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EMILY DICKINSON AND THE BYPASSES
OF PUBLICATION
EMILY DICKINSON ÉS A PUBLIKÁLÁS
KERÜLŐÚTJAI

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Introduction

Emily Dickinson is one of the most reputed American poets today. Paradoxically, she avoided print publication, fame and public acknowledgement all her life. In the past decades a number of researchers have sought to determine the reasons for Dickinson's refusal to publish her poems in print. The present dissertation seeks to contribute to the investigation of this issue while it also intends to clarify Dickinson's concept of publication and examine her bypasses which seem to aim at substituting the print reproduction of her poetry. The main objective of this study is to argue that it was Dickinson's intention to publish her poems by sharing their hand-written copies with readers, while she rejected print as a means of commercialized reproduction endangering the autonomy and the integrity of the texts.

Thus the dissertation makes a distinction between print and the other forms of publication, that is the non-print distribution of Dickinson's work. Print could have limited the scope of interpretation of the poems as in Dickinson's time the technology available could not have represented every aspect of her work as it appeared on the manuscript page, including the chirographic and visual features. Besides their visuality, Dickinson's poems are characterized by certain qualities which make them withstand print publication, such as their dynamic, unfinished nature, the ambiguity and multiplicity attached not only to the text including variant elements but also to the genre of the poems. The same text may appear as an individual poem, as part of a collection or sequence, as a letter-poem, as part of a prose letter imbedded in it or attached to it or as an artifact: a manuscript copy of the poem occasionally accompanied by a gift. Dickinson may have been aware of the above-mentioned print resistant features of her poetry, which could have contributed to her refusal of print technology. Her alternative ways of publishing involve her manuscript collections, the fascicles, which she produced from about 1858 to 1864. During this period she gathered her poems in forty groups and bound them together with a string to form booklets. After 1864 until the 1870s Dickinson's attempts at self-publishing are represented by the sets, which were written, similarly to the fascicles, on letter paper but were unbound. There is, however, no evidence that these home-made collections were

meant for the public, while in several cases Dickinson prepared copies of individual poems for one or sometimes more readers. This dissertation demonstrates that Dickinson intended to share her work not only with the future generations but also with the contemporary public, including her family members, friends and acquaintances and the selected few that are ready to meet the challenge of creative reading and co-authoring demanded by her enigmatic, metaphorical and irregular language.¹

Dickinson's attitude to publication is one of the most significant discussions since it is essential for the understanding of her philosophy of artistic reproduction and poetry. The considerable critical attention the problem received includes diverse approaches.² Karen A. Dandurand in *Why Dickinson Did Not Publish* attempts to find an explanation for Dickinson's decision and focuses on the publication history of her poems during her lifetime and the unexploited opportunities to print her works, assuming that she could have published her poems but did not wish to. I share her view concerning her conclusion, however, Dandurand does not examine Dickinson's substitutes for print.

Dickinson's manuscripts have received considerable attention by scholars. Damnhall Mitchell in *Measures of Possibility: Emily Dickinson's Manuscripts* analyses the limitations of print owing to which the poems could not have been represented as they

¹ The poems are quoted from Franklin, R.W., ed. *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Variorum Edition*, which follows Dickinson's unorthodox spelling (for example, "it's" and "opon" instead of its and upon). It also restores the original punctuation. In an attempt to standardize Dickinson's dashes of different lengths and angles, Franklin consistently uses short hyphens. The poem numbers of the above mentioned edition are indicated after the cited passages. The letters are quoted from the following edition: Johnson, Thomas H. and Ward, Theodora, ed. *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*. 3 vols. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1965. The letter numbers, as indicated in this edition are given in the text of the dissertation.

² In the recent decade literature has emerged that offers a theory which may explain Dickinson's reticence, her withdrawal from society and her rejection of publicity, including publication. *The Rape and Recovery of Emily Dickinson* by Marne Carmean (USA:ExLibris, 2008) identifies Dickinson's mysterious lover as her own father. This argument is based on Dickinson's eighty-five poems through which the author wishes to demonstrate Edward Dickinson's paternal deviance and dictatorial attitude toward his elder daughter. Similarly to the above work, Wendy K. Perriman's *The Wounded Deer: The Effects of Incest on the Life and Poetry of Emily Dickinson* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006) presents the hypothesis that Dickinson could be exposed to incest committed by her father, which may serve as explanation for her lifestyle and her poetry. Perriman's supposition is demonstrated with the help of Dickinson's letters and poems as well as medical studies. Following "The Incest Survivors' Aftereffects Checklist", she finds that Dickinson exhibited thirty-three symptoms of the checklist of thirty-seven. She asserts that the act of writing poetry could help Dickinson recover from her trauma.

Unfortunately, there are so many gaps in Dickinson's life story and her poetry that scholars may never explore whether the above supposition is correct or not. The multiplicity and the vagueness of her poems allow diverse interpretations and explanations. However, it is known that Dickinson felt both fear and respect for her father, who was a prominent lawyer of Amherst, the embodiment of Puritan ethics. Nevertheless, Emily often made humorous remarks to Austin about their father. While she rebelled against him as a young adult, her resistance changed into compassion that she felt for the isolated, lonely man, although their relationship remained distant. She respected her father and did not seem to regard him as a sinner. "His Heart was pure and terrible and I think no other like it exists" (L418), she wrote to Thomas Wentworth Higginson.

appeared on the manuscript page, thus being the possible reasons for Dickinson's refusal to publish. At the same time, he claims that certain features of the manuscripts are accidental and warns against accepting that the layout of Dickinson's autographs is deliberate (Mitchell, *Measures* 21). I find that Dickinson seems to experiment with the visuality of her manuscript poems, although, even if this is not always the case, the point is not her intention but the way the visual image of the manuscripts influences the interpretation of the poems.

Fred D. White in *Approaching Emily Dickinson: Critical Currents and Cross Currents Since 1860* supposes that Dickinson "sought wider recognition in 1862" and considered "printing", this is the reason why she approached Thomas Wentworth Higginson, although she later realized that conventional print publication would deprive her poems of "breathing" (91). In White's view Dickinson sees publication as compromising the integrity of the poet for mercenary advantages (89). This seems to be the case concerning commercial distribution, however, Dickinson did not reject publication in the sense of sharing her work with the readers.

The manuscript scholars regard Dickinson's handwritten works, especially the fascicles as her alternative modes of publishing. However, in "Dickinson's Manuscripts" Martha Nell Smith argues that in the first eight fascicles Dickinson was writing with the book or printed page in mind (115). In *Rowing in Eden: Rereading Emily Dickinson* Smith reconsiders the concept of publication and concludes that Dickinson's letters and fascicles are "alternative forms of distribution which ensure Dickinson's independence of the limitations of print reproduction" (Smith, *Rowing* 1-2). In the current dissertation I will extend this list to unbound sets, poems included or embedded in letters, letter-poems, gift poems and reciting poetry to friends or family members. I will also attempt to explore the reasons for Dickinson's choice of chirographic publishing instead of print.

Another manuscript study, Sharon Cameron's *Choosing Not Choosing: Dickinson's Fascicles* discusses the poems in the context of the sequences of fascicles. Cameron tends to agree that Dickinson may have intended her home-made books for private publication. Similarly, Dorothy Huff Oberhaus examining Fascicle 40 as a sequence of poems in the context of Biblical themes in *Emily Dickinson's Fascicles: Method and Meaning* considers the fascicles a form of self-publication (1). Eleanor Elson Heginbotham in *Reading the Fascicles of Emily Dickinson: Dwelling in Possibilities* studies the fascicles as Dickinson's own context and focuses on the poems repeated in more than one fascicle. She expresses her admiration for Dickinson's editorial skills manifested in her hand-written books, the

creation of which she considers “an extraordinary self-publishing enterprise” (xiii). Although I will discuss the fascicles only as Dickinson’s alternatives to print publication, I find the above works crucial for my research, as viewing the manuscript books as contexts or sequences implies that they represent a form of private publication. This concept is challenged by R.W. Franklin, who presumes that Dickinson created the fascicles in order to keep track of her poems (Franklin, *The Manuscript Books* ix).

The next issue that I would like to treat is the visuality of Dickinson’s work. Jerome McGann in “Emily Dickinson’s Visible Language” examines her experimental writing tactics. I find McGann’s argument that Dickinson used her manuscript page “as a scene for dramatic interplays between a poetics of the eye and a poetics of the ear” (248) convincing. Dickinson’s turning the autograph poems into artifacts will be also discussed in the present dissertation. In Jeanne Holland’s view, similarly to the fascicles, the scraps and cutouts are the results of Dickinson’s private publishing activity. In “Stamps, Scraps and Cutouts: Emily Dickinson’s Domestic Technologies of Publication”, Holland argues that these are not drafts but new experimental genres, visual artifacts. It seems that at the beginning Dickinson may have wished to follow the stages of a traditional writing career, but later as she found her own voice and became aware of the irregular features of her poetry, she discovered new ways of experimenting with the text on the handwritten page and its visual potentials. Dickinson’s poetry is characterized by irregularities, including her unconventional punctuation, for example her dashes, which result in multiple readings. In *Inflections of the Pen: Dash and Voice in Emily Dickinson* Paul Crumbley emphasizes the added value of the different effects the manuscripts make as opposed to the print reproduction of Dickinson’s work. Besides Crumbley and Smith, Sharon Cameron represents similar views concerning the importance of the autograph versions of the poems.

I find studies treating the instability of the genre of the poems also important for my research as I believe that this is one of the factors which contributes to the print resistant nature of the poems. Print resistance is closely linked to genre resistance. As Virginia Jackson asserts in *Dickinson’s Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* the modern concept of lyric needs reconsideration in connection with Dickinson’s poems, which resist classification as lyric(13). Alexandra Socarides in *Emily Dickinson and the Problem of Genre* concentrates on the fascicles when she writes about Dickinson’s experiments with the limits of genre, while rethinking the presumptions about the genres employed in them.

Indeed, poems appear as parts of letters, letter poems, artifacts, gifts, poetic sequences. The change of addressee may result in a shift of genre.

The problem of publication or non-publication involves Dickinson's attitude to the public. Given the fact that she almost never submitted her poems to print publication, her awareness and her need of the audience should be given special attention. As I will assert, Dickinson's expectations of the readers forecast the theory of reader response criticism. Thus research into her audience awareness has special significance. In *Dickinson and Audience* the editors, Martin Orczek and Robert Weisbuch collected essays discussing Dickinson's intended readers, her ideal reader, and her relationship to the wider public. David Porter's "Dickinson's Unrevised Poems" elaborates the irregularities and the incompleteness of the texts. These features hinder the readers' understanding of the poems and necessitate different readerly strategies. In the same volume Robert Weisbuch's "Nobody's Business: Dickinson's Dissolving Audience" speaks of the active participation Dickinson demands of her readers and the challenges they face due to her elliptical language.

My research method is works centered, based on the textual evidence of the poems. Although my assumptions concerning Dickinson's intentions are speculative similarly to those of other researchers, I will attempt to find Dickinson's ideas in her own texts with the traditional method of close reading, while accepting and extending more recent, postmodern views of Dickinson criticism, as stated above, on the materiality and visuality of Dickinson's poems, their existence as artifacts, their unfinished character as well as the instability of genres in Dickinson's oeuvre. However, instead of following one particular trend of criticism, I aim at integrating and synthesizing the various scholarly approaches regarding the central problem treated in my work. Providing my own readings, I will look anew at Dickinson's views hidden in the poems. As Mary Loeffelholz writes, "Dickinson's language speaks back to all theories" (6). Thus we should rely on the context of her poems to find the clues to the understanding of her attitude to publication and the issues related to this problem. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of my dissertation to examine the publication history of the poems during or after Dickinson's lifetime, or to provide analyses of the poems from any other aspect than the topic of my study. This is the reason why I do not draw from the research done by Hungarian scholars as much as from the works focusing more closely on my topic.³

³ Nevertheless, I would like to mention some of the Dickinson-studies written by Hungarian scholars. Enikő Bollobás in "Troping the Unthought: Catachresis in Emily Dickinson's Poetry" (*The Emily Dickinson*

The overall structure of the dissertation takes the form of six chapters excluding the Introduction and the Conclusion. Chapter I examines Dickinson's changing attitude to poetic vocation. Chapter II undertakes to give an insight into Dickinson's writing technique, poetic method and her concept of poets and poetry. Chapter III seeks to analyze Dickinson's approach to public acknowledgement, fame and immortality. Chapter IV is concerned with her target readers and their role in the process of poetic creation. Chapter V presents the print resistant features of Dickinson's poetry. Finally, Chapter VI includes the reasons for Dickinson's rejection of the commercial distribution of her poems and the alternative ways of publication employed by her as substitutes for print.

I very much hope that as a result of several years' work, time and devotion consecrated to my Dickinson studies, the present dissertation will generate some new insights into Dickinson's poetry and her concept of publication.

Journal 21:1.2012:25-56) discusses catachresis as a dominant trope in Dickinson's poetry. Ildikó Limpár in "Reading Emily Dickinson's 'Now I lay thee down to sleep' as a variant" (*The AnaChronist* 2001: 68-78) examines the multiple meanings as variants of a poem. István G. László, also a poet-translator of Dickinson, writes about Dickinson's poetic thinking as a form of confession in his unpublished essay, "The Confessions of the Impersonal".

Emily Dickinson and Poetic Vocation

Emily Dickinson chose to remain silent to the world during her lifetime and withdrew from society both as a poet and an individual. She refused to take up the role of public poet when she rejected publishing. While her name was missing from the printed pages of the mass media of nineteenth century America, Dickinson was utterly conscious of her art and vocation. Silent as she was as an individual, her devotion to poetry is all the more audible in her poems about the definition of poetry and the role of poets. In this chapter I am going to focus on some of the poems which reveal Emily Dickinson's attitude to her vocation, and which also reflect the process that led from a possible sense of shame to the conscious choice and pride connected to writing.

The issue of publication is obviously related to that of poetic vocation. One might think that one of the reasons for non-publishing can be that the author is reluctant to identify himself or herself as a poet, which was evidently not true in Dickinson's case. She did think of herself as a poet from an early age. Her first surviving poem is the one written on Valentine Day in the year 1850, which reveals considerable experience and practice in writing (Fr1).

Her letter written to her friend Jane Humphrey in 1850 may also lead us to the conclusion that she was already concerned with writing: "I have dared to do strange things—bold things—and have asked no advice from any—I have heeded beautiful tempters, yet I do not think I am wrong . . ." (L35). Dickinson's lines seem to justify Robert B. Sewall's argument that Dickinson "approached her vocation with a sense of guilt," with the uneasiness of her contemporaries about artists (Sewall 353). One wonders why she felt the need to conceal her decision of becoming a poet rather than telling it straightforwardly at least to her best friends. As Sewall suggests, "To have announced anything of the sort to her young friends or her family would have dazzled them blind; the shock would have been too great." (Sewall 389).

Dickinson confesses having "rebellious thoughts" to her former school friend, Abiah Root, as well (L 39). When she writes about "bold" and "rebellious" things, she may allude

not only to her refusal of conversion and the religious piety of her community including her peers, but also to a forming inclination which later developed into devotion to poetry.

The choice of poetic vocation was considered rebellion against the social conventions of nineteenth century New England. Taking up a vocation at all was quite unusual for upper-middle class women. In well-to-do circles marriage was “the only viable option for women,” even if the improvement of women’s education and less dependence of men and women on the family led to the decline of patriarchal authority (Loehndorf 114). Loehndorf makes a difference between married and unmarried women, saying that the latter were expected to be dedicated to a “noble cause,” and are often characterized by “a sense of election that conveys power.” (Loehndorf 115). Thus Dickinson seems to have similar experiences to those of other single women of her time.

Dickinson’s sense of mission and election is linked to poets and poetry. The images she uses to express this are the following: the woman in white, title, rank, royalty, crown, being divine and immortal, for example, in poems 194, 230, 307, 334, 353, 395, 409, 466, 549, 740. Consequently, the poems including the above motifs may be considered confession poems on Dickinson’s concept of poetry and the role of poets. Fred D. White compares Dickinson to a “cloistered nun,” as her commitment to poetry “has a religious character.” He calls the white dress Dickinson always wore “her habit, the outward sign of self-election to the holy vocation of poetry.” (White 41). He argues that Dickinson herself found a parallel between her life and that of nuns as, in his interpretation, she alludes to herself as the “Wayward Nun” in “Sweet mountains - ye tell me no lie” (Fr745). Sandra M. Gilbert also finds connection between the white dress and vocation when she claims that in “A solemn thing it was I said” it is clear that the white dress is “the emblem of a ‘blameless *mystery*’ ” and dropping her life in the ‘purple well’ means she “renounces triviality and ordinariness in order to ‘wear’—that is to *enact*—solemnity, dedication, vocation.” (Gilbert 29).

Women did not usually have a vocation at all. If they did, a typical occupation for educated women was teaching or nursing, while poetry was considered a male occupation. Vivien R. Pollack finds correlation between the fact that Emily Dickinson more or less concealed her poetic activity from her family and her “attitudes toward the intellectual aggression she identified with male sexual behavior.” (Pollack 236). According to Pollack, this was due to her relationship with her father and “the patriarchal religious culture of the Connecticut Valley.” (Pollack 236). Pollack presumes that Dickinson’s punishment motif, which “expresses her fear that she will be punished for unwomanly behavior” is partly due

to her concept of “poetic power, which she perceives within an essentially masculinist tradition.” (Pollack 244–45).

Dickinson’s father was a Puritan, who believed in traditional gender roles and expected his daughters to behave accordingly. He drew a clear distinction between male and female roles both in family and public life. Sewall quotes a letter written in 1826, in which Edward Dickinson recalls his positive impressions of Catherine Maria Sedgwick, a women novelist, nonetheless expresses his preference for women in traditional roles (Sewall 49).

In 1862 Dickinson complained to Higginson that her father did not encourage her to read: “He buys me many books, but begs me not to read them—because he fears they joggle the Mind” (L261). He did not read much himself, as she told Higginson (L342a) and did not want his children to read fiction, only the Bible (L342b). While he took no notice of Emily’s writing skills, he acknowledged with praise her brother Austin’s talent for letter-writing. “Father says your letters are altogether before Shakespeare, and he will have them published to put in our library” (L46). Dickinson reminds Austin with similar irony that she has done some writing as well, though this seemed to have remained unnoticed: “Now Brother Pegasus, I’ll tell you what it is—I’ve been in the habit *myself* of writing some few things, and it rather appears to me that you’re getting away my patent” (L110).

As we have seen, in the 1850s Dickinson’s attitude to poetry is characterized by fear and a sense of guilt due to the social conventions of her time and her family background. However, at the beginning of the 1860s she is already perfectly aware of her poetic call and ready to declare her vocation. In prose she makes statements about her conviction that her “business” is poetry. Quoting a bird in a letter to the Hollands, she writes, “ ‘My business is to sing’ ” (L269). In the same letter she makes a similar declaration, thus identifying poetry with love as in “To pile like thunder to its close” (Fr1353). “Perhaps you laugh at me! Perhaps the whole United States are laughing at me too! *I* can’t stop for that! *My* business is to love” (L269). Referring to her preferred form of poetic expression, she claims, “Perhaps you smile at me. - I could not stop for that - My Business is Circumference” (L268). The word “Circumference” seems to be synonymous with “singing,” and writing as discussed later in this chapter concerning “Tell all the truth but tell it slant” (Fr1263). Her sense of shame about her vocation is still revealed by the repeated assumption that she may appear ridiculous.

The declarations of her “business” in prose are echoed in the first line of “I shall keep singing!” (Fr270):

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

Late - when I take my place in summer -
But - I shall bring a fuller tune -
Vespers - are sweeter than matins - Signor -
Morning - only the seed of Noon -

The passion of her conviction and her confidence is similar to that of her statements in the letters. The first line suggests that the poet could be hindered from writing, maybe again by the laughter of people, which she would not let happen. However, she expects and accepts late recognition or its total lack as the first line of stanza two implies. She does not mind if “Birds” “pass” her. She is assured that late recognition is better—“I shall bring a fuller tune”—than immediate fame, expressing her concept of deferred reward.

In the following four poems Emily Dickinson demonstrates a growing sense of being chosen for the vocation of poet, in the early 1860s she gives voice to the satisfaction and self-assurance felt over her special status, for example in “On a Columnar self” (Fr740):

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

That Lever cannot pry -
And Wedge cannot divide
Conviction - That Granitic Base -
Though none be on our side -

Suffice Us - for a Crowd -
Ourselves - and Rectitude -
And that Assembly - not far off
From furthest Spirit - God -

In spite of the sacrifice of isolation (“Though None be on our Side -”), she is contented with the company of herself and that of poets. There is nobody to rely on but herself. The speaker is respectful and powerful enough to do without assistance. She can withstand the adverse conditions (“Tumult,” “Extremity”), including her previous hesitation which is now opposed to “the Certainty” about her decision. The words “Lever,” “pry” and “wedge” all convey the meaning of some kind of pressure, maybe that of the social conventions and expectations enforced on her by her family and her community, while her resistance is suggested by words expressing power, for example, “columnar,” “rely,” “Certainty,” “Granitic Base.” The speaker is now a member of the “Assembly” of poets, one of the elected, who are near God, though He is “furthest” from, presumably, ordinary people. Thus, the speaker distinguishes herself and her “Assembly” from them and declares her close connection to God.

She demonstrates her certainty and pride about her choice in “For this - accepted breath” (Fr230):

For this - accepted Breath -
Through it - compete with Death -
The fellow cannot touch this Crown -
By it - my title take -
Ah, what a royal sake
To my necessity - stooped down!

No Wilderness - can be
Where this attendeth me -
No Desert Noon -
No fear of frost to come
Haunt the perennial bloom -
But Certain June!

Get Gabriel - to tell - the royal syllable -
Get Saints - with new - unsteady tongue -
To say what trance below
Most like their glory show -
Fittest the Crown!

