s dry, dusty beginning shared a page with the volcano poem’s dusty ending; its more affirming conclusion shares the page with the opening

of an almost cloyingly sweet and almost completely ignored poem that becomes the fourteenth in this sequence, "I'm the little 'Heart's Ease!'" (J176, Fr167). It is as though "I'm the little 'Heart's Ease!'" is the speaker's description of the place to which Christ smuggles the Robins. In this poem that place is an "old fashioned" Eden. The birds become "antiquated fellows." Such intertextuality makes one increasingly resistant to notions of the accidental nature of these "repositories" of Dickinson's verse. The "lovely Antiquary" of the eleventh poem is in a line on the top of the left hand of the opened book; "Antiquated fellows" and two "old fashioned" from "Heart's Ease" are on the bottom of the right-hand sheet. By calling attention on this one opened page to the "old," the editor reminds the reader that all through the fascicle she has been fondling old artifacts: the contents of the Ebon box, the picture/portrait, the relics of Pompeii, the dust, and the wagon of the little king. The repeated poem itself stresses long, long years with the repetition of "At last" and the italicized past tense of the last two lines:

Ah! What Leagues there *were*
Between our feet, and Day.

Historians, antiquarians, and poets use the old and transform it into the new. They perform magic.

And that is the point of the fifteenth poem in the series. To my knowledge, almost no one has commented on "Ah! Necromancy Sweet!" (J177, Fr168). Perhaps, as with several poems in this fascicle, "Ah! Necromancy" has almost entirely escaped comment because it was not published until 1929 and thus did not enter the canon but more likely, perhaps, because unless one reads it in its fascicle setting, it is bewildering, even distasteful. At first glance it appears completely weighted on what Paglia calls Dickinson's "Sadean" side (1991, 624, 651); it seems cruel:

Ah! Necromancy Sweet!
Ah! Wizard Erudite!
Teach me the Skill.
That I instil the pain
Surgeons assuage in vain,
Nor Herb of all the plain
Can heal!

To understand the apparent cruelty, the reader remembers that Fascicle 8 links images of transformations and pain: This poem seems to beg the "Wizard Erudite" for the power to enact tricks. Mutlu Konuk Blasing identifies the tricks as semantic, noting that Dickinson juxtaposes the traditional

and the idiosyncratic, the Christian pacifist and the violent, the Latinate and the Saxon so that the reader is continually off guard (1987, 180–91).

Because the fascicle has begun with the image of the wounded deer leaping not in spite of but because of its pain, because it has spoken of the “Sovereign Anguish” that transports and because it has just explored the power of smoldering volcanoes, it is not troubling that the specific skill the speaker requests is that to “instil the pain / Surgeons assuage in vain.” Pain is requisite for the skill to “instil” that pain in others. The word suggests the poet’s function (as Fascicle 21 says) to “Distill amazing sense / From ordinary meanings” by distilling or destabilizing the reader, by, in other words, sharing a wound. As in the fascicle’s fifth poem with its distinction between the foolish and the savan(t)s, this poem’s diction connotes the subject’s self-referentiality. Again, proximity is significant. The pain that is immune to the healing powers of “Herb of all the plain” shares the page with the perhaps overly sweet “Heart’s Ease” and acts almost as an antidote to it. This pairing is similar to one on the previous page, also on the west side of the book. There the butterfly poem precedes the poem (“At last”), which is significant enough to be repeated in Fascicle 21. The speaker’s identity now seems that of a necromancer, one who uses magic in the service of art.

Even the Wordsworthian “Except to Heaven, she is nought” (J154, Fr173) is concerned with the identity of the artist: a tiny artist, compared implicitly to a daisy, “the smallest Housewife in the grass.” Like the Heart’s Ease the little creature is small and others depend on it, for when it is “taken” (it does not leave voluntarily) from the Lawn, “Somebody has lost the face / that made existence—Home!” There’s that face again, and it is followed as if in a refrain by a restatement of the earlier “Portrait” poem, with one essential difference: “Pictures are to daily faces” (J170, Fr174).