The word “Breath” implies that poetic inspiration, which is identified with life, may be a gift of God. Consequently, poems are immortal, they “compete with Death.” For Dickinson, being a poet is a royal “title” as the repeated use of the word “crown” suggests. The idea that the crown protects its bearer is emphasized by the repetition of the negation at the beginning of three lines in stanza two as well as the powerful contrast of “Desert Noon,” “Certain June” and “frost.” In the poem there is no allusion to a sense of guilt or shame linked to poetry; on the contrary, the speaker is proud of her title of poet and does not want to deny it, as her line “Most like their glory show -” suggests. As the phrase “Certain June” indicates, she is certain of her art.

Similarly to the previous poem, Gabriel, as messenger of God witnesses the poet’s glory in “The face I carry with me last” (Fr395). Also, Dickinson uses the same symbols (rank, crown, degree, royalty) to describe the poet as an elected person:

The face I carry with me - last -
When I go out of Time -
To take my Rank - by - in the West -
That face - will just be thine -

I'll hand it to the Angel -
That - Sir - was my Degree -
In Kingdoms - you have heard the Raised -
Refer to - possibly.

He'll take it - scan it - step aside -
Return - with such a crown
As Gabriel - never capered at -
And beg me put it on -

And then - he'll turn me round and round -
To an admiring sky -
As One that bore her Master's name -
Sufficient Royalty!

The speaker is invited to be crowned by no less than an angel who, having inspected her “Rank” of poet, grants her a crown as a token of grace. Her rank is something that can be taken “out of time,” to heaven, as it is not a time-bound asset, it is eternal and immortal. Oberhaus presumes that the line “As one that bore her Master’s name” is an allusion to the Book of Revelations 22:4 (Oberhaus 133). “And they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads.” In this light we can say that the crown is not only a symbol of election but also that of suffering, an experience which the speaker-poet shares with Christ. It is this painful “royalty” similar to that of Christ that the poet finds “sufficient.” This is why she proves to be superior to both Gabriel—by her crown,—and the angel who humbly begs her. The poet who refused the acknowledgment of the public in her life is now admired by the “sky”.

Though the cause of the speaker’s ecstatic state is not identified in “Mine by the right of the white election!” (Fr411), a possible cause could be the revelation of her poetic identity:

Mine - by the Right of the White Election!
Mine - by the Royal Seal!
Mine - by the sign in the Scarlet prison-
Bars - cannot conceal!
Mine - here - in Vision - and in Veto!
Mine - by the Grave’s Repeal -
Tilted - Confirmed -
Delirious Charter!
Mine-long as Ages steal!

Both Jane Donahue Eberwein and Robert Sewall allow for the supposition that the subject of celebration may be, among others, her poetic vocation, while Pollack thinks that the poem belongs to the marriage group of poems (Eberwein, Sewall and Pollack 140; 524; 174). The tropes: “White Election,” “Royal Seal” may confirm the former view, as they

frequently refer to her sense of being elected for the special mission of poetry. Sewall points out that though it is often read as a love poem, the two interpretations do not exclude one another, as the renunciation of love or the failure of friendship may have inspired her to view her dedication differently (Sewall 485). Sewall goes further when he says that the word “white” implies the expression of “her self-appointed rank among the poets.” (Sewall 174). The speaker’s forceful confirmation of her joyful entitlement is expressed by the sixfold repetition of “Mine,” the use of six exclamation marks and the objective legal vocabulary.

Similarly to the poem above, “Title divine is mine!” (Fr194a) is characterized by the emphatic use of the word “mine,” the use of legal terms and exclamation marks. Just like poem 411, it is seemingly a marriage poem, although its subject is uncertain. It may, however, be about poetic vocation, as well:

Title divine - is mine!
 The Wife - without the Sign!
 Acute Degree - conferred on me -
 Empress of Calvary!
 Royal - all but the Crown!
 Betrothed - without the swoon
 God sends us Women -
 When you - hold - Garnet to Garnet -
 Gold - to Gold -
 Born - Bridalled - Shrouded -
 In a Day -
 “My Husband” - women say -
 Stroking the Melody -
 Is *this* - the way?

Brenda Wineapple finds that the poem is sensual, implying “decided sexuality,” which can be “directed toward the Master or Susan or Higginson or her own vocation as poet.” (Wineapple 77). There are two fair copies of the poem, the earlier of which was sent to Samuel Bowles with the message: “*Here’s* - what I had to ‘tell you’ - You will tell no other? Honor - is it’s own pawn -.” (Franklin 228). Presumably, this is why Sewall offers three possible readings, according to which the title “may be that of imagined wife of

Samuel Bowles, a title denied her in reality” (Sewall 485). Or, as the Bride of Christ, she may be sharing with Him the martyrdom of Calvary. Finally, there is the possibility that she “has here taken her ultimate stand, conferring upon herself the ‘Acute Degree’ of Poet” (Sewall 485). Sewall argues that all the possibilities are present in the poem. The renunciation of Bowles and the declaration of love may have strengthened her dedication, which was, at the same time, a renunciation in itself. This is why she sees herself as “Empress of Calvary” (Sewall 485). Fred D. White allows for merely one interpretation: he is convinced that this is a love poem, the beginning of Dickinson’s poem cycle to the Master (White 114). Similarly to Sewall, Joanna Dobson argues that the poem “appears, at one level at least, to reflect Dickinson’s decision to ‘marry’ her art and achieve the divine identity of poet” (Dobson 76). As we can see, the poem lends itself to several interpretations, although the meaning of “title” is specified at the beginning of the poem: it refers to “Wife” and “Empress of Calvary.”

However, we do not know what exactly is meant by “The Wife - without the Sign.” While the first line expresses the joyful state of possession, in the following lines the speaker faces the lack of the “Sign,” the “crown” and the “swoon.” In my reading, if the wife has no sign of her social standing, it may refer to something different from the conventional meaning of the word. The word “Wife” may refer to the poet’s dedication to her poetry, similarly to the bride of Christ, while the lack of a sign may be interpreted as the lack of publications. Being a poet is not only a divine title but it also involves suffering as “Empress of Calvary” suggests, and similarly to nuns, the renunciation of physical love, “the swoon.” The metaphors “Title divine,” “Degree,” “Empress,” “Royal,” and “Crown” emphasize the poet’s sense of election and divinity. Dobson notes that by calling herself “Empress” and “Royal,” she places herself on the same level “with the great woman writers like Elizabeth Barrett Browning and George Sand, whom she perceives as ‘Women, now, queens, now!’” (L234) (Dobson 76).

The first six lines of the poem describe the unconventional female role of being a poet. In the second half of the poem this is contrasted to the stages of a traditional female life consisting of birth, marriage and death: “Born - Bridalled - Shrouded -.” The passive voice stresses the defenselessness of women, with whom the speaker identifies herself for a moment as the pronoun “us” suggests when she refers to the “swoon” of sexuality. However, as the shift of pronoun to “you” indicates, she distances herself from them. She is the lonely “Empress” as well as the speaker who describes the earthly wedding ceremony (“. . . Garnet to Garnet - /Gold - to Gold -”) and is confused about the futility of

women's life, which seems to be over "in a Day." Finally, she turns to her readers, questioning the necessity of this fate. Dickinson chooses to identify herself as a woman poet. The stages of her life involve her birth as a poet when God confers on her the title of poet and her "Degree." "Betrothed," her deprivation of sexuality is transformed into the creative power of writing poetry. She bears not children but poems in her marriage.⁴ The third stage of death is missing from her life cycle as she has become divine and immortal through her poems.

The poet is an elected person who withdraws into her "own Society" of poets and poems instead of mingling with the world in "The soul selects her own society" (Fr409):

The Soul selects her own Society -
Then - shuts the Door -
To her divine Majority -
Present no more -

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

I've known her - from an ample nation -
Choose One -
Then - close the Valves of her attention -
Like Stone -

The Soul prefers the society of poets and rejects all other experience or companion, even that of an "Emperor" as her status elevates her above secular powers. The Soul of the poem may be seen as the personification of the speaker's own soul. It is an organic living being, unlike the conventional opposition of body and soul, in which the soul is supposed to lack any materialistic representation. The female soul of the poem or her "attention" has "Valves," which open and close. The soul seems to have a stone-like quality; however, it is rather her decision that is final and solid like stone. The irrevocable nature of the decision

⁴ Dickinson found fulfillment in writing similarly to Anne Bradstreet, for whom being mother and being artist were the same as the duty of both is "to make her children/her verse good" (Keller17).

is emphasized by the brief one-syllable words: “Then - shuts the Door -” and the firm negation: “no more.” The irrevocableness is further stressed by the anteposition and the repetition of the word “Unmoved.” In spite of being unmoved and hidden, the Soul is aware of the outside world, just like Dickinson – it “notes the Chariots,” before withdrawing her attention to direct it inside to her selected “Society.” However, isolation means confinement, too, as Suzanne Juhasz remarks (Juhasz 138). The symbols of the glories of the outside world are contrasted with the simplicity of the Soul’s house. “Yet while the speaker claims her equality with those most powerful in the outer world – they may be emperors, but she is ‘divine Majority,’ at the same time she asserts her difference from them”. (Juhasz 138)

The concept of poetry as divine is also included in “Of all the sounds despatched abroad” (Fr334b):

Of all the Sounds despatched abroad,
 There’s not a Charge to me
 Like that old measure in the Boughs -
 That phraseless Melody -
 The Wind does - working like a Hand,
 Whose fingers Comb the Sky -
 Then quiver down - with tufts of Tune -
 Permitted Gods, and me -

Inheritance, it is, to us -
 Beyond the Art to earn -
 Beyond the trait to take away
 By Robber, since the Gain
 Is gotten not of fingers -
 And inner than the Bone -
 Hid golden, for the whole of Days,
 And even in the Urn,
 I cannot vouch the merry Dust
 Do not arise and play
 In some odd fashion of it’s own,
 Some quainter Holiday,

When Winds go round and round in Bands -
And thrum upon the door,
And Birds take places, overhead,
To bear them Orchestra.

I crave Him grace of Summer Boughs,
If such an Outcast be -
Who never heard that fleshless Chant -
Rise - solemn - on the Tree,
As if some Caravan of Sound
Off Deserts, in the Sky,
Had parted Rank -
Then knit, and swept -
In Seamless Company -

As “measure,” “Melody” and “Tune” are permitted to Gods – maybe the Gods of nature – and the poet, she has the same rank as them. The speaker is confident enough to claim that poetry derives from God. As “Inheritance,” it is innate, not a learned skill: it is “Beyond the Art to Earn - .” The contrast of “for the whole of Days, / And even in the Urn,” referring to life and death suggests that poetry is also immortal. The music of “Winds” and “Birds” survives even after death. Unlike in the first two stanzas, in the third one the poet is less confident. She begs for the grace of inspiration to be granted in spite of being an “Outcast,” which is presumably an allusion to the poet being barred from communion service as a consequence of her refusal of Conversion. The words “Fleshless” and “Sky” suggest that the song of nature described by the trope “Caravan of Sound” is divine.

Dickinson considered her vocation a royal title, symbolized by the tokens of royalty. “I’m ceded - I’ve stopped being their’s” (Fr353) is another firm declaration of Dickinson’s choice of the “royal” title of poet:

I'm ceded - I've stopped being Their's -
The name They dropped upon my face
With water, in the country church
Is finished using, now,
And They can put it with my Dolls,

My childhood, and the string of spools,
I've finished threading - too -

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

My second Rank - too small the first -
Crowned - Crowing - on my Father's breast -
A half unconscious Queen -
But this time - Adequate - Erect,
With Will to choose,
Or to reject,
And I choose, just a Crown -

The speaker gives up the name received in baptism for her vocation. In each stanza the past and the present are juxtaposed. The days of the speaker's baptism and her childhood are represented by typical childhood objects such as "Dolls" and "string of spools." She does not regard this period with the usual nostalgia. On the contrary, the speaker's definite rejection is suggested by the word "stopped" and "finished," each repeated twice. She clearly distinguishes herself from those referred to as "They," thus excluding the world, even her family. The poem is built on contrasts, that of the past and the present, the first and the "second Rank," consciousness and unconsciousness, choosing and rejecting, simple toys opposed to "crown" and "diadem." While the speaker was not able to make a decision about her name as a baby, "a half unconscious Queen," now she is resolved to do so consciously, which is emphasized by the repetition of "choose" in the last stanza. The word "Grace" may refer to inspiration granted by God, while "Diadem" is a symbol of poems. Interestingly, both the first, traditional baptism and the second metaphorical one are symbolized by the crown. On the former occasion the onomatopoeic "crowing" stresses the negative connotation, adding some irony to the celestial imagery. It may also refer to the activity of writing poems or "singing," Dickinson's metaphor of writing, as a contrast.

Poetry is described as an occupation which links the speaker to the realm of heaven in “I dwell in possibility” (Fr466):

I dwell in Possibility -
A fairer House than Prose -
More numerous of Windows -
Superior - for Doors -

Of Chambers as the Cedars -
Impregnable of eye -
And for an everlasting Roof
The Gambrels of the Sky -

Of Visitors - the fairest -
For Occupation - This -
The spreading wide my narrow Hands
To gather Paradise -

Poetry is seen free of the limitations and restrictions of prose. It is symbolized by “Possibility” in terms of creativity, imagination and interpretation. If this metaphor of poetry as opposed to “Prose” may be interpreted as real-life experience filtered through the windows and doors of the house of poetry, direct experience is rejected in favor of indirect one in the poet’s mind, which becomes real experience through poetry. As in “The soul selects her own society” (Fr409) the “house” metaphor and the vocabulary of architecture is applied. However, this house is more open to the world than that of the Soul of “The Soul selects her own Society,” which has shut doors, a “low Gate” and closed “Valves,” although the notion of exclusion is also included in the above poem. The “Chambers” here are “Impregnable of Eye.” The number of windows and doors as well as the “everlasting roof” symbolize the limitless nature of imagination. As Suzanne Juhasz remarks, “Dwelling there, the lady of the manor makes not cakes but poetry.” (Juhasz 20). The idea of selection is also implied: only the “fairest” visitors are welcome. However, this is possible only in the condition of undisturbed seclusion, which seems to enhance creative power. This could be the reason why seclusion is the poet’s dwelling place and chosen working practice. Being confined to home could make nineteenth century women socially

deprived of power; however, the very same condition enables the poet to create and enjoy the liberty of creation free from social conventions and expectations. The private sphere can be seen as the origin of creative power. The inner contrast of the image of “The spreading wide my narrow Hands” implies that despite the poet’s limited social capacity, this condition offers access to Paradise through poems, the tokens of immortality. Poems are thus linked to God’s realm.

Although Dickinson made her willful choice, she was not unaware of the sacrifice demanded by her occupation as revealed in “One life of so much consequence!” (Fr248):

One life of so much consequence!

Yet I - for it - would pay -

My soul's *entire income* -

In ceaseless - salary -

One Pearl - to me - so signal -

That I would instant dive -

Although - I *knew* - to *take* it -

Would *cost* me - *just a life!*

The Sea is full - I know it!

That - does not blur *my Gem!*

It burns - distinct from all the row -

Intact - *in Diadem!*

The life is thick - I know it!

Yet - not so dense a crowd -

But *Monarchs* - are *perceptible* -

Far down the dustiest Road!

The poem reflects Dickinson’s ultimate devotion to poetry on the one hand and her realization of the price of being a poet on the other. Poetry is worth sacrificing her life and her soul. What she expects in return for her sacrifice are the tokens of richness: “Pearl,” “Gem,” and “Diadem,” Dickinson’s metaphors of poetry. Nevertheless, she does not expect immediate success; the word “Consequence” suggests that she counts on deferred

reward. She is confident that the result of her commitment will be immortality. She knows that “Far down” the road, that is, with due time she will get recognition. She regards herself as one of the “Monarchs,” suggesting that royalty is an attribute of real poets. However, she differentiates herself from the “crowd” of successful, rival poets from which real talent is distinguished, herself included, provided she can get hold of her “Gem.” Writing poetry is her mission, which requires diving deep down into the sea, which may be the metaphor of her soul: the price of her art is silent confinement and seclusion.

Emily Dickinson knew exactly what it took to be a poet: she clearly defined the poet’s task and the meaning of poetry. In a letter to his wife, Higginson quoted Dickinson’s words during his first visit to Amherst in 1870: “If I read a book [and] it makes my whole body so cold no fire ever can warm me I know *that* is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know *that* is poetry. These are the only way I know it” (L342a).

Poetry is described as a power deriving from God, while poets are regarded as intermediaries between Him and human beings. Poetry provides a supernatural experience in “To pile like thunder to it’s close” (Fr1353). However, while Dickinson’s definition in her letter describes poetry as a physical experience, in poem 1353 it is also an emotional experience, an equivalent of love:

To pile like Thunder to it’s close
 Then crumble grand away
 While everything created hid
 This - would be Poetry -

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

In the first stanza the grandness of poetry is compared to thunder, the power of which can be devastating, while love is considered equal to poetry: “the two coeval come.” Experiencing them has similar dramatic consequences, as both poetry and love derive from God. As Cristanne Miller suggests, “creativity or love or deeply religious experience involves the release of potentially destructive power.” (Miller 127). Miller presumes that the poet is a divine creator in the poem but also as ignorant of her own creation as the

reader, thus creation can be devastating to her too, so poet and reader are inseparable (Miller 128–29). In her reading “consume” refers to the human involvement in capturing the experiences, just like on the level of the world one ingests a poem by completely taking it in. Miller sees the poem as the expression of the role of creativity in Dickinson’s life, namely that poetry is not separated from the experience of God, and provides access to God through this expression of both love and religion (Miller 130).

In “The only news I know” (Fr820), Emily Dickinson identifies the poet as a mediator between readers and God:

The only news I know
Is Bulletins all Day
From Immortality.

The Only Shows I see -
Tomorrow and Today -
Perchance Eternity -

The only one I meet
Is God - The only Street -
Existence - This traversed

If other news there be -
Or admirable show -
I'll tell it You -

The poem is yet another manifestation of Dickinson’s concept of the divine nature of poetry. The poet is linked to God through the poems which bring immortality. As Dorothy Huff Oberhaus suggests, poetic news comes from immortality, consequently the poet hopes poems are means of salvation (Oberhaus 34). The speaker’s strong conviction of this is expressed by the repetition of the same sentence structure at the beginning of the first three stanzas as well as the words “immortality,” “Eternity” and “God.” The first lines also imply the preclusion of the possibility of the poet conveying any other messages than those of God, with the exclusion of the world. The news is from beyond the world of humans: “Existence - This traversed.” The messages are both verbal and non-verbal (“Shows”), the

perception of which necessitates the use of senses and mental capacity. The poet's responsibility is to be a chronicler of God's eternal realm. The final promise stresses the poet's dedication to her task. The poet is similarly defined as messenger in "This is my letter to the world" (Fr519):

This is my letter to the World
 That never wrote to Me -
 The simple News that Nature told -
 With tender Majesty
 Her Message is committed
 To Hands I cannot see -
 For love of Her - Sweet - countrymen -
 Judge tenderly - of Me

The poet-messenger communicates the news of nature to the readers. The word "Message" implies that the news is meant to be transmitted to people and it derives from God, it "is committed / To Hands I cannot see -." Thus, the poet acts as intermediary between God and human beings. Although the poet does not see those hands, she can see clearly what the message is about, unlike her "countrymen."⁵ The poem recalls "Tell all the truth but tell it slant," where the readers are compared to children, too "infirm" to face the truth, who need the "slant" (Fr1263) telling of a mediator, the poet. However, in this case the poet is also a letter-writer. As Cristanne Miller notes, "the writer disappears behind the supposed transparency of her message. In the fiction of the poem she does not create, she gossips. [. . .] The metaphor of poet as letter-writer aptly characterizes Dickinson's art." (Miller 8-9). Miller adds that the element of controlled intimacy is a key to the poet's method in her poems (Miller 9).

"Between my country and the others" (Fr829) also differentiates between the poet's world and the world of others:

⁵ Dickinson seems to share Emerson's transcendentalist idea about the role of poet as described in his essay *The Poet* (1844). For Emerson, the poet is in search of the universal truth. He is an interpreter who articulates the truths and the secrets of nature to humans. However, she is not influenced by the Romantic concept of poet as prophet and redeemer. Dickinson knew and appreciated Emerson's works. She received Emerson's Poems from Benjamin Newton (Sewall 402). Some of the books that remained from the Homestead, Emily Dickinson's home and the Evergreens, Austin and Sue's home have markings which are supposed to be Emily's. The marked volumes include the following works by Emerson: *The Conduct of Life, Society and Solitude, May-Day, Essays* (Sewall 678).

Between My Country - and the Others -
There is a Sea -
But Flowers - negotiate between us -
As Ministry.

The poet's territory is isolated from the world, while poet and reader are separated by the sea (Oberhaus 116). However, the difference between poet and reader is not irreconcilable. The flowers, the tropes for poems act as intermediary between them.

Dickinson also identified the role of poets. "I reckon when I count it all" (Fr533) is a statement about the ranking of poets:

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

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

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

Be Beautiful as they prepare
For Those who worship Them -
It is too difficult a Grace -
To justify the Dream -

The poem is built on a hyperbole. At the beginning the speaker sets out to present a ranking in which poets take precedence both over nature and heaven. The speaker seems to

be absolutely confident of this. Her conviction is emphasized by the simplified language and the school-bookish listing and repetition of “Then.” The list does not include any other elements, while in stanza two everything except poets is erased, as they include “the primal work of creation,” (Sewall 724) and “Comprehend the Whole.” What they comprehend is described in stanza three: Summer, Sun and even “the Further Heaven” of their immortal art. Poets are comparable to God, they are to be worshipped, they pave the way to immortality. However, the word “Grace” is an allusion to the fact that the origin of inspiration is God and being a poet is a grace of God. This inspiration is so powerful that it results in the supernatural-superhuman creative power of poets. Their task is to “justify the Dream” of eternity as mediators of God’s truth. Yet, the conditional clause, the subjunctive “Be” and the word “too” of the final stanza reflect that this task might be beyond human power.

Emily Dickinson remained silent as a public poet all her life, however, she was not silent about her vocation as poet. Having overcome her initial feeling of shame linked to poetry, by the early 1860s she openly identified herself as a poet. The first group of poems demonstrates her growing sense of vocation which turned into firm commitment and dedication to poetry. They also manifest her conviction of being elected for the divine occupation of poet. From the second group of poems it is revealed how Dickinson defined and described poetry and the role of poets. She thought of poetry as an equivalent of love, a divine occupation, while poets are messengers, the mediators of God’s truth and act as an intermediary between God and the world.

Tricks of the Trade: Emily Dickinson on Writing Poetry

Although Emily Dickinson refused to publish her poems in print, not only did she identify herself as a poet, clearly define poetry and describe the role of poets, but also offered an insight into her “tricks of the trade”, her method of writing. In the present chapter I would like to discuss some of her poems which reveal her ideas about the art of writing poetry.

Dickinson explains her writing method in “Tell all the truth but tell it slant-” (Fr1263), which can be regarded as her *ars poetica*:

Tell all the truth but tell it slant -
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth's superb surprise
As Lightning to the Children eased
With explanation kind

The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind -

The poet's job, to “tell all the truth”, is clearly defined. The word “all” suggests that the poet is in possession of all the knowledge, which is described as “Too bright,” “superb surprise” and dazzling, while the simile in line five compares it to “lightning”. Thus, its effect may be as powerful and possibly as destructive as natural forces, too dramatic for the readers who, unlike the poet, cannot bear it. Cristanne Miller argues that “truth is a substitute for language as a substance of power” (Miller 12). Similarly to poems “The only news I know” (Fr820), “Between my country and the others” (Fr829) and “I reckon when I count it all” (Fr533), there is a divide between poet and reader, since they are of different worlds and have different capacities. The reader needs indirect expression for

protection against being directly exposed to the drama of truth. Miller sees the poet's role as "implicitly maternal", which is in "contrast to the more common nineteenth century portrait of the poet as a wielder of lightning." (Miller 16).

Protection, however, is not the only reason why Dickinson recommends "slant" expression. She also strives for "success" as suggested by the second line. One wonders what Dickinson means by success. Is it the readers' comprehension of the truth? Josef Raab suggests that Emily Dickinson's slanted use of symbols and the presumption that conventional language is not suitable to express complex meanings could be accountable for her usage of variants (Raab 285). Maybe the deficiency is due to the readers' "infirm Delight," which hinders them from understanding, that is why they should be offered variants like dishes on the menu to choose from, in the hope that at least one of the variants will be clear enough for them to grasp the message, which is eased in this way. Variants may serve as "explanation kind" (Fr 1263). The reading public is compared to children, weak, immature and unprepared for poetry, especially Dickinson's poetry, which she may choose not to publish for their sake. However, in line three the first person plural possessive pronoun—"our"—implies that Dickinson identifies herself with the readers. Thus, as a reader, she does not differ from others. If she is distinguished as a poet, it is due to the divine power of poetry. As a poet she is able to overcome her weakness is characteristic of human beings, and face the truth.

The word "slant", understood as slant meaning, seems to represent Dickinson's method of writing characterized by indirectness. Her poetic devices of ambiguity include ellipsis, comprised language, allusions and metaphors. Dickinson often appears to avoid direct expression as if she were hiding her thoughts and feelings behind a linguistic mask. "Slant" telling is a means of protection not only for the readers but also for the poet. Telling the truth "slant" may imply that there is no absolute truth, merely the truth told from a certain angle. Dickinson's view on the dangerous nature of being confronted by the truth may be a reason for her excessive use of dashes, which leave a gap in the poem for the readers to fill, thus holding back some of the poet's ideas and allowing the readers to consider the truth from their own angle. Ellipsis may suggest that truth resists expression in inadequate language as Shira Wolosky points out (*Truth and Lie* 147).

The visual representation of the word "slant" as a diagonal line implies that it may lead to the core of the truth, rather than "circuit", which may be understood as circling round the truth, always getting closer, however, maybe never reaching the core. The

inherent ambiguity of the poem is well demonstrated by the second line if we consider the meaning of “lies” as the opposite of telling the truth. The multiplicity of Dickinson’s poems may lead to the consequence that instead of telling the absolute truth everyone should explore their own truth from their own angle with the poet’s assistance, which results in several possible meanings. As Ildikó Limpár argues, the best reading of a Dickinson poem “is the one that offers the various levels of interpretation with the awareness of their being different aspects of the same thing”. Limpár finds that for Dickinson the dimension of truth is “infinite and can, therefore, only be approached.” (78)

The poet’s method of not representing ideas straightforwardly, as “success in circuit lies”, may refer to her concept of circumference. In July 1862 she wrote to Higginson: “Perhaps you smile at me. I could not stop for that – My Business is Circumference – ” (L268). This statement corresponds to the one in L269: “My business is to sing,” which may lead to the assumption that singing, which may be identified with writing poetry as explained in Chapter I, is characterized by circumference. Dickinson also contrasted circumference with the essential truth in L950: “The Bible dealt with the centre, not with Circumference – .” Consequently, it is her poetry which communicates the word of God to people.

“Essential oils are wrung” (Fr772) also provides an insight into the process of writing poetry which focuses on the circumferential expression of the essential truth:

Essential Oils - are wrung -
 The Attar from the Rose
 Be not expressed by Suns - alone -
 It is the gift of Screws -

The General Rose - decay -
 But this - in Lady's Drawer
 Make Summer - When the Lady lie
 In Ceaseless Rosemary –

The truth told by poetry is described as essence. Truth is not only communicated in a “slant” way but is also subject to transformation. Real life experience is turned into the essence of life in the process of artistic creation. In the poem there is a double twist: Dickinson applies the metaphor of oil distillation to describe the expression of the essence

from the rose. At the same time, metaphor is the most suitable trope for concise poetic expression of the essence, typical of the process of writing poetry. Writing is characterized by great inner power. This power is comparable to the supernatural power of God, capable of making eternal summer and rendering both the flower and the Lady immortal in the “Ceaseless Rosemary”. Furthermore, poetic power may bring the effect of “Suns” to perfection. The subjunctive forms: “decay” and “lie” also emphasize their immortal nature. Artistic creation is referred to as “Screws,” torture devices, to indicate that creation is a painful activity. Nevertheless, the poet is not only sufferer but also operator of the “Screws.”

The poem was written in 1863, during the period which, as Michael Ryan presumes, is probably Dickinson’s most prolific one (Ryan 44). Consequently, it is hard to believe that in 1863 she would regard writing poetry as torture. However, considering her method of carefully choosing the words, frequently offering variants as well, we may allow for the fact that it could have been strenuous work for her. It may be interesting to note that a variant of “Essential oils are wrung” was sent to Sue, signed “Emily”. (Franklin 728). Ryan points out that Dickinson wrote a poem almost every other day during this prolific time, in spite of the fact that from 1855 she and her sister had to attend their sick mother besides supervising the housework with four servants and tending the large garden (Ryan 44). Presumably, not only writing itself but also finding time for this activity could have been difficult for Dickinson. Consequently, the poet may be operator, sufferer and owner of the outcome of the process, that is the distilled essence, the poem.

A similar, although more explicit description of poetry writing is offered in “This was a poet” (Fr446):

This was a Poet - It is That
 Distills amazing sense
 From ordinary Meanings -
 And Attar so immense

From the familiar species
 That perished by the Door -
 We wonder it was not Ourselves

Arrested it - before -

Of Pictures, the Discloser -

The Poet - it is He -

Entitles Us - by Contrast -

To ceaseless Poverty

Of Portion - so unconscious -

The Robbing - could not harm -

Himself - to Him - a Fortune -

Exterior - to Time -

Again, the process of distillation is a metaphor for writing poetry. However, this time the outcome of the process is not oil but the poem itself: the “amazing sense” distilled from the “ordinary meaning”, paralleled with “familiar species,” which recalls the “General Rose” in poem Fr 772. The contrast of the adjectives (ordinary, familiar – amazing, immense) reflects the substantial nature of the transformation. The “Poet” is a creator of a different substance. While in the first stanza the speaker provides insider information about creation, in the second stanza she becomes one of the readers – as the pronouns “we,” “us” and “ourselves” indicate – who have the impression that the “Poet” expresses his own experience: “We wonder it was not Ourselves/Arrested it - before -”. This may signal either the speaker’s admiration or skepticism concerning the “Poet”. Cristanne Miller argues that the speaker’s negative attitude is expressed by the fragmented, repetitive sentences and the great number of function words (Miller 45). In the third stanza a further definition of the “Poet” is offered: he is “the Discloser” of pictures, which reveals the difference between poet and readers. The “Poet” exploits the readers’ experience, “robbing” them and thus leaving them in “ceaseless Poverty” as they are deprived of the raw material for artistic creation. They are condemned to poverty also because they lack the richness of imagination necessary for poetry. Nevertheless, the “robbing” is “unconscious,” which may refer to the act of robbing from the aspect of the “Poet”, or rather, that of the audience, who are unaware of the potential of “Pictures” which may yield a “Fortune” due to creative power. Naturally, “Fortune” does not imply financial assets but fame and immortality, which renders the “Poet” “exterior - to Time -”, unlike other human beings.

Comparing poem 772 and poem 446, Cristanne Miller suggests that the “Poet” is a public figure who is in contact with a community, in contrast to the Lady of “Essential Oils,” isolated both in her home and in her death. Still, the “Poet” is distinct from the admiring crowd. He also creates without sacrifice unlike the poet of “Essential Oils.” Miller supposes that “unconscious” may refer to the “Poet” being unconscious of his poetic power. He creates with ease, that is why Dickinson differentiates herself from him (Miller 120). The “Poet” is also a male figure, which may be another reason for Dickinson’s skeptical attitude to and distance from the character of the successful “Poet”. Martin Greenup presumes that doubt over the status of the “Poet” and Dickinson’s own status are expressed in the poem (Greenup 353).

Not only circumference and the process of distillation seem to be essential for writing poetry but also the skill of reproduction. In “The one who could repeat the summer day” (Fr549) the key to creative art is repetition and reproduction:

The One who could repeat the Summer day -
Were greater than itself - though He
Minutest of Mankind should be -

And He - could reproduce the Sun -
At period of going down -
The Lingerer - and the Stain - I mean -

When Orient have been outgrown -
And Occident - become Unknown -
His Name - remain -

The objective of the artist is preservation, the subject of which is nature. He attempts “to transgress the limits of temporality”. (Weisbuch 285). What is more, he can also transgress the limits of his own capacity. As a creator he is “greater than itself,” and greater than nature: being immortal, art is superior to reality. Emily Dickinson recalls mimesis, in the sense of re-presentation rather than copying. In the poem the infrequency and the difficulty of artistic creation are suggested by the conditional verb forms: “could repeat”, “could reproduce”. Both the artist and the result of his work are represented as immortal, unlike nature in the third stanza. The idea of immortality is highlighted by the contrast of the

words “outgrown,” “unknown” and “remain”. The second stanza of the poem captures the end of a day at sunset, while the final stanza allows for an interpretation of vaster perspective. Robert Weisbuch suggests that the world “no longer exists for the now-dead artist but which the artist continues to exist in (‘His Name—remain—’even post-mortem) by virtue of his achievement.” Weisbuch finds double reference to a day and an entire life, a sunset and a death and transcendence of death (Weisbuch 285). It seems that the reproduction of nature is the most challenging task for the artist.

In “I found the words to every thought” (Fr436) the poet attempts to depict the sun again, this time at noon:

I found the words to every thought
 I ever had - but One -
 And that - defies Me -
 As a Hand did try to chalk the Sun

To Races - nurtured in the Dark -
 How would your Own - begin?
 Can Blaze be shown in Cochineal -
 Or Noon - in Mazarin?

The speaker sounds more confident now. Instead of the doubtful conditionals of “The one who could repeat the Summer day,” she claims she could always find the necessary words except one case, suggesting that expressing thoughts is less demanding for the poet than “chalking” natural phenomena like “the Sun”, the “Blaze” or “Noon.” The word “chalk” refers to the activity of reproduction or mimesis as the major task of the poet, similarly to the previous poem. As for the primary subject of mimesis, one wonders if it is nature, if the words denoting natural phenomena and colors characterized by warmth have metaphorical meaning referring to emotions or directly love. The poet’s most challenging task is the reproduction of love. The phrase “your own” in stanza two implies that the speaker of the poem is not the only artist who has attempted to accomplish this task, while “try” in line four suggests that these attempts may have been unsuccessful. The closing question signals that the poet is skeptical about the potential of art to reproduce reality.

The outcome of mimesis is far from the real life experience which is meant to be reproduced in “To see the summer sky” (Fr1491). The poem offers (“never in a Book it

lie”, “True Poems flee”) an explanation for Dickinson’s refusal to submit her poems to conventional print publication. She was unwilling to finalize her poems in an unchanged, static form, fixed in a book or a magazine. Her concept of “true poems” appear to include the possibility of change. Additionally, she relied on the readers’ responses to complete the text.

The idea that reproduction cannot be identified with direct perception is implied in “I would not paint a picture” (Fr348), as well:

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

I would not talk, like Cornets -
I'd rather be the One
Raised softly to the Ceilings -
And out, and easy on -
Through Villages of Ether -
Myself endued Balloon
By but a lip of Metal -
The pier to my Pontoon -

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

Emily Dickinson's utmost devotion to poetry is expressed in the poem. In spite of Dickinson's remark in her letter to Higginson, according to which the first person singular does not mean that she is the "representative" of her poems, it is rather a "supposed person" (L268), the reader has the impression that this poem is a sincere confession of her vocation, which is also reflected by the fact that unlike most of Dickinson's poems, this one is less fragmented, and the poet seems to be more confident and controlled. The poem consists of three stanzas, each beginning with a conditional clause, each referring to a branch of art: painting, music and poetry. The symmetrical arrangement ends in a climax, a surprising statement: "Nor would I be a Poet—", highlighted by the inverted word order.

Judith Farr argues that presenting the painter's skill as heavenly, which stimulates suffering in the viewer "reflects classic late eighteenth and early nineteenth century views of the artistic sublime" (65). The second line of both the first and the second stanza are alike, while that of the third stanza includes the verb "own". The former implies that the poet may prefer the state of being the outcome of creation, that is the work of art, to the state of being the creator, that is the artist, while the third stanza seems to suggest Dickinson's conviction that perceiving poetry and being absorbed in and finally united with art as a reader is a much more exhilarating experience than creating it. Cristanne Miller notes that the closing metaphor for this merging is implicitly sexual. She argues that the poet and the audience form a bridal couple, and reading one's own poetry is like entering into marriage with one's own soul as poetry is indistinguishable from love (128). Consequently, Dickinson appears to be utterly self-confident and ecstatically enthusiastic both about poetry as such and her own poetry.

While the poems discussed so far reveal Dickinson's *ars poetica* and her philosophy of writing, "Shall I take thee, the poet said" (Fr1243) is characterized by a more practical approach concerning the technique of word selection:

Shall I take thee, the Poet said
 To the propounded word?
 Be stationed with the Candidates
 Till I have finer tried -

The Poet searched Philology
 And when about to ring

For the suspended Candidate
There came unsummoned in -
That portion of the Vision
The Word applied to fill
Not unto nomination
The Cherubim reveal -

It is obvious from the beginning of the poem that the speaker is on friendly terms with words, which she chooses with care. The question form suggests that the activity of choosing involves some hesitation. The words “stationed” and “tried” give the reader further insight into Dickinson’s writing method: she pauses to consider and test more alternatives, referred to as “Candidates.” Then, as the second stanza suggests, she consults “Philology” to find some more possible words, presumably in her beloved dictionary: “The Poet searched Philology.” In the Emily Dickinson Lexicon the first meaning of philology is defined as follows: “words; etymology; vocabulary; the lexicon; dictionary;” (Emily Dickinson Lexicon). As Dickinson confessed to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, “for several years, my Lexicon – was my only companion – ” (L261). Her “lexicon” was identified as the 1844 edition of Webster’s American Dictionary of the English Language (Deppman 119). Jed Deppman quotes Martha Dickinson Bianchi, who wrote that Dickinson’s dictionary “was no mere reference book to her,” “she read it as a priest his breviary – over and over, page by page, with utter absorption.” (Bianchi 80) Deppman, however, is of different opinion. He thinks that unlike Walt Whitman, who liked reading dictionaries and considered writing one himself, “Dickinson was more likely to use her family’s two-volume 1844 Webster’s to press flowers than check spelling or meanings. She did not annotate it – aside from her father’s signature there are no pencil or ink marks.” Deppman sees the reference to philology in the poem as evidence of the fact that the poet’s attempt to find the necessary word was unsuccessful. Deppman reminds us that in L261 lexicon is mentioned as “lifeless knowledge.” (Deppman 121). Another mention of “lexicon” can be found in a 1842 letter to her brother, Austin, which contradicts the above view: “I am glad you took the Latin lexicon – if it can be of any use to [you] because I have had good luck in borrowing one ..”(L2). In “Let us play yesterday” (Fr754) she also refers to lexicon as an essential source: “Easing my famine/At my Lexicon –”

In the poem the reader can follow the well-structured plot of a three act mini-play of a puppet theatre performance where the animated puppet characters are the personified words. The personification presumes that words are alive for Dickinson as also suggested for example in “The word is dead” (Fr278) or in her first letter written to Higginson in which she asks whether her words “breathe”. The wording is taken from an official-clerical vocabulary (candidates, propounded, stationed, suspended, unsummoned, applied, fill, nomination) and reflects the mechanic procedure typical of the official apparatus despite the fact that the selection of words should serve poetic imagination. Contrasted to this is the unexpected appearance of the divine creatures, the cherubim, who are not subject to summoning or nomination. Winged creatures, cherubim are needed for poetic vision. Their appearance is the climax of the “puppet theatre play”, marked by the alternate rhymes of the third stanza. The poet’s technique, the sequence of practical actions during the process of selection finally evokes inspiration.

A simple and straightforward declaration of Emily Dickinson’s ars poetica is included in “If I can stop one heart from breaking” (Fr 982):

If I can stop one Heart from breaking
 I shall not live in vain
 If I can ease one Life the Aching
 Or cool one Pain

 Or help one fainting Robin
 Unto his Nest again
 I shall not live in vain.

The plain form consists of two future conditional structures. It reflects the simplicity of the poet’s task as well as the speaker’s humble attitude to her job, which is to provide comfort and service to those in need, to her readers. Richard B. Sewall sums up Emily Dickinson’s doctrine of poetry as “message, or service abhorrent to modern ears but an operative and unabashed phase of her own aesthetic (...) She felt impelled not only to comfort but to teach people how to live.” (Sewall 711). The unusual lack of dashes or any other sign of fragmentation indicates the speaker’s firm dedication to her task.

The poems discussed above give the readers an insight into Dickinson’s ideas about writing poetry, her method and technique. These are characterized by “slant” telling

and the circumferencial expression of the truth as a service to mankind. The poem is the result of careful selection of words, reproduction, mimesis as re-presentation, real life experience filtered through imagination and transformation as an outcome of the process of distillation and condensation.

Success and Fame in Emily Dickinson's Poetry

Did Emily Dickinson long for success? Did she care for fame and recognition? Surprisingly for our success-oriented world, she did not. She wrote to Higginson as follows: "If fame belonged to me, I could not escape her – if she did not, the longest day would pass me on the chase – and the approbation of my Dog, would forsake me – then – My Barefoot Rank is better –" (L265).

This chapter will scrutinize some poems which reveal Dickinson's concept of success and fame as well as the immortality of art as deferred reward in order to get closer to her attitude to publication.

Dickinson refused fame and success, considering both valueless. She rejected them for the long-lasting merit of immortality, as immediate rewards. As the poems examined below attest, she believed that fast recognition was an obstacle to the immortality of art, the two being opposed and she opted for the latter. Her attitude to success may also serve as an explanation for her poetic reclusion. Her self-imposed withdrawal from the world and her self-denial are certainly two of the factors contributing to her non-publishing. It seems that she identified publication and the commercialization of literature with public acclaim, which may lead, as fast as it was obtained, to oblivion. At the same time, Dickinson's chosen way of life provided release and the freedom of creation necessary for her (Wolosky 96). Her renunciation of acknowledgment implies that she set herself free from the obligation to meet the expectations of the contemporary audience. In return, she did not expect appreciation from them, either. Nevertheless, she contemplated the idea of success both in her poems and her letters. She may as well have had some weak moments of longing for it. For instance, in response to Susan Gilbert Dickinson's criticism of "Safe in alabaster chambers" (Fr124) Emily Dickinson remarks: "Could I make you and Austin proud – sometime – a great way off – 'twould give me taller feet –" (L238). However, she refused the opportunity of becoming famous by refusing to print her poems. The fear of failure may have contributed to her decision. As discussed in the chapter on resistance to print, she was aware of her poetry being different from that of most successful, published

poets and was not certain to find an understanding response. Elisabeth A. Petrino mentions that she had to face the non-understanding of even one of her best friends, Helen Hunt Jackson, although Hunt did appreciate her talent. Still, she often failed to understand her cryptic language. When Dickinson sent her a congratulatory note on her second marriage: “Have a word but joy?”, Jackson sent it back and asked for interpretation (Petrino 163-4).