Portraits or pictures: Both are art. There may be a small difference to Dickinson, however. The burgeoning popularity of daguerreotypes, an art form that seemed so magical in the nineteenth century that it captured the imagination of Hawthorne (we remember that Holgrave was a daguerreotypist, for example) and seems to have impressed Dickinson as well. One imagines her staring at the representations of the revered framed faces in her own room as she wrote these lines—and as she repeated them with the change of that first word. Indeed, other than the word and two punctuation marks, the poems appear so identical that one seems almost traced from the other and is almost a picture of the other. The single word change is from the specific to the general. At least that is the implication of Dickinson’s own lexicon: “[P]ortraits” are “pictures of faces drawn from life . . . the likeness consist[s] more than in the exact similitude of every feature,” whereas “pictures” may be paintings or “any resemblance or representation, either to the eye or to the understanding.” Both suggest a Platonic conception of reality; both are more

spectacular than the "pedantic Sunshine"; both are explorations of and attempts to transform the palpable or the remembered into a new form. The editor, no mean picture maker herself (recall the sunset, the deer, and the volcano), has just mourned the loss of a little flower ("somebody has lost the face / That made Existence—Home!" in "Except to Heaven"). "Pictures" shares the page with it. There is a way to mitigate such loss, the author suggests, and that is by art. Pictures may, for example, be put in an Ebon box and uncovered many years later or perhaps hidden in a Barn, as she tells us in the next poem, which moves this fascicle toward its conclusion.

"I cautious, scanned my little life—" (J178, Fr175), the eighteenth in the series, unlike most of the past few poems in the fascicle, has attracted much intriguing critical discussion,⁸ but what impresses the fascicle reader is the way "I cautious" moves the concerns of the fascicle to a new level even as it reiterates many of the themes and images from earlier in the collection. Its cynical Yankee farmer-speaker introduces a new voice. This is not an as-told-to tale such as the voice musing on volcanic power but is the voice of the poet in the guise of one who makes and stores hay. Nevertheless, the reader of the previous seventeen poems requires no more hints than the farmer/poet offers: to see that the precious hay, as those objects in the Ebon box, should be winnowed. Some would be lost, but some "would last till Heads like mine / Should be a-dreaming laid." It was these ("the latter") that the careful Yankee hid in a Barn. Here the analogy with the Ebon box contents fails, for this farmer cannot find what he has saved, and he becomes "A Cynic." In light of Dickinson's own lexicon's definition of this word, a word she uses only in this poem, we need not assume the modern meaning of the word. Her Webster's harks back to its assumed origin: "Having the qualities of a surly dog; snarling, captious, austere . . . a follower of Diogenes, a misanthrope." So the farmer is cranky; he is not necessarily a doubter or a skeptic. One proof of that is the end of the poem: "My business is, to find!" he declares, and then he tells us how: "So I begin to ransack!"

Rummaging, throwing that hay around, searching for the precious harvest is, perhaps, something the reader must do, but the speaker reflects the anxiety of the poet about what would survive and how it would survive and be found. The same editor who placed the letter, tawny now with time, opposite an image of Moses looking longingly at the Promised Land has voiced the question that would most haunt her. Recognizing, as does the speaker/farmer, that her "business" was best done "within the little Barn / Love provided [her]," she nevertheless worries. If she did not "print," how would her letters reach the world? In a sense the last two poems of the fascicle help to answer that question.

"If I could bribe them by a Rose" (J179, Fr176) is one possible answer, bribing being (in its secondary sense in Dickinson's Webster's) "that which seduces." No more than the cynical farmer (looking for his "priceless Hay"),

whose "business is to find," the speaker of this penultimate poem voices a wistful urgency about her business. Repeating the word, she intensifies it (and the reader of the discussion of Fascicle 21 in the last chapter will recall the many meanings of "business"): "My business were so dear!" Two of the eight times she ever used the word in her poems, half of the times she ever used the phrase ("my business") are on the two facing pages near the end of this fascicle. Intensely self-reflexive, this fascicle is not just a declaration of the speaker's intent to become a writer (she had done so often before, especially in Fascicles 1 and 3). Rather, this fascicle explores what it is to *be* one. It involves conning and scanning, winnowing and saving, chanting and singing, and, by the end of this rather long poem, bribing and wearing down the listener until he or she finally says "Yes." In fact, the listener is primary in this poem.