We may get a clearer idea of why Dickinson denied success and recognition if we consider how much she was safeguarding her privacy, which she did, to some extent sacrifice for creation (Uno 97). However, she was not willing to make sacrifices for fame. Dickinson’s claim for anonymity, her “nobody” status and her rejection of the contemporary public could be a tool of distancing herself from the readers, similarly to the function of the different roles she adopted in her poems. Thus she targeted future generations, an audience from which she could keep sufficient distance, as expressed in “Of bronze and blaze” (Fr319):

Of bronze - and Blaze -
 The North - tonight -
 So adequate - it forms -
 So preconcerted with itself -
 So distant - to alarms -
 And Unconcern so sovereign
 To Universe, or me -
 Infects my simple spirit
 With Taints of Majesty -
 Till I take vaster attitudes -
 And strut upon my stem -
 Disdaining Men, and Oxygen,
 For Arrogance of them -

My Splendors, are Menagerie -
 But their Competeless Show
 Will entertain the Centuries
 When I, am long ago,
 An Island in dishonored Grass -

Whom none but Daisies, know -

The speaker's fascination with the northern lights is suggested by fragmented lines, alliteration and the repetition of "so" for emphasis at the beginning of the lines. She is part of the universe, sharing the same attitude. The speaker's smallness compared to nature is contrasted to "Majesty", which gives inspiration to her "simple spirit". The second stanza reveals a change of attitude. She separates herself and her smallness from her work and connects splendor to her immortal art, which is meant for the "Centuries", for the public of future generations. Unlike her poetry, her body is mortal, as ironically expressed by the image of the tomb that only "Daisies" (the alternative word is "Beetles") know. The closing line is a clear refusal or even mockery of fame. Her poetry is independent of her physical existence. It will survive her and bring honor to the dishonor of mortality. As Vivien R. Pollack writes, "Mortality is... an experience of inadequacy, anxious proximity to alarm, concern with reputation, with physical needs, and with the ultimate terror of irreversible anonymity. The poem momentarily reverses this terror" (Pollack 247).

Immortality is presented as the ultimate goal of the few elected artists who refuse fame. Dickinson's belief in the immortality of real art is revealed in "Some work for immortality" (Fr536):

Some - Work for Immortality -
 The Chiefest part, for Time -
 He - Compensates - immediately -
 The former - Checks - on Fame -

Slow Gold - but Everlasting -
 The Bullion of Today -
 Contrasted with the Currency
 Of Immortality -

A Beggar - Here and There -
 Is gifted to discern
 Beyond the Broker's insight -
 One's - Money - One's - the Mine -

Those striving for immortality are contrasted to the majority, seeking immediate compensation described by banking metaphors: gold, bullion, currency, money, broker. The latter group is linked to Time, a male character, referred to as “He” (Pollack 247). The second stanza is built on the contrast of the slow-coming result of immortality and fast success, the “Bullion of Today”. The word “bullion” recalls wealth, tangible assets which may be bought and sold. It is accessible for anybody unlike immortality. The poet appears in the role of a “Beggar” who, unlike the “Broker” is able to make distinction between money and the endless store of values, the “Mine”. While a broker is only a mediator of financial transactions and works for a commission, a certain percentage of the profit, the “beggar”, being not merely an agent, will get the full return of his investment of work and time.

Fame repeatedly appears as a pejorative notion in Emily Dickinson’s poetry, for instance, in “Fame is the tint that scholars leave” (Fr968):

Fame is the tint that Scholars leave
Opon their Setting Names -
The Iris not of Occident
That disappears as comes -

The words “tint” and “Setting” suggest the fading, transitory nature of fame. The “Setting names”, which may disappear with the sunset within one day are doomed to be forgotten in spite of their fame. They are compared to the ephemeral character of the “Iris not of Occident”. The poet speaks slightly of the transience of fame.

The first line of “Fame is the one that does not stay” (1507) conveys a similar message:

Fame is the one that does not stay -
It’s occupant must die
Or out of sight of estimate
Ascend incessantly -
Or be that most insolvent thing
A Lightning in the Germ -

Electrical the embryo
But we demand the Flame

Here fame is not only transitory and, as such, valueless but also high prices are charged for it: either death, or existence “out of sight of estimate” or being nothing more than a “Lightning”, a fast-emerging but ephemeral phenomenon contrasted to “Flame”. The word pun “fame-flame”, the first and the last word of the poem imply ironically that in spite of the similarity of the words, the difference in meaning is ever greater. Flame symbolizes long-lasting recognition unlike fame. The first person plural personal pronoun can be a reference to the few poets – including Dickinson – who refuse the pointless pursuit of fame.

“I cannot dance upon my toes” (Fr381) is a most straightforward rejection of publicity and valueless, immediate success:

I cannot dance upon my Toes -
No Man instructed me -
But oftentimes, among my mind,
A Glee possesseth me
That had I Ballet knowledge -
Would put itself abroad
In Pirouette to blanch a Troupe -
Or lay a Prima - mad -

And though I had no Gown of Gauze -
No Ringlet, to my Hair -
Nor hopped to Audiences - like Birds -
One Claw upon the Air -
Nor tossed my shape in Eider Balls -
Nor rolled on wheels of snow
Till I was out of sight, in sound -
The House encore me so -

Nor any know I know the Art
I mention - easy - Here -

Nor any Placard boast me -

It's full as Opera -

The parody of those seeking sparkling and glittering success employs the images of ballet and acrobatic stunts characteristic of circus. Dickinson proudly claims that she had no instruction, at least not from Man – suggesting that writing poetry is a divine gift coming from God, unlike the learnable skills of entertainers in a circus. In 1862 she writes to T.W. Higginson as follows: “I went to school – but in your manner of the phrase – had no education” (L261). The first variant of this poem was enclosed in another letter sent to Higginson in the same year (Franklin, *The Poems* 1:406). Dickinson’s disapproval of artists serving and hopping “to Audiences” is expressed by the grotesque simile and images. By confessing her limitations with a serial of negations: “I cannot”, “No Man”, “I had no Gown”, “No Ringlet” and the repetition of the word “Nor” five times, as Pollack writes, she cuts herself off from an audience which has such expectations (Pollack 239). By doing so Dickinson releases herself from the constraints of traditional art. Her poetry does not satisfy the contemporary tastes, does not always follow the rules of prosody or those of grammar. Her limitations are presented as merits. In contrast to the self-depreciating lines of the last stanza, the speaker is definitely self-assured, claiming “I know the Art”. She seems to have the appreciation of her own audience, which “encores” her and makes the “House” “full as Opera”. While she ridicules circus performances, she identifies herself with the genre of ballet, which is characteristic of Dickinson’s elitist attitude. Circus is a form of entertainment designed for the masses as contrasted to ballet, which is an art form for the well-educated minorities, the learned connoisseurs, the audience Dickinson intends to write for.

While she is proud of the elected, appreciative readers of the previous poem, in “I’m nobody! Who are You?” (Fr260), discussed in more detail in the chapters “Emily Dickinson On Readers” and “Dickinson and Publication”, Dickinson expresses her refusal of fame due to a non-understanding public. The “Somebody” existence of the famous is scorned by Dickinson as vulgar and bleak in the second stanza:

How deary - to be - Somebody!

How public - like a Frog -

To tell your name - the livelong June -

To an admiring Bog!

She prefers anonymity to the admiration of an undeserving audience. The meaning of the words “Nobody” and “Somebody” in the poem suggests that they are, in fact, convertible terms. Being superior to those desperately pursuing fame, anonymous poets deserve to be called “Somebody”. The ephemeral nature of fame is emphasized by the metaphor of “Bog”, which sinks, similarly to a name which will sink into oblivion, regardless how loudly and how many times it is repeated.

While Dickinson withdraws from the contemporary public and refuses to satisfy their requirements in return for fame, she still meets the expectations of society to some extent, in terms of reticent female behavior which includes the rejection of publishing and public recognition in Dickinson’s time. As Robert McClure Smith argues, Dickinson often identifies female roles with passivity, weakness and insignificance, accepting a role of subordination, for example in “I was a phebe - nothing more” (Fr1009) (2). MacClure Smith goes further when claiming that masochism was “an accepted form for female behaviour under patriarchy, which is reflected in Dickinson’s poetry (MacClure Smith 5). Vivien R. Pollack also presumes that seeking fame through publication was contrary to female modesty. It was “men’s business”, and Dickinson identified intellectual aggression with male sexual behaviour (Pollack 236). Pollack explains self-denial as punishment for her unwomanly behaviour as a poet, usurping male power which was a cause of her refusal of print and consequently the resulting success (246). However, for Dickinson, renunciation does not necessarily involve the punishment of suffering. Paradoxically, she hopes to benefit from deprivation: her deferred compensation should be no less than immortality.

Immortality implies timelessness. Dickinson seems to be intent to get rid of the limitations of time to avoid the consequence of fast recognition, the readers’ forgetting her poetry. Interestingly, this attitude is paired with her unwillingness to fix the text of the poems in the static and permanent state of a given moment, the moment of printing them. Thus, the term “nobody” as a compound word of “no” and “body” may be a reminder of Dickinson’s denial of the fixed materiality of the printed text.

In “Fame of myself to justify” (Fr481) she does not only express her indifference concerning the appreciation of her contemporaries but also emphasizes the importance of confidence of her own art:

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

Fame of Myself to lack - Although
My Name be else supreme -
This were an Honor honorless -
A futile Diadem -

It appears that for Dickinson self-esteem takes precedence over the appreciation of the public. Her rejection of the latter is expressed by the synonyms “superfluous”, “beyond necessity” and the metaphor “Incense”. The latter describes the substance used in religious ceremonies as a sacrificial offering to God but it also refers to flattery, fulsome praise, which implies that Dickinson considers public recognition the result of insincere praise which only God deserves as inspiration derives from Him. The poem suggests that the most reliable, understanding reader is the poet herself, in fact, no other audience may be necessary. Fame does not mean much to her, success and the readers’ judgment seem to be unimportant and dishonest. It is sufficient for her to be aware of her own artistic merits, without this it seems to be dishonest to accept the celebration of the public.

The affirmative first stanza is paralleled by its negation in the second one: “Fame of Myself to lack”. The powerful antonyms “Supreme”, “Honor honorless”, “futile Diadem” create a dramatic effect in the final lines by negating the value of the things described with a word of positive connotation. Thus “Honor” and “Diadem” are seen as worthless if not bestowed by the poet herself, like in “Title divine is mine” (Fr194) or “I’m ceded – I’ve stopped being their’s” (Fr353), in which Dickinson expresses that her chosen rank of poet is equivalent of royal title symbolized by the diadem and the crown.

The paradox that deprivation and self-denial may be rewarding is expressed in “The service without hope” (Fr880). In this poem Dickinson goes further than the mere rejection of time-bound success. She praises endless service without any social recognition, the value of which is rooted in its independence of time:

The Service without Hope -
Is tenderest, I think -

Because 'tis unsustained
By stint - Rewarded Work -

Has impetus of Gain -
And impetus of Goal -
There is no Diligence like that
That knows not an Until -

The first line reveals that the speaker would regard this service as a sacrifice if she did not consider the compensation for this superior to “Rewarded Work”. Service is deprived of hope, however, the very deprivation contributes to the value of unrewarded work. The repetition of “impetus” followed by the alliterating nouns “Gain”, ”Goal” emphasizes the difficulty of the rejection of acknowledgement. The final line suggests that unlike work or diligence, service should be never-ending and characterized by renunciation and self-denial as opposed to “Rewarded Work”, which has “impetus”. Ceaseless, timeless service is described with a time metaphor: “That knows not an until - ”. The speaker regards being independent of time as a benefit, since it may lead to the timelessness of immortality.

Nevertheless, there is some hope for reward, if only a deferred one in “The martyr poets did not tell” (Fr665):

The Martyr Poets - did not tell -
But wrought their Pang in syllable -
That when their mortal name be numb -
Their mortal fate - encourage Some -
The Martyr Painters - never spoke -
Bequeathing - rather - to their Work -
That when their conscious fingers cease -
Some seek in Art - the Art of Peace -

In the above poem the speaker identifies with the martyr poets, for whom there is no recognition during their lifetime, as the repetition of “mortal” and the word “numb” implies. However, they have the chance for immortality as a future compensation for their suffering. By their vow of silence they reject the contemporary audience and work for the

readers of posterity. The word “Some” in both parallel parts suggests that this future audience might be a narrower, selected one.

Unlike in the above poems in which Dickinson seemed to find compensation for her submission in a disdainful attitude to success and public acclaim, regarding them as valueless and transitory, in “Success is counted sweetest” (Fr112) success has positive connotations, its attribute is “sweetest” and it is compared to “a nectar”:

Success is counted sweetest
 By those who ne'er succeed.
 To comprehend a nectar
 Requires sorest need -
 Not one of all the purple Host
 Who took the flag today
 Can tell the definition so Clear of Victory -
 As he defeated - dying -
 On whose forbidden Ear
 The distant strains of triumph
 Burst agonized and Clear -

Dickinson must have attached high importance to this poem as it was included in the first four poems she sent to Higginson. This one was enclosed in her fourth letter to him, written in July 1862 (Franklin, *The Poems* 2:146). The same message, the idea that deprivation adds to the value of the things we are deprived of is communicated in a poem included in another letter to Higginson written in 1863: “Best Gains - must have Losses’ test - / to constitute them - Gains” (Fr 499, L280). This idea, similarly expressed in several other poems, for instance, in “Water is taught by thirst” (Fr93) and “Your riches taught me poverty” (Fr418) appears to be crucial for Dickinson as a justification of her way of life, characterized by deprivation, self-denial and the self-imposed lack of experiencing the world.

The poem starts with a paradox built on the antonyms of success – never succeed, nectar – .need. The strong negation “not one” introduces the message communicated through the contrast of the images of victory and those of defeat. A tragic plot is created with the help of the war metaphors: “Host” flag”, “Victory”, “defeated” and “triumph”. Victory, turned into agony for the victims of the battle, is presented as a token of suffering.

However, religious believers are promised compensation for their suffering on earth. Thus the dying soldier may be approaching his reward of eternal life in heaven. The speaker's sympathizing attitude suggests that the poet identifies with the defeated soldier who has more understanding of victory by being deprived of it. Thus deprivation and the very lack of experience provide more knowledge and appreciation than experience and possession. Renunciation has an ennobling role. As Vivien R. Pollack argues, "privation has an ethical function" (Pollack 125). The desire of the destitute is not satisfied by the experience, yet it is overwritten by moral victory.

The poem beginning with one of Dickinson's favourite paradoxes was subject to a paradox itself. In spite of Dickinson's disinterest in success, this poem proved to be one of her most successful ones, if we regard, unlike Dickinson, publication as success. First it appeared in *Brooklyn Daily Union* on 27 April 1864, then in 1878 in *A Masque of Poets*, an anthology. As Franklin claims, Dickinson resisted this publication which was due to the effort of Helen Hunt Jackson, and did not approve the text which had been altered (Franklin, *The Poems* 1:147). Sewall supposes that Dickinson may have given her permission to print the poem as she thanked the editor, Thomas Niles, for the copy of the anthology she had received. Sewall finds it surprising there was "no word of protest from her" concerning the changes (Sewall 584).

Emily Dickinson chose to be unseen as a private person and unheard as a poet during her lifetime. At the same time she wished to be all the more acknowledged by future generations. According to her interpretation, success and fame are ephemeral, transitory, easily and merely temporarily attained, and thus valueless. She refused the recognition of an undeserving contemporary public and strove for much more: immortality. This may be one of the reasons for her unwillingness to distribute her poems in print. She hoped for eternal acknowledgement of her poetry. In her poems she expressed her intention to separate herself from time-bound success and fast recognition as barriers to unfading glory. It was for the deferred reward of the immortality of her poetry that she was ready for self-sacrifice, deprivation and the renunciation of success and fame.

Emily Dickinson on Readers

Considering the issues related to Emily Dickinson's attitude to publishing, it seems essential to examine her concept of audience. Although she is not interested in the recognition of the contemporary public, her need for readers is obvious. Relying on the analysis of certain poems, the first part of this chapter will discuss the reader's role in the process of interpreting Dickinson's poems, the poet's expectations of her audience and her own reactions as a reader. The second part will attempt to examine the groups of Dickinson's target audience and her own reactions as a reader. However, her actual audience will not be discussed. This issue is beyond the scope of research on Dickinson's publishing activity as there seems to be no evidence that any of the approximately ten poems published in her lifetime were printed with her intention and authorization (Franklin, *The Poems* 1:1).

The Reader's role

As Emily Dickinson's poems are not conventional in the sense that they do not meet the expectations of the contemporary public, they also necessitate a non-conventional readerly attitude. Dickinson's readers have a demanding and responsible role, a frequently frustrating one, as it is sometimes hardly possible to deduct a meaning. Dickinson applies her philosophy of renunciation not only to herself but also to her audience, who have to bear then "interpretative frustration" and the "consequently provoked desire for meaning" (McClure Smith 110). The unsatisfactory or challenging reading experience is due to the irregular syntax, the unusual use of punctuation marks, the comprised and elliptical expression, the enigmatic, metaphorical language, the technique of "slant telling" and last but not least to the existence of variants.

Robert Weisbuch speaks of "the poet-made-reader" in connection with Dickinson: firstly, because the reader has to meet different demands and make an effort to create, rather than understand the meaning of the poems; secondly, because he believes that the

poems are an autobiography, not of Dickinson, but of the reader. Thus the reader is remade beyond the limits of personal experience, the bounds of ego” (Weisbuch 71, 69). The poems activate the readers’ personal memories and personal experience, which results in several possible interpretations. The readers may deduct a universal meaning and finally arrive at an “intimate universality” (Weisbuch 70-71). Emily Dickinson’s practices of copying and binding her poems in fascicles or later just grouping them in unbound sets may serve as evidence of her intention of preparing final versions of the poems. However, even in her fair copies she frequently included variant words, not to speak of the variants produced when, for instance, the poem was sent to different recipients. The alternative readings offered in the fascicles are neither revised versions of the given poem nor are they altered for a different occasion or different recipient, they rather seem to be equally ranked by the poet. This method well illustrates the challenge to which Dickinson exposed her readers. Although the earliest fascicles included no variants, following their first occurrence in Fascicle 5 “the variants exist as part of the text of the last thirty fascicles” (Cameron, “Dickinson’s Fascicles.” 140). Thus, the variants offer more options: they can be considered alternative readings, or allowing for Sharon Cameron’s argument, a kind of complex reading, where variants, as nonexclusive alternate words are constitutive parts of the poem as they are not indicated to be subordinate (Cameron, *Choosing not choosing* 5).

In the case of the first option, the reader is expected to make a choice, although there are no criteria by which this could be done, except rare instances when Dickinson indicates her preference of an alternate word by underlining it as, for example in Fr1125. According to the second option, the reader is to integrate the variants into the text, regarding it as an entity. However, in the case of the first option, the problem of selection may be more complex than just deciding which of the two or more words to consider. One may also choose how many of the variants to select or integrate within one reading. One variant or two, or all of them, or maybe a combination of certain alternate words? As a consequence of this decision, one could get multiple versions of a poem. Considering all the possible variations, each alternate word combined with each other would mean an unmanageable task for the reader who seems to be offered the elements of a puzzle to be put together, instead of a “ready-made”, finished poem.

I am not suggesting that there are as many poems as there are variants, merely that there may be countless possible interpretations of the same poem. The argument that the alternative words should be considered integral parts of the same poem seems to be justified if we think of Dickinson’s mode of copying: the alternative words are usually

placed below the text of the poem, to be followed by a line Dickinson drew to indicate the end of the unit. This implies that the only adequate reading of Dickinson's poems would be that of the texts including the variants. Undoubtedly, what we get by this way of reading is a different work of art, an artifact similar to a mobile statue which the reader gets moving, instead of a static work of art. It implies the physical movement of the eyes as well as the reader's mind. Besides the variants, the audience has to consider the material features of the poem in its original manuscript form, such as the holograph, the arrangement of the poem on the paper, the appearance of the page including Dickinson's marks indicating the alternatives. Thus, a conventional reception of the poem is not always appropriate. The text should be experienced in its complexity, not only as a literary but maybe also as a visual work of art, which might further frustrate the audience or, on the contrary, satisfy their expectations. For instance, the artist Jen Bervin has created pictures based on the "patterns formed when all of the marks in a single fascicle ... remained in position, isolated from the text, and were layered in one composite field of marks" (Bervin n.pag.) His works are large-scale quilts made by embroidering the poet's unusual punctuation marks on the fascicles.

Certainly, the material form of the work may shape its interpretation, which is especially true for the fascicles because of their unusual appearance on the page. Martha Nell Smith presumes that Dickinson "increasingly envisioned her poems as scribal objects" ("Corporealizations" 201). She argues that "by her ninth and in all her subsequent fascicles, or manuscript books, Emily Dickinson's writerly sensibility is obviously in marked contrast to most of her readers' interpretive sensibilities" because she writes as if "the joint work of the eye and inner ear" were being shaped by her persistent encounters with the manuscript page, a striking contrast to print" (Smith, "Corporealizations" 196). The fact that the poems were not intended for print also contributes to the extended scope of responsibilities for the reader. Let us take the example of a fascicle poem with an unusually high number of variants, "Fitter to see him I may be" (Fr834) in Fascicle 40:

Fitter to see Him, I may be
For the long Hindrance - Grace - to Me -
With Summers, and with Winters, grow,
Some passing Year - A trait bestow

To make Me fairest of the Earth -
The Waiting - then - will seem so worth
I shall impute with half a pain
The blame that I was chosen - then -

Time to anticipate His Gaze -
It's first - Delight - and then - Surprise -
The turning o'er and o'er my face
For Evidence it be the Grace -

He left behind One Day - So less
He seek Conviction, That - be This -

I only must not grow so new
That He'll mistake - and ask for me
Of me - when first unto the Door
I go - to Elsewhere go no more -

I only must not change so fair
He'll sigh - "The Other - She - is Where"?
The Love, tho', will array me right
I shall be perfect - in His sight -

If He perceive the other Truth -
Upon an Excellenter Youth -

How sweet I shall not lack in Vain -
But gain - thro' loss - Through Grief - obtain -
The Beauty that reward Him most -
The Beauty of Demand - at Rest -

4 trait] charm 8 chosen] common 9 Time] Time's 10 It's] the 16
He'll] He - 20 Other] Real One 21 array] instruct 26 Grief] pain 27
most] best 28 Demand] Belief

There are ten alternate words offered below the text of the poem in which the numbers indicate the numbers of the lines in which they are to be inserted. Even if the reader agrees with Cameron's suggestion of regarding the variants as integral parts of the poem and does not neglect them, it is still the reader's decision whether to include all the variants in the reading at the same time or only one by one or certain ones combined with certain other ones. Thus, we have the original text and the poem with all its variants considered, which makes two readings. However, if the reader considers one variant at a time, he will get eleven additional versions. Moreover, one may choose to include at a time, for instance, only the first two alternative words or the first word combined with the third one or the fourth one only, etcetera, or a combination of the first two alternatives with the fourth or fifth or sixth one, resulting in a whole network of readings. If one considers the original poem without the variants or the poem with all the variants plus the poem with only one variant of the ten at a time, the number of the different versions will be twenty, not counting the possible combinations. Martha Nell Smith quotes Franklin's extreme example of the above phenomenon concerning "Those Fair – fictitious People" (Fr 369) which, with its twenty-six suggestions for eleven places would make 7680 poems possible, supposing every variant is a different poem (Franklin, "The Editing" 202).

Returning to "Fitter to see him I may be" (Fr834), the impact of the variant words on the meaning is quite remarkable. It serves as an evidence that they may not only change the meaning or enlarge its scope but also paraphrase Dickinson's words and help to understand some enigmatic lines, thus facilitating, yet also restricting the reader's task. Domhnall Mitchell agrees with Martha Nell Smith supposing that the alternate words are synonyms, antonyms or sometimes discursive units in the poem (Mitchell, *Emily Dickinson: Monarch of Perception* 181). Similarly, Cristanne Miller calls them "at times approximate synonyms" (47). I believe that as synonyms they may serve as explanations to clarify ambiguous references. However, even when the alternate words are not synonyms, they create a "safety net" of a limited number of meanings, which restricts the interpretations.

The above poem describes the speaker's imagined meeting with Christ in eternity. She wants to be well-prepared for the long awaited encounter, which she hopes to happen as a result of "Grace." Her preparation may result in her becoming perfect, however, she should not become too "fair," otherwise Christ may not recognize her. She hopes love will help her reach the proper condition. The first alternate word offered in line four is "charm"

instead of/besides “trait”. Though not innate but bestowed, the latter may be a human feature, while “charm” implies a supernatural, divine power, which enables the speaker to become “Fitter” to meet Christ. The variant also clarifies it for the reader that the word “trait” refers to a divine trait. In line eight the variant of “chosen” is “common”. Dorothy Huff Oberhaus presumes that “common” is “echoing 1 Cor. 1.26, whose ‘called’ are rarely the noble, but instead those who are common. The conviction that she was ‘chosen’ echoes several earlier poems including the image of crowning and queen, for example Fr613, Fr280” (139). I think the state of being “chosen” and/or “common” identified with painful “blame” (unlike in Fr 613, in which it is identified with “Grace”: “The Grace that I – was chose –”, or in Fr 280, in which it is “Gift” and “munificence”) may also suggest having been elected for religious conversion “then” and not taking the opportunity. In line nine the Time/Time’s alternative also alters the meaning: “Time to anticipate His Gaze” may imply that it is time to do so while “Time’s to anticipate His Gaze” means this task is left to Time to be done. The variant in line twenty also seems to be significant. It reveals that “The Other” that is the original, imperfect “She” is the “Real” one for Christ. Consequently, she need not become perfect, she merely needs God’s “Grace” and “charm” to be fit for the meeting with Christ, who loves and accepts humans in spite of their evil and imperfect nature. In line twenty-one “array” suggests that the speaker will be embellished by “Love”, while its variant “instruct” rather means that the agent of the action is herself with the help of the guidelines provided by “Love.” “Pain” instead of “Grief” in line twenty-six may refer to the “pain” of line seven caused by “The blame” and it implies more suffering, a more dramatic, rhyming opposite of “gain” at the beginning of the line than its alternative. In line twenty-seven the variant word “best” refers to the quality of the “reward,” while “most” refers to its degree. In the closing line the alternate word provides an answer to the question: what the speaker should obtain to appeal to Christ: “Demand,” that is need for him or “Belief” in him. As demonstrated above, eight out of the ten variants may affect the interpretation of the poem, however, Dickinson does not indicate her preferences.

Cameroon regards the variants and the ambiguities of syntax and unclear reference as a case of “choosing not choosing” besides other aspects of doubleness:

The refusal to choose – choosing not to choose – how syntax is to be read, how double voices and sometimes contradictory stories are related to each other, how lines which *can* be read in antithetical ways *should* in fact be read, is reiterated in the question mark with which so many of Dickinson’s poems conclude. ... Finally, Dickinson’s choosing not to choose is dramatically

reiterated in the questions raised by the discrepancy between boundlessness implied by the variant. Not choosing in Dickinson's poetry thus results in a heteroglossia whose manifestations inform every aspect of the poetry (Cameron, "Dickinson's Fascicles" 148).

Another important aspect of the reader's challenge derives from the ellipses of the text. Dickinson, aware of her technique of omissions, writes in "Going to him! Happy letter!" (Fr 277): "... I only said the Syntax - / and left the Verb and the pronoun out -". In her condensed poems she frequently omits the subject, the predicate, conjunctions, articles, prepositions, making it difficult or sometimes impossible for the reader to grasp the message of the poem. Due to the elliptical nature and the compactness of the language, the reader has to insert words to recover the meaning and bridge the gaps of ellipsis, concealments and incompleteness. However, elliptical expression is viewed as a positive phenomenon by Robert Weisbuch. He argues that by challenging the reader with elliptical expression, the poet demands "a participatory effort beyond the norm of poetry of Dickinson's time and create a rigorous democracy of meaning making" (Weisbuch 67). Weisbuch finds that ellipsis is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also what he terms "scenelessness," a "word meant to suggest that Dickinson's poems only pretend to locate an occasion for themselves and tell a story" (Weisbuch 68). He argues that Dickinson's narratives are not stories but rather parables. Thus she "appeals to narrative conventions precisely in order to overthrow them and the conventional readerly self is evoked to be overthrown" (Weisbuch 69). Having an unusually creative role, the "poet-made-reader" might become a poem-making-reader, who creates a meaning and completes the poem according to his own interpretation. It may also be considered a process of reproduction as the reader reproduces the poem during the reading process. Thus, similarly to the poet herself, the readers may also produce variants of the poem. In addition, the variants offered by Dickinson may elicit further reader-made versions. Consequently, readers are not simply decoders of the text, they are supposed and expected to be equal in rank and intellectual capacity as co-authors of the poems. As Martha Nell Smith remarks, "Dickinson's poetic mind chose to exploit co-authoring inevitabilities of the reader, a distinct contrast to the literary conventions of print in which author and editor are masters and readers consumers" (Smith, *The Iconic Page* 202).

The omissions, similarly to the other linguistic irregularities may also result in more possible interpretations, especially if there is nothing to guide the audience and help them with their work of completing the text. Dickinson's strategy of maintaining a feeling of

uncertainty in the reader may be intentional as she “hides behind ellipsis” (Thomas 209). David Porter supposes that Dickinson’s poems are deliberately ungrammatical and were not meant for a public (Porter, “Dickinson’s Unrevised Poems” 22). Charlotte Nekola also claims that Emily Dickinson avoided an audience with the help of her “slant” language. Thus, listeners might not understand the disguised language, if they did, “they would know too much”. She draws a parallel between Dickinson and her female contemporaries when she holds that “having an audience would mean that the revelation of sexuality will be understood” (Nekola 50-51). In my view, the concept of hiding can be regarded as intentional: some of the poems obviously reveal this strategy, for example Fr 945 or Fr 80.

Ellipsis is called “Dickinson’s most characteristic stylistic trait” by Jane Donahue Eberwein (Eberwein, *Strategies of limitation* 149). Ellipsis as a contribution to the concise nature of Dickinson’s art helps focusing on essence and facilitates understanding but it also makes understanding more difficult. As David T. Porter remarks, Dickinson’s ellipsis is “bordering on code”. (Porter, *Dickinson: The Modern Idiom* 38).

An example of ellipsis can be found in “Mine - by the Right of the white election!” (Fr 411, quoted on page 17), in which the subject has been omitted. The emphatic five-fold repetition of the word “Mine” makes the absence of the subject even more striking. The missing subject of the first sentence is also the theme of the poem, which thus remains unclear. The readers do not know what is identified as “Mine”. The context of other, similar poems and certain keywords like “White”, “Election”, “Seal” may give us an idea as demonstrated in the analysis of the chapter on Dickinson’s vocation; however, the common subject of the six exclamations included in the poem is still not clear. The speaker is ecstatically rejoicing in possessing something the subject of which is unclear: maybe her devotion to poetry or a person she is in love with.

The above observations suggest that Emily Dickinson, though unaware, could be considered an early representative of reader response theory. Although this theory was not developed before the 1930’s, Dickinson’s approach, implied in the reception requirements of her poems is not unintentional and seems to have several traits in common with reader response criticism. Louise Rosenblatt, a pioneer of the theory argued that a poem always presupposes a reader actively involved with the text⁶ and the reader is composing her own “poem” (Westbrook Church 72). This presumption seems to be true for Emily Dickinson’s

⁶ Wolfgang Iser’s term, the “implied reader” (*The Implied Reader*. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1974.) similarly designates the active participation of the reader and the interactive role he/she plays in the production of meaning. Iser’s implied reader recalls Dickinson’s ideal, intended reader.

poems as they set special tasks for the reader, who is expected to reconstruct a meaning from a patchwork of images, ideas, often expressed with irregular and incomplete linguistic structures. How the reader accomplishes this task depends on his personality: “The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition. These and many other elements in a never-to-be-duplicated combination determine his response to the peculiar contribution of the text” (Rosenblatt 30-31).

Rosenblatt differentiates between efferent and aesthetic modes of experiencing a text. The efferent reading satisfies the need to acquire information to understand the text itself, while the aesthetic response focuses on the reader’s own unique experience (Westbrook Church 72). In Dickinson’s case, efferent reading often seems impossible, as it is hardly feasible to paraphrase the text in an “objective” way. The meaning of the poem is rather a result of the transaction between the text and the reader, as Rosenblatt’s transactional theory presumes: “‘Transaction’ ... permits emphasis on the to-and-fro ... reciprocal influence of reader and text in the making of meaning. The meaning – the poem – ‘happens’ during the transaction between the reader and the signs on the page” (Rosenblatt xvi). Rosenblatt’s theory, which contravenes the formalist assumption that the meaning is to be sought in the text itself, coincides with Dickinson’s implicit approach characterized by the lack of a fixed, final text.

Similarly, another representative of reader response criticism, Stanley Fish argues that “the formal features of a text do not exist independently of the reader’s experience” (311). The readers are left to choose their interpretation and manage by themselves. Thus the responsibility is transferred from the text to the readers (Fish 314). This is what happens when Emily Dickinson leaves the reader a set of variant words to select from or to include in the text, in addition to her ellipses, omissions, gaps to be completed, riddles to be solved, besides her word puns, irregular grammar, highly condensed and fragmented language and the strange appearance of poems on the page, particularly due to the abundance of dashes, which suggest “a poet not only putting the world together but also putting herself together, phrase by phrase. And they force the reader to do the same, to put together meaning in such a way that it is constantly undergoing revision” (Weisbuch 65). The short lines sometimes consisting of only one or two words also contribute to the oddity of the appearance of poems (Weishbuch 67). These lines are often expanded by the readers to “restore the elided syntax for example in “To pile like thunder” (Fr 1353) (Porter 18).

It is obvious that the meaning of a Dickinson poem is not always embedded in the text, it is often not possible to determine its meaning independently of the reading experience, as its meaning is not only inside but also outside the poem itself, in the reader's mind, as Dickinson claims in "To hear an oriole sing" (Fr 402). Considering the activity Dickinson demands of her readers, we need to agree with Stanley Fish, who writes that the reader's activities "include the making and revising assumptions, the rendering and regretting of judgments, the coming to and abandoning of conclusions...the asking of questions, the supplying of answers, the solving of puzzles. In a word, these activities are interpretive", they are "not waiting for meaning but constituting meaning (Fish 319).

Accordingly, Dickinson's readers are the ones that are able to carry out the above reading strategies, once given the opportunity of having access to the poems either directly, as recipients, or indirectly. For even if a certain poem was intended for one particular person, without going through the above procedure of interpretation, this person remained only the recipient of the poem as a physical object, without receiving it in an intellectual sense. Thus Dickinson intended her poems for everybody who manages to re-create her texts by applying the "interpretative strategies" required by the poems. Fish presumes that readers belonging to the same "interpretive community" will produce a similar response of the same text as they execute the same interpretive strategies (Fish 327). Allowing for this, one may conclude that Dickinson targeted the readers that belonged to the same interpretive community as herself, especially when meaning the poem for one particular direct recipient. This may be the reason why she wrote for the selected and elected few. However, she also volunteers to join other interpretive communities when offering unfinished and elliptical poems for the audience to "write" while reading in an interactive way instead of passive reception. However, she seems to limit the circle of her audience in order to avoid extreme subjectivism resulting from an excessive number of interpretations and misreadings. Willis Buckingham argues that Dickinson learned or indirectly absorbed a set of dispositions of the reader-writer relationship of the mid-century (Buckingham 234). On examining the reviewing culture of the antebellum period, Buckingham finds that the reader-writer relationship is characterized by that of exchange, and the reader's presumption of fraternity with writers (234-5), a pressure "to democratize and familiarize the poet-reader relationship" (239). Buckingham continues by quoting Jane Tompkins, who assumes that instead of a small, elite circle of readers in the eighteenth century, the large circle of middle class constituted the audience of poetry, poet and reader were no longer personally known to each other (Tompkins 241-2). Thus, Dickinson may have

inherited the democratic attitude toward readers from the reading culture of the mid-century, however, in selecting her target audience of a limited circle of friends and acquaintances, mainly her correspondents or those she gave or sent poems to as a gift and refusing to print them, she seems to have returned to eighteenth century practices. The intimate voice and the personal address of the reader as “you”—not to be confused with “you” used as a general subject in other poems—in many of her poems may be seen as evidence for this.

Dickinson’s writing method may be considered an invitation for creative work rather than a limitation or barrier for the reader as some scholars argue. Her language challenges the reader and calls for a creative and constructive technique of quality reading. Her linguistic traits make Porter refer to Dickinson as a “language founder” (Porter, *Dickinson: The Modern Idiom* 38).

Similarly, Joanne Dobson sees her as a reformer of language (79). Dobson also argues that the linguistic reforms “unsettle readers in a manner enhancing the unsettling content of much of Dickinson’s discourse; they also create communicative barriers between the text and the untutored reader.” Dobson believes that this is the reason why Dickinson focused on a small group of close friends for readers “who would have grown accustomed to, and tolerant of, her manner of expression (80). Moreover, it may be not sufficient to grow accustomed to Dickinson’s language, the reader should also grow up to meet the challenge of adopting new reading strategies, to endure the frustration deriving from the lack of intelligibility, which, as David Porter points out, is given up for the intensity of the performance (Porter, “Dickinson’s Unrevised Poems” 19).

Martin Orczek finds that Dickinson formulated an absentee reader, which is first demonstrated in her letters to Abiah Root. Instead of an unsympathetic and unresponsive reader, like her friend, Dickinson created an audience of absent readers for her poems, as well, which, at the same time, demonstrated her need for a suitable audience. Orczek believes that she renounced physical public, thus remained impenetrable for her readers, her created readers of silent listeners (135-160). Contrary to this, Karen Dandurand argues that Dickinson had a larger audience than that of her personal acquaintances, who knew her poems through private channels. The recipients shared the poems with others, which must have been known by the poet, as it was common practice. As for the poems published during Emily Dickinson’s lifetime, Dandurand points out that it was customary to have the poems reprinted in different journals several times, resulting in a large audience. Dickinson

was aware of this practice and did not seem to protest (Dandurand, “Dickinson and the Public” 255-276).

Dickinson’s writing technique may be regarded as a challenge as McClure Smith sees it: “The rejection of the reader’s interpretative ‘advances’ by the syntax of the text is frequently taken as a strangely personal affront, and the failure of an interpretive reading strategy to appropriate the poem satisfactorily can produce ... either a denial or a qualified acceptance of the poetry’s merit”. He supposes that the rejection of the reader provokes similar rejection of the poet by the reader (McClure Smith 123).

This is not necessarily true as the challenges of reading may be inspiring for the reader. We can agree with Wolfgang Iser, who argues that literary works have two poles: the artistic pole referring to the text created by the writer and the aesthetic one referring to the realization accomplished by the reader, thus the literary work is not identical with the text, it is more than that (188). Iser remarks that the ‘unwritten’ part of a text does not only stimulate the reader’s creative participation in constructing a meaning but it also influences the written part of the text, which starts a dynamic process: “the written text imposes certain limits on its unwritten implications”, which, in turn, will also have an impact on the written text, as a result of the interaction between the text and the reader (Iser 190). This statement is correct in the case of most literary works, however, as demonstrated above in poem Fr 411, it is especially true for Dickinson’s elusive, elliptical poetry. The reader’s task is to reconstruct the poem which sometimes only serves as a base, a structure onto which the building of the poem may be erected.

Provided that the reader is able to satisfy Dickinson’s implicit requirements, the process of interpretation becomes creation or at least recreation, by which the frustration of reading Emily Dickinson’s poems may be counterbalanced by the reader’s recognition of their own creative power and the resulting pleasure.

The following poems may serve as evidence to the fact that the poet is aware of the challenge her audience is exposed to. “Good to hide, and hear ‘em hunt!” (Fr 945):

Good to hide, and hear 'em hunt!
Better, to be found,
If one care to, that is,
The Fox fits the Hound -

Good to know, and not tell -
Best, to know and tell,
Can one find the rare Ear
Not too dull -

The poet-fox makes the readers hunt for the key to the poetic message in her poems. She hopes they have enough creativity to succeed as the contrast of the first two lines suggests, although the inverted word order of the third line in the second stanza implies that there is little probability of fulfilling this condition. The poet helps the readers by fitting them with signals, however, she expects them to participate in the process of decoding and meaning-making. The poet witnesses this process with joy, as the first line suggests, which also implies her playfully friendly attitude to the readers. The second stanza reveals her dedication to her vocation of telling the truth. Nevertheless, she requires “the rare Ear”, a selected audience with refined ear and taste, the selected few to understand her message. We can see Dickinson in two roles: in the role of the mediator and that of the reclusive private poet, who is hiding from the public and refuses to publish her work since she does not wish to expose it to “dull” ears in fear of misunderstanding. Dorothy Oberhaus remarks that the reader is manipulated by the poet to act the role of sleuth and is demanded to solve the riddles of fascicle 40, in which this poem is included, with the help of the preceding fascicles (36). It is obvious that the poet demands readers for her work, however, the structure built on parallel contrasts reveals her ambivalent attitude to them.

“The riddle that we can guess” (Fr 1180) also serves as an explanation for Dickinson’s preference for cryptic writing:

The Riddle that we can guess
We speedily despise -
Not anything is stale so long
As Yesterday's Surprise.

Riddles seem to be intended not only to protect the poet’s privacy but also to challenge the audience, to prevent boredom, as a means of raising and maintaining their attention. Thus,

writing in riddles may be also a poetic strategy of unfulfilled desire as the poet does not want her readers to gain satisfaction by guessing the meaning.

The expectation of creative reading is clearly expressed in “To hear an oriole sing” (Fr 402):

To hear an Oriole sing
May be a common thing -
Or only a divine.

It is not of the Bird
Who sings the same, unheard,
As unto Crowd -

The Fashion of the Ear
Attireth that it hear
In Dun, or fair -

So whether it be Rune,
Or whether it be none
Is of within.

The "Tune is in the Tree -"
The Skeptic - showeth me -
"No Sir! In Thee!"

The poet's performance is regarded as unimportant compared to the reader's poem-making activity. The reader is receiver and creator of the “Tune” at the same time. Thus the responsibility for the outcome of artistic activity is passed on to the reader, who is challenged to create or recreate the poem. The “Ear Attireth that it hear”, so the text itself only serves as the raw material for the audience who will turn it into a work of art in the process of creative reception. The song is “not of the Bird”, the tune is “of within”, “In Thee!”: the three different expressions of the same idea, the dialogue form in which the speaker addresses the reader and the punch line with the two exclamation marks in the last

stanza give special emphasis to the message. There is no poem without readers, however, the second stanza implies that the poet's activity is not influenced by the audience, what is more, the poet does not necessarily need readers: the "Bird" "sings the same, unheard,". Each stanza includes a contrast: "common" – "divine," "unheard" – "unto Crowd," "Dun" – "fair," "Rune" – "none," "in the Tree" – "In Thee," which reveals that the poet finds the concept of reader response not only controversial, but, as the last stanza suggests, also humorous.

However, if or when Dickinson does not care about her readers, her poems may be also considered monologues to herself. Similarly to the above poem, in a letter to Mrs. Holland Dickinson, Emily Dickinson relates a parable about a bird:

I found a bird, this morning, down – down – on a little bush at the foot of
the garden, and wherefore sing, I said, since nobody hears?

One sob in the throat, one flutter of bosom – "*My* business is to *sing*" – and
away she rose! How do I know but cherubim, once, themselves, as patient,
listened, and applauded her unnoticed hymn?(L269)

It seems that Dickinson identifies with the bird, as the bird's statement is paralleled with Dickinson's statement in the same letter about her business "to love". She often uses the bird image as a symbol of poet and herself, as in the above poem or in her introduction to Higginson: "I had no portrait, now, but am small, like the Wren;" (L268).