"If I could bribe them" differs from the poem that preceded it ("I cautious, scanned my little life") and other stories in Fascicle 8, most of which emphasize the first person, the speaker; "I cautious" does so six times. As we near the fascicle's end, however, this poem uses the third-person plural ("they") five times, indicating an awareness of her audience, the they's who will find whatever it is she cannot find in that barn. A Rose and a Bird stand in for poetry and the poet. Both poet and poetry reappear in the last poem of the fascicle, but first, on the same page as that last poem, is the self-deprecatory notion that perhaps the world would listen patronizingly only "to drive her from the Hall!" She answers that contingency in the final poem.

The Charge to the Reader

The speaker of "As if some little Arctic flower" (Fr177, J180) is as wistful as that in the past two poems, but she seems to be saying that if the they's did try to "drive her from the Hall," she would not be deprived of her laurels. She would not be silenced. Like the Arctic Flower, she would simply

Wander down the Latitudes
 Until it [the Arctic flower] puzzled came
 To continents of summer
 To firmaments of sun—
 To strange, bright crowds of flowers—
 And birds, of foreign tongue!

This is the whole range of "Leagues" from Amherst to Cashmere (the dichotomy is geographical and symbolic: from familiar Yankee territory to exotic, sunny, vaguely Asian climes, in which we recognize an Emersonian echo). By wandering down the "Latitudes," in fact, the poet may be covering even more than geographical territory. Her Webster's includes a sixth mean-

ing beyond the distance from the equator: "Extent or deviation from a settled point; freedom from rules or limits; free; thinking or acting at large." Whether she intended the joke we can only deduce from the rest of those 1,775 extant poems and from the forty books into which she gathered so many of them, but she allows and even encourages such speculation in the final lines of Fascicle 8. There she gives the they's of the previous poem—and all of us whether in Amherst or Cashmere—a charge:

What then? Why nothing—
Only, your *inference* therefrom!

We have met the negation ("Nobody" and "naught" of previous fascicle poems reappears in the nonnegation "nothing" here), but the important new word, one of her favorites, is the one she underlined. She uses some form of the word twenty times (as a variant for estimate, as something quaint, as portentous, even, playfully, as appalling, for example).⁹ As the summation of this fascicle about transport, witchcraft, necromancy, a fascicle in which faces and artifacts and dust and flowers linger as proof that the poet is at last identified, "inference" conveys how much Dickinson requires of her readers. An inference is itself an act of transport, a leap. Dickinson's Webster's definition of the word takes us toward contemporary reader response theory. It is "a truth or proposition drawn from another which is admitted or supposed to be true; a conclusion." Inferences, continues her lexicon, "result from reasoning, as when the mind perceives such a connection between ideas, as that, if certain propositions deduced from them must also be true." Although Karl Keller is right that this poem "forewarns us of [Dickinson's] difficulties" (1979, 2), the word tantalizes the reader who recognizes that the text *is* a sort of promised land. Inferring requires that the reader reach out to the possibilities imbedded in the poem or the book, but at the same time it limits the process to the text itself. As Judy Jo Small says, "While [Dickinson] accepts the instability of meaning as it [the poem] goes from world to poet to poem to reader, she invites not a wild delirium of self-indulgent personal 'readings' but a responsible attempt to get at or near what the poet had to say" (1990, 70). This "little Arctic flower," this "charming parable" (Gelpi 1966, 84) posits a heaven in which the sava(n)t(s), not the foolish, will recognize the flowers she ransacked and saved and ordered in these books and will understand that in them she is "At last! . . . identified" again and again as new minds draw new inferences from the letters grown tawny with time.

Drawing inferences from such evidence, evidence contained in some of the forty books she bound and left for us to ransack is the business of this study. Inferring the meaning of the altered form within the different contexts of "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers" in Fascicles 6 and 10 will be an adventure that the author and compiler of Fascicle 8 would relish.