From the above texts one might conclude that Dickinson appears to be contented with being "unnoticed," waiting for the divine readers, the "cherubim" or just "singing" for herself. There are poems which express her need for God as the only audience, such as "All that I do" (Fr 1529): the poet's activity is constantly "in review" of God, and the poet's only ambition is to become his bride. Another example is "This is a blossom of the brain" (Fr 1112), in the last line of which she calls her poem "The Flower of Our Lord."

Dickinson's target audience

Emily Dickinson had an ambivalent attitude to readers. Given her rejection of the conventional channels of reaching the public, one might come to the conclusion that her poetry was not meant for an audience, except her private audience to whom she sent or read some of her writings. However, this was not necessarily the case. Dickinson's intended readers, her target audience seems to fall into seven categories: (1) God, (2) the

absentee reader, (3) the universal audience, humanity, (4) future generations, (5) herself, (6) direct recipients, a narrow circle of friends and acquaintances who could also share her writings with others, (7) anyone who is ready to adopt the special reading strategies her poems require, the selected few.

Some of Dickinson's poems reveal that she wrote for the general public, a faceless, universal audience: humanity. If this audience has no distinctive features, it may be so because they are not necessarily the poet's contemporaries but the future generations. This idea of audience seems to be justified if one takes into account Dickinson's concept of renunciation for deferred reward. She refused immediate fame and hoped for immortality, thus renouncing readers during her lifetime. In this case the readers of her then immortal poems are the future generations instead of her contemporaries as the bird parable also suggests. Dickinson seems to deny her need for a contemporary audience and appears to be contented with the attention of future generations both in "Essential Oils are wrung" (Fr772) in which the immortal product of artistic condensation is experienced after the lady's death and in "Summer for thee, grant I may be" (Fr 7). Similarly to the former poem, the targeted audience here is posterity, for whom the poems will "Make Summer" after the poet's death.

The next category is the opposite of the previous one: instead of writing for human beings as such or the humanity of the future centuries, she also targeted her contemporaries, a narrow, carefully selected circle of readers, consisting mainly of her personal acquaintances she read or sent the poems to. In this case the word "audience" is not a collective noun; it denotes separate individuals instead of a group of readers. The selected audience also includes those members of the general public who can meet the high requirements of reading her poetry.

As Emily Dickinson was also her own reader, it is interesting to discuss some of the writings which show Dickinson herself as a representative of the public. Her definition of poetry in L342a (quoted on page 25) shows her as an ecstatic reader who can not imagine any other ways of perception.

In "He fumbles at your soul" (Fr 477) it is the soul that is scalped as an effect of poetry. The speaker experiences reading poetry as an act of ecstasy and torture, called forth by the poet, "'a soul-scalping' visionary who leaves the reader ecstatic but annihilated (Buckingham 233):

He fumbles at your Soul
As Players at the Keys
Before they drop full Music on -
He stuns you by degrees -
Prepares your brittle Nature
For the Ethereal Blow
By fainter Hammers - further heard -
Then nearer - Then so slow
Your Breath has time to straighten -
Your Brain - to bubble Cool -
Deals - One - imperial - Thunderbolt -
That scalps your naked Soul -

When Winds take Forests in their Paws -
The Universe - is still -

The simile of the first two lines implies that the reader, as the poet's instrument is an essential element of artistic creation. The word "key" may refer to the piano. The reader is not only receiver but also a participant of the work of art. Although Willis J. Buckingham supposes that the above poem is a "privatized construction of the reading act" (233), the general subject "you" indicates that the poet thinks of reading as an experience shared with readers in general. Cristanne Miller believes that the direct address of "you" also makes it impossible for the readers to distance themselves from the poem. She supposes that the use of simple present describing the poet's actions implies a repeated, habitual action (73). The effect of poetry is so stunning that the public needs preparation to be able to bear the shock as in "Tell all the truth but tell it slant" (Fr1263), in which "The Truth must dazzle gradually". In "He fumbles at your soul" (Fr 477) graduation is expressed with a crescendo-diminuendo technique: first there is just "fumbling" at the "Keys" as if the artist were testing the instrument for maximum effect, then there is "full Music", "Ethereal Blow" to be followed by "fainter Hammers", "further", "Then nearer", "Then so slow" and finally the diminuendo ends with a momentary pause of suspension ("Your Breath has Time to straighten") before the climax, the final "Thunderbolt", the devastating consequence of which is the stillness of Universe. The impact of poetry on readers is also

compared to thunder in “To pile like thunder to its close” (Fr1353). The mental experience of reading is described as a physical one, similarly to Dickinson’s remark quoted in L342a. The perception of art is limited to acoustic sensation; however, as a result of the performance, the poet and her fellow-listeners are deprived of this very sensation: for them “The Universe - is still - ”. Thus, both for the speaker and her supposed audience reading poetry involves ecstasy, a positive experience, like "Take all I have away" (Fr 1671) and an aggressive, tormenting, devastating one, involving suffering.

In “I think I was enchanted” (Fr 627) reading is a profound intellectual experience resulting in mental transformation:

I think I was enchanted
When first a sombre Girl -
I read that Foreign Lady -
The Dark - felt beautiful -

And whether it was noon at night -
Or only Heaven - at noon -
For very Lunacy of Light
I had not power to tell -

The Bees - became as Butterflies -
The Butterflies - as Swans -
Approached - and spurned the narrow Grass -
And just the meanest Tunes

That Nature murmured to herself
To keep herself in Cheer -
I took for Giants - practising
Titanic Opera -

The Days - to Mighty Metres stept -
The Homeliest - adorned
As if unto a Jubilee

'Twere suddenly confirmed -

I could not have defined the change -

Conversion of the Mind

Like Sanctifying in the Soul -

Is witnessed - not explained -

'Twas a Divine Insanity -

The Danger to be Sane

Should I again experience -

'Tis Antidote to turn -

To Tomes of Solid Witchcraft -

Magicians be asleep -

But Magic - hath an element

Like Deity - to keep -

The poet's reaction to the poems of Elisabeth Barrett Browning (Franklin, *The Poems* 2:618) is compared to that of a magic spell. It is something she cannot tell or explain as it "is witnessed". Poetry seems to have supernatural power, both over the reader and nature, as in "He fumbles at your soul" (Fr 477), though it is not destructive this time. It is, however, capable of bringing about crucial changes in nature as well as the speaker's mind. The poet's authority over the reader is already expressed by their roles described in the first stanza, the reader being a "Girl" while the poet is a grownup "Lady". The enlightening effect, the "Lunacy of Light" makes the reader see animals as if through a magnifier and hear the sounds of nature in an amplified form, thus "Bees" are like "Butterflies" which have grown as big as "Swans", while nature's tune "murmured to herself" sounds like "Giants – practising/Titanic Opera". The tale-like image suggests the reader's childlike reaction of awe to the poems and her wish to be absorbed in art. Her strange vision brings about an unconscious change in the speaker, which is beyond her control: a mental "Conversion", instead of the religious conversion of Dickinson's time. Presumably, it suggests Dickinson's decision to become a poet who needs imagination and inspiration from God, that is "Divine Insanity" instead of the salvation of her soul. The parallel of

mental and spiritual conversion in the sixth stanza reappears described with metaphors in stanza seven, in which “Divine Insanity” is contrasted with “The Danger to be Sane”. As Jane Donahoe Eberwein writes, Dickinson employs “the language of conversion” as it is “the only imagery adequate to expression of enhanced spiritual life achieved through poetry (Eberwein, *Dickinson: Strategies of limitation* 195). The poem suggests that reading may have a crucial and everlasting effect on the audience, as it did on Emily Dickinson as a reader.

In “The way I read a letter’s this” (Fr700) reading is a private, solitary activity, which involves excitement on behalf of the poet-reader:

The Way I read a Letter's - this -
'Tis first - I lock the Door -
And push it with my fingers - next -
For transport it be sure -

And then I go the furthest off
To counteract a knock -
Then draw my little Letter forth
And slowly pick the lock -

Then - glancing narrow, at the Wall -
And narrow at the floor
For firm Conviction of a Mouse
Not exorcised before -

Peruse how infinite I am
To no one that You - know -
And sigh for lack of Heaven - but not
The Heaven God bestow -

The poet uses narrative technique to depict the excitement and joy the recipient of the letter experiences. She describes the sequence of actions which precedes reading. The detailed

account of the lengthy process of preparation does not only stress the importance of the letter for the recipient but it also expresses self-irony. The adverbs: “first”, “next”, “then” mark the stages of preparation including quadruple checking of the circumstances. The description of ordinary activities is contrasted with the act of reading in the final stanza, in which the “lack of Heaven” is the metaphor of the correspondent’s absence. The recipient of the letter takes an active part in reading, both physically and mentally. The importance of the letter is attached to her person as it expresses how important she is to the absent writer. Thus, the letter is much more than the text itself, it comprises the emotions aroused by it in the absence of the correspondent from the recipient’s aspect, and that of the recipient from the correspondent’s aspect. It is obvious that the poem is meant for no one else but the addressee, who is in intimate relationship with the writer as the line “To no one that You - know -” suggests. The rest of the readers may have the impression that they are eavesdropping.

In the first stanza of “A word made flesh is seldom” (Fr 1715) words have a powerful impact on readers who participate in the rite of the reading act, which involves the crucial change from “word” to “Flesh. Reading is compared again to a religious act as the opening metaphor of the poem suggests:

A Word made Flesh is seldom
And tremblingly partook
Nor then perhaps reported
But have I not mistook

Each one of us has tasted
With ecstasies of stealth
The very food debated
To our specific strength -

A word that breathes distinctly
Has not the power to die
Cohesive as the Spirit
It may expire if He -

“Made Flesh and dwelt among us”
Could condescension be

Like this consent of Language
This loved Philology

Similarly to the previous poems, the words “tremblingly” and ecstasies of stealth” indicate that the reader’s attitude is characterized by ecstasy and awe. However, the subject of reading is not poetry but the word of God, the Bible – the first line of the last stanza is quoted from John 1:14. The word “partook” implies that the ideal reader is part of the act of creation, in taking into possession the written word, which “seldom” happens as there seem to be few readers who can meet the requirements of reading. In case they can, reader and writer become equals as the activity of reading is similar to that of writing. Both involve creation, which is comparable to divine creation as the opening image of the Holy Communion suggests. Willis J. Buckingham describes the reader as suppliant and beneficiary, while the writer acts as a servant whose humility is emphasized and compared to the self-implying of Jesus, yet his ability to give depends on being called, thus their relationship is characterized by the give-and-take of equals (248). The word “stealth” also implies some intimacy between them. Buckingham remarks that as the reviewers of Dickinson’s generations insisted, literary affiliation was an ethical standard of literature by which writers who failed to make human connections as persons were judged (250). Both the Holy Communion and the “food” metaphor suggest that reading is identified with nourishment for the audience with whom the speaker identifies herself as the pronouns “I”, “us” and “our” show.

“Strong draughts of their refreshing minds” (Fr 770) is another testimony of Dickinson’s response to poetry as a reader:

Strong Draughts of Their Refreshing Minds

To drink - enables Mine

Through Desert or the Wilderness

As bore it Sealed Wine -

To go elastic - Or as One

The Camel's trait - attained -

How powerful the stimulus
Of an Hermetic Mind -

Just as in “A word made flesh is seldom” (Fr 1715) the reception of poetry is identified with consumption (“To drink”) and nourishment (“Draughts”, “Wine”), which serve as inspiration for the poet-reader. The image of “Sealed Wine” may refer to the symbol of Christ’s blood in the Holy Communion, which is available for the elected only, just like the understanding of poetry. However, the image of “Sealed Wine” is paralleled with the poet’s “Hermetic Mind”, which is as difficult to access and understand as the secret of communion. Again, the reader undergoes a change of the mind. This implies that the role of the audience is more important than what is traditionally supposed. The transformation is imposed on the reader by the “Strong Draughts” and the “powerful” “Stimulus” of the creative power of poetry.

Dickinson’s statement in “To see the summer sky” (Fr 1491) suggests that art does not involve creation, it is rather the reception of reality itself:

To see the Summer Sky
Is Poetry, though never in a Book it lie -
True Poems flee -

If perception is reception and reception is poetry, consequently the recipient himself is the poet. Also, the ephemeral nature seems to be an essential quality of art, which means that the reader’s reception is non-recurrent and unrepeatable. In this case no consummation or possession of the work of art is possible on the reader’s behalf and the circle of readers is not selected but spontaneously established. I agree with R. McClure Smith, who argues that the impossibility of possessing art, which he links with the reader’s deprivation of meaning and of reaching an ending is an implication of Dickinson’s aesthetic philosophy: “If ‘True Poems flee’ ... then what does it mean for a reader who is a ‘creature of appetite seeking ‘satisfaction’ and ‘possession’?.. What if the purpose of Dickinson’s poetry is to educate the reader in ... non-consummation” (McClure Smith 110)? Certainly, if there is no finished work, there is nothing to possess; the reader may only participate in the process of creating the poem.

The act of reception is preferred to creation according to the third stanza of “I would not paint a picture” (Fr 348, quoted on page 38), which suggests that listening to poetry is a more satisfying experience than being a poet. Both Cristanne Miller and Robert Weisbuch agree that the speaker is affected by her own poetry, she is a reader of her own poems and she acts as reader and poet simultaneously (Miller 128, Weisbuch 215). “Calling poetry ‘the Art to stun myself / With Bolts of Melody!’ Dickinson is surpriser and stunned victim of surprise at once, a wounded dialectician,” as Weisbuch writes (215).

In the above poems the speaker appeared as a reader, either that of someone else’s poetry or that of the Bible or her own poetry. “The show is not the show”(Fr 270) also depicts the poet as an audience; however, this time she is not the audience of a work of art but the audience of the audience:

The Show is not the Show
But they that go -
Menagerie to me
My Neighbor be -
Fair Play -
Both went to see -

It is clear from the statement of the first three lines that for Dickinson watching the audience is more entertaining than the performance itself. The Emily Dickinson Lexicon defines “menagerie”, the metaphor referring to the public as follows:

- A. A circus; [adj.] wild; varied; like a circus; like a collection of performing animals; [fig.] variety; [word play on “many”] numerous.
- B. Zoo; spectacle; exhibition; exposition; something to look at.

Thus the response to the work of art is more important than the work itself. She does not only need an audience but is also keenly interested in their reaction. The word “Neighbor” may mean that the public is made up of her fellow-beings; consequently, she regards them as equals as in “A word made flesh is seldom” (Fr1715). Yet, unlike in “I would not paint a picture” (Fr348), she is not an artist and audience at the same time but, as the latter includes her “neighbor”, the speaker may be one of the audiences. Assuming that

“Neighbor” is used in a more restricted sense, as someone close to her, the public can be identified as the poet’s selected audience of intimates and acquaintances, whose reaction is important for her. McClure Smith, however, argues that the poem, as a summary of Dickinson’s aesthetics of reception “assumes what is of interest is not the response but, rather, the attitude assumed by the respondents and that reading is less valuable than the subsequent exposure of the readers in the course of their analyses”(106). It seems correct to suppose that Dickinson understood the importance of having an audience, to know their reaction to her poems and also to know their criticism.

In “Just lost, when I was saved!” (Fr132) the speaker performs two roles again: the role of viewer and listener and that of the poet who wishes to communicate a message to the readers:

Just lost, when I was saved!
Just felt the world go by!
Just girt me for the onset with eternity,
When breath blew back -
And on the other side
I heard recede the disappointed tide

Therefore, as one *returned*, I feel,
Odd secrets of “the Line” to tell!
Some sailor, skirting novel shores!
Some pale “Reporter”, from the awful doors
Before the Seal!

Next time to stay!
Next time, the things to see
By ear unheard -
Unscrutinized by eye!
Next time, to tarry -
While the Ages steal -

Tramp the slow the Centuries
And the Cycles wheel!

The speaker hopes to be the only one to witness the secrets of “Eternity” and to report them to the readers. She is the mediator between people and the other world. The exclamation marks, the repetition of “Just” and “Next time” and the use of infinitives expressing obligation (“to tell!,” “to stay,!” “to see,” to tarry”) indicate that she is determined to perform this task in the future as she feels an urge to share her experiences with the readers. The recipients the speaker targets may be those who have not been saved, as being saved seems to be the condition of crossing the “line”, that is entering the realm of life after death. Presumably, those not saved may be those who have not undergone religious conversion. However, in the third stanza the speaker claims that she wishes to see and hear things no one has before: “unheard” and “Unscrutinized” by eye”. This means that the readers are not capable of perceiving what she will be able to perceive. Thus, in this poem the readers are not equal to her. There is a boundary between the audience and the poet, whose supernatural power distinguishes her from her readers, who need her report. She also needs them, as without the readers she can not fulfill her mission.

Unlike in “The way I read a letter’s this” (Fr700), in “This is my letter to the world” (Fr519) the speaker is both listener and transmitter of message. She is the listener of the “simple News that Nature told” and the transmitter of the news in her letter. She is the only listener of “Nature”, the only receiver and interpreter of her message. Thus, she feels responsible for transmitting it in a letter to the public. The addressee of her letter is the universalized public, the world. However, in the second stanza the circle of readers is restricted to her “countrymen”. The informal way they are addressed implies that these readers may have a closer relationship with the speaker or at least she feels close to them, although she cannot see them. Consequently, she seems to be sure about having readers for her poetry, even if she is not aware of them as a specific group of people.

In an inner dialogue with herself, the speaker of “Had I not this, or this, I said” (Fr828) admits her need for an audience:

Had I not This, or This, I said,
Appealing to Myself,
In moment of prosperity -
Inadequate - were Life -

"Thou hast not Me, nor Me" - it said,
In Moment of Reverse -
"And yet Thou art industrious -
No need - had'st Thou - of us"?

My need - was all I had - I said -
The need did not reduce -
Because the food - exterminate -
The hunger - does not cease -

But diligence - is sharper -
Proportioned to the chance -
To feed upon the Retrograde -
Enfeebles - the Advance -

Her imaginary readers ask her if there is a point in writing and being “industrious” if her poems do not have an audience. In the first stanza the speaker takes stock of the things that give meaning to her life. Supposedly, her possessions are her poems referred to as “This”, the results of her work as the word “industrious” in the second stanza and “diligence” in the fourth stanza suggest. Interpreting the poem as part of the Fortieth Fascicle, Dorothy Huff Oberhaus finds that the preceding poem, “I hide myself within my flower” (Fr80), and the one following it, “Between my country and the others” (Fr829), both include “flower” as a metaphor of poems (114). “Prosperity” is contrasted with need and deprivation in the next two stanzas. The inner voice representing readers makes her admit her need for them. However, she intends to continue work and make progress without them.

The following group of poems testify that Emily Dickinson was not only aware of her need for readers but also the readers’ need for the poems, which she wishes to satisfy by rendering service to her audience.

“You said that ‘I was great’ one day” (Fr736) reveals that she does not know what exactly the readers’ demand is, but she is eager to find out and tailor her poetry to meet with the audience’s approval:

You said that I "was Great" - one Day -
Then "Great" it be - if that please Thee -
Or Small, or any size at all -
Nay - I'm the size suit Thee –

Tall - like the Stag - would that?
Or lower - like the Wren -
Or other heights of other ones
I've seen?

Tell which - it's dull to guess -
And I must be Rhinoceros
Or Mouse -
At once - for Thee -

So say - if Queen it be -
Or Page - please Thee -
I'm that - or nought -
Or other thing - if other thing there be -
With just this stipulus -
I suit Thee -

Addressing the reader as “You” implies that she addresses readers in general or a typical reader whose requirements should be satisfied. The speaker offers a variety of sizes, species, heights and ranks to choose from, which may be an allusion to her method of providing variants of her poems. In each stanza the proposal includes two things which are in sharp and, therefore, humorous contrast with each other: “Great” – “Small,” “Stag” – “Wren,” “Rhinoceros” – “Mouse,” “Queen” – “Page,” as if the poet had no idea how to “please” the public. Her determination to satisfy the readers is indicated by the repetition of the phrase “please Thee” and “suit Thee” at the end of the opening and the closing stanza, although the humorous list of animals may suggest that she is aware of the absurdity of her offer. The poet does not mean to “please”, she may be just teasing the

reader, especially if we accept McClure Smith's argument, according to which the targeted reader is the typical reader (107-108). Probably, here the typical reader is the professional, critical reader: the editor. As discussed in the chapter "Resistance to Print", the publishing business belonged to male editors whose priority was to satisfy the demands of the market and therefore they had well-defined expectations of women writers. "Queen" as the persona offered in the first line of the last stanza also suggests that the speaker may wish to appeal to her male reader. Emily Dickinson was not too responsive to criticism, was not willing to alter her poems to meet the critical standard and objected to editors' changes made to her poems if they appeared in print. In the third stanza the speaker calls upon the reader to make his choice as "it's dull to guess". Maybe this is the reason for not selecting one of the alternative words as a final version of the poems. R. McClure Smith argues that the speaker is the poem itself, which offers the reader the possibility of its own manipulation. In the interpretation he offers, it is the voice of Dickinson discussing her different personae (McClure Smith 108). McClure Smith finds that the wish to please the audience is typical of Dickinson's poetry, which "can suit the desire of the readers perfectly" (107-8). This argument, however, is debatable, as Dickinson's poems are not reader-friendly; on the contrary, they challenge the readers and may leave them frustrated due to their failure to deduct a meaning. The intention to serve the audience and the barriers to understanding the poems appear to be controversial. Indeed, Dickinson is not willing to serve any readers, only the ones who are able to meet her requirements as active participants of artistic creation.

A similar intention is revealed in "I fit for them – I seek the dark" (Fr1129). The speaker does not strive to meet her readers' expectations by tailoring her works to their taste but by providing them with nourishment, as the food metaphor, used similarly in "A word made flesh is seldom" (Fr1719) suggests:

I fit for them - I seek the Dark
Till I am thorough fit.
The labor is a sober one
With this austerer sweet -
That abstinence of mine produce
A purer food for them, if I succeed,
If not I had
The transport of the Aim -

The poem could serve as a portrait of Emily Dickinson, the private poet and recluse, who chooses to withdraw from the world and refuse publicity (“I seek the Dark”) as long as her poetry is perfectly suitable to please her readers. The pronoun “them” refers to a specific group of people, presumably her private audience of personal acquaintances. The deferred reward of her renunciation would be providing “purer food” for her audience but even in case the speaker can not accomplish her mission, she will be still content to have tried to achieve her objective. In this poem Dickinson’s need for an audience is obvious; she does not only need them but also wishes to serve them and completely satisfy their demand. Unlike in “You said that I ‘was great’ one day” (Fr736), the speaker means what she says, the poem lacks any kind of ironical or humorous overtone. Her determination is stressed by the repetition of the word “fit”. The lines of the poem keep getting longer until they reach the climax with the idea of succeeding, thus expressing the speaker’s optimism, while the repetition of “for them” emphasizes the notion of service.

Similarly, the idea of serving the public is included in “I think the longest hour of all” (Fr607):

I think the longest Hour of all

Is when the Cars have come -

And we are waiting for the Coach -

It seems as though the Time -

Indignant - that the Joy was come -

Did block the Gilded Hands -

And would not let the Seconds by -

But slowest instant - ends -

The Pendulum begins to count -

Like little Scholars - loud -

The steps grow thicker - in the Hall -

The Heart begins to crowd -

Then I - my timid service done -

Tho' service 'twas, of Love -

Take up my little Violin -
And further North - remove -

The “service” “of Love” is connected to the timeless moments following death, when the “Gilded Hands” of the clock are blocked. This imagery may refer to the habit of stopping the clock at the time of death as well as to the immortal, timeless nature of art, since it is in this period that the violinist-speaker plays music as a “service” “of Love”. The idea of art as a form of service is emphasized by the repetition of the word and the unusual word order, in spite of the fact that there seems to be no connection between the artist and her audience at the deathbed of the deceased. Her service is “timid”, maybe because it is unsolicited and she is unsure about the audience’s reaction. Then there is silence, without communication, the clock and the steps in the hall can be heard. The artist withdraws unnoticed, that is separates herself from the group of mourners, as artistic creation requires isolation. Although the personal pronoun “we” in the first stanza suggests some mutuality between her and the public, the distance between them is highlighted in the last stanza. After mingling with the group of mourner-listeners, she distinguishes herself from them by her art and the power which enables the artist to render a service of love to the audience. Thus service to the public is a sign of power.

Emily Dickinson’s intention of serving humanity and targeting a universal audience is also revealed in “The first day that I was a life” (Fr823):

The first Day that I was a Life
I recollect it - How still -
The last Day that I was a Life
I recollect it - as well -

’Twas stiller - though the first
Was still -
’Twas empty - but the first
Was full -

This - was my finallest Occasion -
But then
My tenderer Experiment

Toward Men -

"Which choose I"?

That - I cannot say -

"Which choose They"?

Question Memory!

In the first stanza the poet may refer to her birth to this world and her death for the world since she finds life "empty". She speaks of her "finallest Occasion" in the first line of stanza three, yet, in the next line the word "then" refers to her future life. She is reborn as a poet to carry out a loving "Experiment" addressed to mankind. It is worth considering the definitions of "experiment" in the Emily Dickinson Lexicon: "A. Trial; test; act designed to discover some unknown truth. B. Experience; feeling; suffering". Thus, she may be testing her readers with her poems, communicating the truth unknown to them while going through the painful experience of creation. The question raised in the last stanza is which "Day," that is which kind of "Life" the poet chooses and which one is chosen by the readers, whether they approve of her state of being a poet or not. Her whole existence seems to be justified by the readers' need for her as a poet and, consequently, by her need for the readers.

Unlike in the above poems, Emily Dickinson's refusal to serve a certain public is implied in the second stanza of "I cannot dance upon my toes" (Fr 381), examined in more detail in the chapter "Success and Fame in Emily Dickinson's Poetry":

And though I had no Gown of Gauze -

No Ringlet, to my Hair -

Nor hopped to Audiences - like Birds -

One Claw upon the Air -

Nor tossed my shape in Eider Balls -

Nor rolled on Wheels of Snow

Till I was out of sight in sound -

The House encore me so -

Comparing reading poetry to a spectacle in the Opera, she describes the performance with the images of the circus and expresses her unwillingness to "hop" "to Audiences", a

universal audience, in order to please them. At the same time, the speaker of the poem seems to recognize her need for an audience and is proud of having the public attention of her targeted readers in spite of her avoiding publicity and refusal to appeal to them as the last two lines of the stanza suggest.

Dickinson does not always refer to the readers as a single, homogenous group of people. She sometimes makes a distinction between her preferred, selected readers and those she is not willing to accept as her audience. Unlike in the above poem, in “I’m nobody! Who are you? (Fr260) the poet does not address a universal audience. She differentiates between the general public and her selected reader just like between ordinary poets seeking cheap popularity and herself, as also discussed in the chapter on publication:

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you - Nobody - too?
Then there's a pair of us -
Don't tell! they'd banish us - you know!

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

The speaker has an intimate relationship with her selected reader, who seems to belong to the same intellectual community as herself. The frequent use of question marks and exclamation marks suggests that the poet is excited and anxious to have found her reader with whom she may share experiences. They form a “pair,” which suggests a sense of togetherness between them. The speaker also makes a distinction between the reader as her anonymous peer and the public referred to as “they” and the “admiring Bog”, who are likely to be dangerous for both of them by “banishing” or, as the alternate word suggests, “advertising” them. The warning is given special emphasis by the unusually long line including two exclamation marks. The word “Bog” has a definitely pejorative connotation as a muddy substance which might swamp and flood the poet. As for the predicate of the subject “they” in the first stanza, in the Emily Dickinson Lexicon the definition of “banish” is the following: “A. Reject; exile; condemn. Separate; isolate; drive away”. The variant word “advertise” is defined as follows: “Search; probe; inquire of; give notice to; announce

a search into; place an announcement in”. As we may see, both words convey a pejorative meaning, something that has a negative or threatening effect. “Advertise” may imply that the audience might try to uncover the secret, anonymous identity of both poet and reader. Consequently, the public is a mass of people the poet and her distinguished reader should be afraid of, isolate and withdraw from.

The speaker of “What soft, cherubic creatures” (Fr675) employs the tools of sharp irony to characterize the middle class women of her community, who could be her potential readers, the public she refuses:

What Soft - Cherubic Creatures -
These Gentlewomen are -
One would as soon assault a Plush -
Or violate a Star -

Such Dimity Convictions -
A Horror so refined
Of freckled Human Nature -
Of Deity - Ashamed -

It's such a common - Glory -
A Fisherman's - Degree -
Redemption - Brittle Lady -
Be so - ashamed of Thee -

The poem probably refers to the women attending sewing circles of Dickinson’s time. It was written in 1863, during the Civil War, when most women took part in the war effort working for charity organizations, such as The Ladies Hospital Aid Society, the Union Volunteer Refreshment Saloon, the United States Christian Commission or sewing circles in which they prepared items to be sent to soldiers (Leahy n.pag.). Dickinson contributed to the war effort “sewing” her fascicles of poems instead of blankets or socks. Karen A. Dandurand believes that Dickinson gave three poems as a contribution to the war effort to the *Drum Beat*, a newspaper published to raise funds for the army. When the editor, Richard Salter Storrs asked for her poems on behalf of the Sanitary Commission, she did not refuse (Dandurand, “Why Dickinson Did Not Publish” 55-56). Thus “Blazing in gold

and quenching in purple” titled “Sunset”(Fr321) , “Flowers - Well - if anybody”(Fr95) titled “Flowers” and “These are the days when the birds come back” (Fr122) titled “October” appeared (Dandurand, “Why Dickinson Did Not Publish” 207-8).

Dickinson refers to her refusal of charity work in a letter to Mrs. Samuel Bowles in 1861:

“I shall have no winter this year – on account of the soldiers – Since I cannot weave Blankets, or Boots – I thought it best to omit the season – Shall present a ‘Memorial’ to God – when the Maples turn – Can I rely on your name?” (L235).

Karen A. Dandurand suggests that this may be a satirical allusion to the “Appeal to the Patriotic Ladies”, which was a request published in the Hampshire Gazette in 1861 to send items for the soldiers, such as blankets or boots, to the Sanitary Commission (“Why Dickinson Did Not Publish” 50-51). As early as in 1852 in a letter to Jane Humphrey, she wrote about her unwillingness to participate in the charity work with similar irony:

“The Sewing Society has commenced again – and held its first meeting last week – now all the poor will be helped – the cold warmed – the warm cooled – the hungry fed – the thirsty attended to – the ragged clothed – and this suffering – tumbled down world will be helped to it’s feet again – which will be quite pleasant to all. I dont attend – notwithstanding my high approbation—which must puzzle the public exceedingly” (L30).

In the above letter, just as in “I’m nobody! Who are you?”(Fr260) and “What soft, cherubic creatures” (Fr675), the poet isolates herself from the public including the women members of the prominent families of her town. This kind of audience is referred to with irony and contempt.

“What soft, cherubic creatures” (Fr675) is a criticism of the hypocrisy of gentlewomen, who are horrified and ashamed of human nature though they do not lack “freckles” themselves. The metaphors: “plush” and “dimity convictions” allude to the refined materials worn and maybe used in sewing societies by women in Dickinson’s time. The definition of dimity in the Emily Dickinson Lexicon reveals that it may be used with a double reference as the adjective of “conviction”:

dimity, adj. [see **dimity**, n.] Soft; smooth; describing clothing made from cotton cloth; [fig.] weak in argument; simplistic.

dimity (dimities), n. [ME < It. *dimito*, course cotton or flannel, *linzie-wolzie*.]
White cotton cloth. ”

These words as well as the adjectives “soft,” “cherubic,” “refined” and “brittle,” characterizing the gentlewomen and mocking at their affectation and overrefined manners, are in sharp contrast with “common glory” and “fisherman’s degree”, which, as Neal Frank Doubleday notes, may be again a double reference to ordinary people and the twelve disciples (Doubleday 90). At the same time the women’s appearance and behavior is contrasted to their real character, which lacks charity and the understanding of human nature. As Peter J. Conn remarks, Dickinson “scrutinized the chilly decorum that masqueraded as piety in her community” (229). The change of tone in the last two lines of the poem indicates the intensity of the speaker’s hostile feelings toward the ladies.

As the poems analyzed above reveal, Dickinson needed readers and was aware of both her need of readers and the readers’ need of her poems. She was also aware of the challenge she exposed them to. Dickinson as a reader herself was also challenged: she experienced reading as ecstasy which resulted in a change of mind and compared reading to religious acts. She found reception and the reaction of the audience more important than artistic creation.

Dickinson’s linguistic irregularities, the enigmatic expression and the variants require creative interpretation from the readers. They are expected to act as co-authors in order to experience the text in its complexity and actively participate in the production of the poem. Thus the reader-writer relationship should be a relationship of exchange. Dickinson’s attitude to readers, as suggested by the poems analyzed in this chapter, can be intimate and friendly, sometimes she even expresses her wish to suit and serve her audience. Nevertheless, the barriers to understanding may be regarded as intentional as the readers who are not able to meet the poet’s expectations are rejected and excluded from her public, consequently she implicitly differentiates between “desired” and “undesired” audience. Emily Dickinson needed a reader for her work but not any reader. She either wrote for a fictitious, physically non-existing, imaginary audience or the selected, narrow circle who could meet the requirements of her poetry.

Resistance to Print

One of the reasons why Emily Dickinson rejected traditional ways of publishing could be that she had realized her poems withstand print publication. This chapter will attempt to scrutinize the characteristic features which render the poems resistant to print. These features are as follows: (1) the poems are dynamic, not static works of art, (2) the poems are characterized by an unfinished quality, (3) the poems are untitled, (4) the poems may be regarded as artifacts, (5) print technology may not be adequate to reproduce the visual elements of the manuscripts, (6) print publication could have deprived Dickinson of the freedom of experimenting with the text. The first part of the chapter will discuss the destabilizing factors characterizing the poems (1-3 of the above list) while the second part will examine the visual and other features of print resistance (4-6).

Destabilizing factors

Dickinson's poems are not static, ready-made objects like printed texts preserving their momentary state at the time of printing but works in progress. As discussed in the chapter "On Readers", the reader's creative role in the production of the Dickinson poem is essential. As it is left to the reader to complete the poem, the outcome of the process is always different, depending on their personality and their mental or psychological state. Additionally, the poet does or does not always produce a final version of the poems, and the variants, the poems and the recipients enter into an interactive relationship with one another. The interchangeability of alternate elements also contribute to the dynamism of Dickinson's poetry. This exchangeability reminds us of a puzzle which has more than one solution. Paradoxically, the dynamic character of the poems with variants and the uncertainty attached to them also imply an element of hesitation, a moment of halt, when both poet or reader consider the variants within the poem. As Philip G. Cohen suggests, variants destabilize the text (Cohen 142). At the same time, this consideration as well as

the perception of the poem with its visual elements on the manuscript page require that both the reader's mind and eyes be in motion. The poet also seems to be in constant movement, continually working on her poems: presumably not only with the aim of improving them or sometimes making them suitable for a special occasion or addressee but also, as Masako Takeda suggests quoting Dickinson's wording, to make them "breathe" (Takeda 145). Thus, the poet produces several revised versions of the poem.

A crucial element of the unfinished state, the existence of variants is obviously controversial to the concept of printing: first, because they contribute to the unfixed quality of the text, secondly because of the difficulties their existence implies both for printer and reader. Concerning the barriers to print represented by variants, Sharon Cameron argues that "variants indicate both the desire for limit and the difficulty in enforcing it. The difficulty in enforcing a limit to the poems turns into a kind of limitlessness, for...it is impossible to say where the text ends" (Cameron, *Choosing* 6). Philip G. Cohen speaks about "radically unfinished" poems. He thinks that the author's intension is indeterminate owing to the existence of the variants, which results in a "textual otherness", a uniqueness of style (Cohen 142). Michele Ierardi sees the fact that the final copies are not final as a "refusal of booklike closure" (Ierardi 2).

The unfinished nature of the poems also results from the fact that even if Dickinson produced more fair copies which are not necessarily identical, there is usually no final version of the poem or at least it is not indicated by the poet. Only occasionally does she underline the variant word she prefers, for example in the first version of "Paradise is of the option" (Fr1125A). Although Franklin argues that each of the fair copies prepared for different people or occasions are final for its person or occasion, he admits that this cannot be equated with a final intention for publishing. (Franklin, *The Editing* 132). All things considered, we can assume that the text of the poems is not fixed, which raises problems for their print distribution.

The word "variant" usually refers to the alternate words offered by Dickinson beside or above the lines or below the text of the poem. As Jerome J. McGann reminds us, the "print convention she inherited would organize such variants at the foot of the page, in what scholars would later call an 'apparatus'. Many of her poems exploit that convention, but Dickinson also habitually threw her 'variants' all over the space of her pages—interlineally, in both margins (sometimes written up and sometimes down), within the area of 'the line itself', the so-called superior text. The whole space of the page was open to these add-on, sometimes free-floating, textual events" (McGann "Composition and

Explanation” 199). This brings about changes in the visual effect of the handwritten poems, producing not only textual but also visual variants.

However, as the factors outside the text may also influence, slightly or more significantly, the identity of the poem, I suppose that variants—using the term in a broader sense—have two categories: in-textual variants, which imply changes in the poem itself and extra-textual variants, which derive from factors outside the text of the given poem. Thus, we can find eleven types of variants: seven in-textual and four extra-textual ones. The in-textual ones are as follows: (1) variant words, (2) variant lines, (3) variant stanzas, (4) variant lineation, (5) variant punctuation, (6) the manuscript including the alternate solution and (7) fair copies of the same poem without the variants marked in the copy. Additionally, Mary Carney observes that there are a few poems which have variant marks only, the variant words are not provided, for example “The admirations and contempts of time” (Fr830) in Fascicle 40 (Carney 137). The extra-textual variants comprise: (8) the same poem in different contexts, (9) poems as variants of one another, (10) various interpretations, (11) poems representing different genres.

As for the in-textual variants, while Cameron believes that the variant words are non-exclusive, integral parts of the poem, Domhnal Mitchell compares them to a soccer team with eleven players and some substitutes on the side-lines, who may be part of the squad but not part of the playing team. They are usable but unused elements, the poem or poems Dickinson might have written (Cameron, “Dickinson’s Fascicles” 139, Mitchell, *Measures* 273). Both arguments suggest that alternate words do belong to the poem in one way or another. However, there are poems which have fair copies with and also without alternatives, as Dickinson usually included variants in the fascicles or sets but rarely in the copies sent or given to family members, friends or acquaintances. I argue that the physical existence of variants on the page results in a different work than the one without any variants in the copy, even in case there are changes in the text compared to another version. Contrary to Cameron’s and Mitchell’s arguments, these fair, variant-free copies may testify that Dickinson did not necessarily regard the poems complete only with the variant words, lines or stanzas, although, when present, they should be considered parts of the poem. For example “Of all the sounds despatched abroad” (Fr334) has three existing copies. The copy in Fascicle 12 contains three variant words. The one sent to Thomas Wentworth Higginson does not include any additional variant words, though it adopts the alternate words from the fascicle copy and introduces five new ones. There are differences in punctuation and

lineation, as well. The third copy sent to Susan does not offer any variant words, either. (Franklin, *The Poems* 1:356-8)

An interesting example of variant lines is included in the first copy of “One need not be a chamber to be haunted” (Fr 407A):

One need not be a Chamber - to be Haunted -

One need not be a House -

The Brain - has Corridors surpassing

Material Place -

Far safer of a Midnight - meeting

External Ghost -

Than its Interior - confronting -

That cooler - Host -

Far safer, through an Abbey – gallop -

The Stones a'chase -

Than moonless - One's A'self encounter -

In lonesome place -

Ourselves - behind Ourselves - Concealed -

Should startle - most -

Assassin - hid in Our Apartment -

Be Horror's least -

The Prudent - carries a Revolver -

He bolts the Door -

O'erlooking a Superior Spectre -

More near -

Besides the four variant words in the Fascicle 20 copy of the poem, two alternative lines are also provided for the two final lines of the poem. Thus these variants are in a “strategic” position concerning the closure, the final message. These are as follows:

Variant closure1: “A Spectre - infinite - accompanying - /He fails to fear -”

Variant closure 2: “Maintaining a superior spectre –/None saw –”

The poem is a psychological thriller built on antonyms paralleled with each other within each stanza. The first two lines provide information about the “Material Place” of a haunted house and its tenant, compared in the third and fourth lines to the interior space of the psyche haunted by its own repressed unconscious mind, representing far more danger and “Horror” than the former one. Encountering one’s own self, “Ourself - behind Ourself - Concealed -”, a hidden facet of one’s own mind is more terrifying than the threat of a ghost. There are three spheres in the poem: the real, physical world of the house, the projection of the speaker’s fears to the real world by the embodied ghost and the interior of the “Brain”, that is the mental, psychological sphere. Both the “original” closure and Variant closure 1 in the Fascicle 20 copy suggest that we fail to notice our monstrous self, which is “Superior” to the “External Ghost” and is more dangerous as we concentrate on the external threats.

However, our failure to notice this darker self is unintentional, as the word “O’erlooking” indicates. Contrary to the above closures, the word “Maintaining” in Variant closure 2 implies an intended action as the definition of “maintain” in Webster shows: “To hold, preserve or keep in any particular state or condition; to support; to sustain” (“Maintain” Def. 1.).

If the verb “maintain” refers to an intentional action, the existence of the darker side of the soul is the speaker’s fault, hiding it from others (see “None saw” in the final line) suggests it is her responsibility. Although the state of being “Haunted” described at the beginning of the poem refers to passive behavior, according to the second line variation it is changed for active participation on the speaker’s part. Thus, the line variation results in a completely new interpretation of the whole poem.

Interestingly, sometimes Dickinson would make a fair copy for herself outside the fascicle or set, without giving alternatives for words, lines or stanzas. For instance, the fascicle copy of “There came a day at summer’s full” (Fr325) includes alternate words, while in the fair copy which was not bound but remained in her possession she did not include any extra words (Franklin, *The Poems* 1:344-5). This may testify that the fascicles are not work copies prepared for her own use or for a possible later choice for a final version. At the same time, the existence of her own fair copies without variants may evidence that the variants are provided for the reader to accomplish the poem, just like a set of accessories of different colors may be provided for an outfit. As she usually did not include any variants in the poems sent to friends or relatives but made her choice of the

alternative words and tailored the poem to the addressee, her own variant-free copies raise the question whether she regarded her own copy as the most relevant one for herself. If so, in this case she considered herself a reader of the poem.

Since the readers of a conventional print publication are not aware of any of the variants, for them a significant part of the poem is lost as if they encountered only a fragment of the whole work. They are also partly deprived of the challenge of creative reading and the task of co-authorship. They receive a finished text, ready-made for them.

Allowing for the fact that the identity of a poem also depends on its context, the latter is an important element which a new, extra-textual variant may derive from. A differing context may produce a new variant of the poem. Regarding contextualization, most scholars focus on the fascicles and argue that they represent added meaning to the individual poems. For instance, Dorothy Huff Oberhaus, Sharon Cameron, Gudrun Grabner and Martha Nell Smith agree that there is remarkable interplay among poems within a fascicle, as poems establish a certain relation with each other. Oberhaus, for example, supposes that “a single Dickinson poem does not have the same signification when it is read outside the context of fascicles,” which she sees as “the account of a long spiritual and poetic pilgrimage” (Oberhaus, *Emily Dickinson’s Fascicles* 186-7). Sharon Cameron believes that a poem contextualized by a fascicle sometimes has “an altogether different, rather than only a rationally more complex, meaning when it is read in sequence rather than an isolated lyric” (Cameron, “Dickinson’s Fascicles” 149). She also agrees that the poems within the fascicles are related to each other, some of them are paired or clustered (Cameron, “Dickinson’s Fascicles” 150). Heginbotham discusses fascicles as forerunners of modern poetic sequence (Heginbotham, *Reading the fascicles of...* 9). Martha Nell Smith calls attention to Dickinson’s consciousness of intertextualities evidenced by the fact that she rearranged the poems after copying them. She also points out the importance of contexture of poems within letters (Smith, *Rowing* 89-90). I agree with the above scholars regarding the importance of contextualization, although I do not think that a poem may not be interpreted without its context, in itself. However, the change of context necessarily changes the reading of the poem.

Contrary to these views, Mitchell does not attach much significance to the contexts of the Dickinson poems. He argues that Dickinson never asked Susan Dickinson or Thomas Wentworth Higginson about the sequences of poems, only about the individual poems. Furthermore, she did not distribute fascicles or sequences of poems or keep or bind the poems sent to one particular addressee together (Mitchell, *Measures* 310). Mitchell

points out that, for instance from the twenty-five poems of Fascicle 5 Susan received nine, four of which only existed in pairs. If the sequence of poems were a narrative one, Susan would not have been able to follow the poems. Dickinson did not always allude to Susan's name in the fascicles or sets, which may prove that the context is not a significant factor in the interpretation of poems (Mitchell, *Measures* 308). I share Mitchell's view that contextualization results in different possibilities of meaning for Dickinson and for the reader, and his assumption that "poetry may be legitimately appreciated in contexts other than those of its first material presentation (Mitchell, *Measures* 310).

However, the appearance of the same text in different contexts may change the poem to such an extent that it results in a text which may be considered a variant, or in case of more than one differing contexts, as it often happens with a Dickinson poem, more variants, due to the influence of the context on the poem. A Dickinson poem in its original manuscript form may appear in various contexts: as part of a fascicle or set, imbedded in a letter, included in a letter, as part of a gift, paired with a picture or drawing or with no context at all, as an individual poem. The way the above contexts may influence the poem is different from the way they are influenced in printed publishing. Even their original, manuscript context could not, or not always have been adopted by the print version in Dickinson's time. Moreover, the poem may have been subject to other, unsolicited effects. This is definitely true for poems published in periodicals or collections, which seemed to be the easiest way for Dickinson to print her works. In this case the poems are influenced by the other texts surrounding them in an unwanted way. Although she may have had some prospect of publishing whole books of poetry if she had become popular with the contemporary audience, obviously, she would not have published her letters, as it would have been a violation of her much safeguarded privacy. Additionally, it would have been unfeasible to reproduce the poem as part of a gift.

The following poem may serve as evidence of the effect of the differing contexts on the poem. As we will see, the Fascicle 3 context of the poem reveals some additional meaning or emphasizes a special facet of the meaning. "I hide myself within my flower" (Fr80), the Fascicle 40 variant of which was discussed in the chapter "Emily Dickinson On Readers", has three fair copies. The first one was included in Fascicle 3 in about spring 1859:

I hide myself within my flower
That wearing on your breast -

You - unsuspecting, wear me too -
And angels know the rest!

As Sharon Cameron, Martha Nell Smith, Eleanor Elson Heginbotham and Dorothy Huff Oberhaus argue, there is interaction among poems within a fascicle. In *Reading the Fascicles of Emily Dickinson: Dwelling in Possibilities* Heginbotham reads the poems contextually, based on their position within a fascicle. I agree with her thesis that returning to the context of the poems “may tip us off to possible meanings not obvious when a poem is isolated” (xi). Similarly, Cameron argues that poems read in isolation get a new meaning in the context of the fascicles (Choosing 182). Oberhaus, analyzing Fascicle 40, concludes that the poems allude to each other as well as the earlier fascicle (Oberhaus 80). Although the examination of this interplay within Fascicle 3 and Fascicle 40 is beyond the scope of my research, I would like to examine some of the connections to the above poem in order to highlight why the poem in the fascicle context may be considered a variant of the individual poem. When considering the text not only as an isolated work, I follow the idea of the above mentioned scholars.

In the above poem the poet communicates with her recipient through her flower, a metaphor Dickinson frequently uses for her poems. The recipient is the bearer of the poem, the wearer of the flower, with which she appears to identify herself: having the flower is a substitute for having her company, consequently the poem is a substitute for the poet.

In Fascicle 3 there are eight other poems which include the flower trope. The most important one is “My nosegays are for captives” (Fr74):

My nosegays are for Captives -
Dim - long expectant eyes,
Fingers denied the plucking,
Patient till Paradise -

To such, if they should whisper
Of morning and the moor -
They bear no other errand,
And I, no other prayer.

The poem is a kind of *ars poetica*, in which “Nosegays” is a metaphor referring to Dickinson’s poems. She alludes to her poems with the same metaphor in her letter written to Samuel Bowles in 1862, during the Civil War when she was asked several times to give poems to charity publications to help soldiers: “A Soldier called – a Morning ago, and asked for a Nosegay, to take to Battle.” (L272) In the above poem the only mission of her “nosegays”, the poems is to “tell all the truth” about nature, to serve those in need and serve as the poet’s prayers for them.

“The rainbow never tells me” (Fr76) also includes the flower metaphor:

The rainbow never tells me
That gust and storm are by -
Yet is she more convincing
Than Philosophy.

My flowers turn from Forums -
Yet eloquent declare
What Cato could’nt prove me
Except the birds were here!

Similarly to the examined poem, here the poet identifies her poems with the flowers as the possessive pronoun and the word “eloquent” in stanza two suggest. Her flowers, her poems have some secret knowledge that they communicate.

In the following poem, however, there is reference to one particular species of flowers, the daisy. In “I often passed the village” (Fr41) the daisy is a reference to Dickinson, while “Dollie” is a nickname for Susan Dickinson (Sewall 488, Hart, Smith 4):

I often passed the Village
When going home from school -
And wondered what they did there -
And why it was so still -

I did not know the year then,
In which my call would come -
Earlier, by the Dial,

Than the rest have gone.

It's stiller than the sundown.

It's cooler than the dawn -

The Daisies dare to come here -

And birds can flutter down -

So when you are tired -

Or - perplexed - or cold -

Trust the loving promise

Underneath the mould,

Cry "it's I," "take Dollie,"

And I will enfold!

Again, instead of the speaker, the flowers have the courage to communicate something to her friend. The poet is hiding, like in "I hide myself within my flower", within the "Daisies".

The daisy metaphor can be identified in "If I should die" (Fr36): "'Tis sweet to know that stocks will stand / When we with Daisies lie -". Here, though the theme of the poem differs, line 12 confirms that the speaker identifies herself with "Daisies".

Although the flower metaphor of "The morns are meeker than they were" (Fr32) is different, it may be worth noting that its first copy was sent to Susan Dickinson with a flower. A similar gesture of friendship is expressed in "By chivalries as tiny" (Fr37), in which the mention of "Book" right after "Blossom" may refer to the gifts Dickinson can offer:

By Chivalries as tiny,

A Blossom, or a Book,

The seeds of smiles are planted -

Which blossom in the dark.

Finally, "I never lost as much but twice" (Fr39) is a poem repeating the angel metaphor of "I hide myself within my flower": "Angels - twice descending / Reimbursed

my store –”. Similarly to the knowledgeable angels of “I hide myself within my flowers”, these creatures also assist the poet owing to their supernatural power.

The complimentary meaning of the poem, namely that the flower or daisy is a metaphor referring to the poems or the poet who identifies herself with her poems and relies on the angels’ assistance, is highlighted by its context in the fascicle. As Grabner claims, “to read a poem in the fascicle context is potentially to domesticate it—to make it less uncanny than the conventional interpretation does” (Cameron, “Dickinson’s Fascicles” 150).

A variant of “I hide myself within my flowers” was copied in about 1863 “on a leaf of notepaper, as if for sending with a flower”. Franklin notes that there may have been another copy sent with a bouquet (Franklin, *The Poems of* 1:119). If the flower or the bouquet may be regarded as a context, and the poem as part of this context, then there is another variant of the poem. In this case the text itself is read as a separate entity. It is a note accompanying the flowers sent by the reclusive Dickinson. The poem is to replace its author’s person, it is a substitute for personal contact. This emphasizes the motif of hiding in the poem. However, with the physical appearance of the actual flower, the flower metaphor, as a reference to the poems, is rendered completely meaningless. A more obvious reason why this copy is a variant is that it has only one and a half lines identical with the poem in Fascicle 3. Presumably, it was rewritten to be “tailored” for the recipient and the occasion.

Almost the same text, a variant or, according to Cameron, a version of the poem can be found in Fascicle 40. Cameron considers the same poem outside of a particular fascicle a different version or a different poem, not a variant, (Cameron, *Choosing* 112) since the “the category of a fascicle is required to produce poetic identity” (Cameron, *Choosing* 82). She even allows for the fact that poems appearing in two different places in a single fascicle may not be regarded as variant but as different versions” (Cameron, *Choosing* 87). I call them variants but, as mentioned above, in the broader sense of the term.

In the above case there are some changes in the punctuation as included in Fascicle 40 written in about 1864:

I hide myself - within my flower,
That fading from your Vase -

You - unsuspecting, feel for me -
Almost a loneliness -

If the reader is familiar with the previously discussed context of the poem, the flower metaphor will be interpreted as an allusion to the speaker's poems. Another poem from this fascicle, "Between my country and the others" (Fr829) contains the same flower trope referring to poems:

Between My Country - and the Others -
There is a Sea -
But Flowers - negotiate between us -
As Ministry.

The flower trope, at the same time, will clarify the pronoun "This" in the next poem of the fascicle, "Had I not this and this I said" (Fr 828) as a reference to one particular poem, as Oberhaus concludes (114).

"The only news I know" (Fr820) the opening poem of Fascicle 40, may clarify the meaning of the word "you" in the third line of "I hide myself within my flowers" (Fr80). The poet expresses her wish to communicate God's "News" to her fellow human beings, the readers:

"If other news there be -
Or admirabler show -
I'll tell it You -"

Similarly, the speaker's vocation as mediator and reporter of the news is referred to as an "Experiment" "Toward Men" in "The first day that I was a life" (Fr 823). Thus in "I hide myself within my flower," the addressee, referred to as "you," may be the reader in general. The final line of "The first day that I was a life" is "Memory", which might lead us to the assumption that "fading from your Vase" is an allusion to the readers' fading memory, "Vase" being the readers' mortal body and mind. Mortality is shared with them by the speaker, as she identifies herself with the fading flower. If the speaker of "The first day that I was a life" is dead for the world and reborn as a poet, this statement is emphasized in the first line of the poem discussed.

Where is the poet now, if the readers cannot meet her in the world? The answer seems to be included in the first line: she is hiding from the world in her flowers, the poems. The intimate relationship between the speaker and the addressee is explained by the third line of “Between my country and the others”: “But Flowers – negotiate between us -”. It also serves as a similar explanation for the function of the poems: to serve as intermediary between the poet and her readers. The reciprocity of their feelings is revealed by “Had I not this and this, I said”. Thus it is not only the reader who feels “loneliness” without the poet, but the poet also needs the readers.

As the above analysis reveals, the three different appearances of the poem may be considered variants not only due to their textual differences but also because of their varying contextualization. Even though the texts of the second, separate copy and the one included in Fascicle 40 do not show significant differences, the differing contexts may result in differing interpretations. Certainly, one might say that all the works of a given author serve as a context for any one particular poem. However, readers do not usually read the whole oeuvre for a better understanding of one work, although they may read a whole sequence or a letter or consider an object as an immediate context, which may result in a different meaning and a different reading.

It is not only the change of context that may produce an extra-textual variant but also a poem. Several scholars agree that a poem can be a variant of another one. Sharon Cameron speaks about pairings of poems within one particular fascicle, in which the heteroglossia is made manifest. By pairing she means that in several of the fascicles the first and last poems are complementary or/and antithetical (Cameron, “Dickinson’s Fascicles” 150-151). While Oberhaus writes about clusters of groupings of poems centered around one particular idea or topic, Heginbotham supposes that some of the fascicle poems are reprises or revisions of each other (Heginbotham, *Reading the fascicles* 5).

A further extra-textual variant may result from the differing interpretation of recipients including ways of reading the alternate words. Owing to the unfixed nature of Dickinson’s poems and the co-productive reading they require, different recipients will “create” different versions of the poem. As the reader takes an active part in the creation of the poem, the outcome of each reading may be regarded as a variant of the poem.

Sometimes Dickinson would alter the poem for different addressees and occasions, the practice of which is not possible in print mass production, which cannot be targeted at the author’s intended audience. Franklin assumes that Dickinson would change a reading to make it suitable for different people or occasions. He sees this practice as an evidence

that multiplicity did not bother Dickinson (Franklin, *The Editing* 132). Mitchell agrees that Dickinson sometimes altered the poem with a particular reader in mind but “was not averse to having more than one recipients to certain poems”. For instance, about twenty per cent of the poems to Susan were also read by others (Mitchell: *Measures* 308). Dickinson does not always change the poem in order to tailor it to the recipient. The reason for alterations is usually revision and improvement. For instance, “A bold, inspiring bird is a joy” (Fr 1022) has three variants: one in Set 7, another in Set 11 and a copy sent to Susan. The Set 11 version is a revised version of the poem in Set 7, and the same text is sent to Susan, unchanged.

The effect of the change of text and change of recipient as well as the change of context can be demonstrated by “I have a bird in spring” (Fr4):

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

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

Fast is a safer hand
Held in a truer Land
Are mine -
And though they now depart,
Tell I my doubting heart
They're thine.

In a serener Bright,

In a more golden light
I see
Each little doubt and fear,
Each little discord here
Removed.

Then will I not repine,
Knowing that Bird of mine
Though flown
Shall in a distant tree
Bright melody for me
Return.

The first copy of the poem concluded a letter to Susan, written in about 1854 (Franklin, *The Poems of* 1:59). The letter is about the differences between them and expresses Dickinson's willingness to break with her friend. Ellen Louise Hart and Martha Nell Smith agree with Johnson supposing that the disagreement may have been on spiritual matters (Johnson 1:307, Hart, Smith 69). Jay Leyda publishes a draft letter to Susan written in September 1854, which also refers to some differences between Emily and Susan. Johnson mentions these, as well, though he dates it to September 1851 (Leyda 1:316). The letter to Susan starts as follows: "Sue - you can go or stay - There is but one alternative - We differ often lately, and this must be the last" (L173). In the concluding lines preceding the poem Dickinson writes: "We have walked very pleasantly - Perhaps this is the point at which our paths diverge - then pass on singing Sue, and up the distant hill I journey on." (L173) Thus the poem is a farewell note for Susan, in which the singing "Bird", the "Robin" may be a trope for her, who should "pass on singing". Then the speaker hopes for her song to "return", heard from a "distant tree". She also hopes for a Utopian, peaceful future or rather the future memory of their relationship: "each little discord here/ Removed". This variant of the poem, the message of which is reinforced by the context of the letter, does not imply a final, dramatic rapture, contrary to the beginning of the letter, only the establishment of some distance between the speaker, as suggested by the adverbs of time in the second stanza: "beyond the sea" and the last stanza: "distant tree".

The variant of the second stanza, incorporated in a prose letter to the Hollands written 26 November 1854, has a different effect on the reader (Franklin, *The Poems of* 1:60):

Then will I not repine,
Knowing that Bird of mine,
tho' flown -
learneth beyond the sea,
melody new for me,
and will return.

The above variant of the second stanza was written following Emily and her sister, Lavinia Dickinson's second visit to the Hollands (Sewall 2:596). Both the beginning and the final paragraphs of the letter express how much the poet misses their company and voices her hope to see them again soon: "How sweet if I could see you, and talk of all these things! Please write us very soon. The days with you last September seem a great way off, and to meet you again, delightful. I'm sure it won't be long before we sit together" (L175). Placed in a different context, reedited to make sense without the preceding stanza and rewritten for different addressees, the text conveys a completely different message. The first word "Then" refers to the condition described in the preceding lines of the letter. Contrary to the last stanza of the first variant, in which there is hope only for the "Bright melody" to return, here it is the bird itself which will come back, having learnt a new "Melody". The speaker's optimism and certainty of the new encounter is emphasized by the simple future tense of the last line. The poem reflects the optimistic tone of the closing lines of the letter, not characteristic of the letter written to Sue. Thus the first variant focuses on the friends' parting while the second one on their meeting.

It is not only the genre of the context that may vary, as in the above example, but also the genre of the text itself. Some poems exist only in the form of a letter-poem, some in two forms: as a letter-poem and as a poem, sometimes with the same text, sometimes with variations in the text. Certainly, a poem read as a kind of letter cannot be considered the same as a conventional poem. It is a variant even if the text is the same. I argue that the change of genre results in a further variant as the genre has a considerable impact on the identity of the text and, consequently, on its reading. However, if the genre is a crucial element determining the poem and there is a multiplicity of genres about certain poems,

this is another explanation for the possibly distorting effects of print publishing that Dickinson avoided.

A poem written following the birth of Susan's first child, Edward (Ned) Dickinson on the 19 June 1861 is an example of Dickinson's typical genre, the letter-poem (Johnson 1:373):

Is it true, dear Sue?
Are there two?
I should'nt like to come
For fear of joggling Him!
If you could shut him up
In a Coffee Cup,
Or tie him to a pin
Till I got in -
Or make him fast
To "Toby's" fist -
Hist! Whist! I'd come!
Emily -
(L232)

The most important formal features of conventional letters: the opening salutation and the signature at the end are kept. The topic is also a typical epistolary one: the writer congratulates on the birth of the newborn. Another reason why this letter-poem approaches the genre of private letter is that it is a personal message addressed to the recipient. She may be the only person to understand all the allusions comprehensible for the public only in case they have some knowledge of Emily Dickinson's private life. However, it is also published as a poem, for example in the Johnson and the Franklin edition, without the signature at the end, although Dickinson did not prepare any other manuscript copies than the letter-poem sent to Susan. Read as a poem, besides the above-mentioned allusions, the reader can not understand the references. Even the most creative reading strategy would not help to clarify or complete the meaning of "two" and "Him" mentioned four times. The reader should also be aware of the poet's secluded lifestyle to understand why her visit is subject to humorous conditions in addition to other circumstances. For instance, according to Ellen Louise Hart and Martha Nell Smith, the first condition: shutting up the baby in a

coffee cup might be a playful reference to Susan's love of coffee, and in earlier publications was mistranscribed as "I could shut him up..." suggesting that Emily could be jealous of Susan Dickinson's baby (Hart, Smith 96). Similarly to the first condition, the other two conditions: tying the newborn to a pin or putting him in Toby, the cat's fists are also expressed with irrational, abstract images as if the writer considered her own visit irrational. In spite of its similarities to a private letter, this text is undoubtedly a poem. The short, verse-like, capitalized lines, the rhymes, the rhythm, the alliterations (for fear, coffee cup, the suspended rhyme: fast-fist), the one-syllable words, the exclamation marks and the subordinate conditional clauses are all tools of the hyperbole leading to a dramatic climax, which renders the work seem more like a poem than a letter, in spite of the fact that read as a poem by others than the addressee, only a fraction of the meaning can be comprehended.

A shift of genre and the resulting variant can be observed in "There is a word" (Fr 42):

There is a word
Which bears a sword
Can pierce an armed man -
It hurls it's barbed syllables
And is mute again -
But where it fell
The Saved will tell
On patriotic day,
Some epauletted Brother
Gave his breath away!

Wherever runs the breathless sun -
Wherever roams the day -
There is it's noiseless onset -
There is it's victory!
Behold the keenest marksman -
The most accomplished shot!
Time's sublimest target
Is a soul "forgot"!

The first fair copy of the poem written about late 1858 was sent to Susan Dickinson, signed “Emily” and addressed “Sue”, while the second one, only slightly different in punctuation and capitalization, was included in Fascicle 2 (Franklin, *The Poems of 1*: 93-94). Although the first copy includes three formal features of conventional private letters: the address, the salutation, and the signature, it remains a question whether it should be regarded as a letter-poem or rather a gift-poem. As we know, Emily Dickinson often gave copies of poems to her friends. Her sister-in-law, Susan, received many poems, “some as messages, and some for her evaluation and critical response” (Hart, Smith 78). There are poems which are signed, however, those signed can not always be considered personal messages, which sometimes remain unsigned. Thus it is difficult to make a distinction between a letter-poem and a gift-poem. However, regardless of the genre of “There is a word” (Fr4), the genre of the first copy as a letter-poem or a gift differs from that of the second copy in Fascicle 2, thus it may be considered a variant, carrying different or additional meaning. The first one is intended for one particular reader, consequently every other reader is an outsider, having the impression of eavesdropping. Obviously, the outsider-reader is not invited to activate creative reading skills of co-authoring. It is possible that the poem sent to Susan is an allusion to a dispute between the two women, to some resentment. An insulting remark may be compared to a “sword” with “barbed syllables”. The target of the sharp word identified with time may be Dickinson herself, “a soul forgot”, who may have complained about Susan neglecting her.

The diversity of meaning is revealed if, instead of reading the text as a letter-poem or a gift-poem intended for one particular addressee, it is read as a poem which is an integral part of both Fascicle 2 and Emily Dickinson’s whole oeuvre. In the latter case, it is worth considering that Dickinson frequently used biblical language, which she placed in a non-theological context. In “There is a word” she describes the power of language with the help of the “sword” metaphor, well-known from the Bible. The same metaphor is used, for example, in The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians in 6:17 and in The Revelation in 1:16, 2:16 and 19:15. In the latter we can read: “And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations”. Similarly, the word of God is compared to a sword in The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews: “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (4:12). In the poem the “sword” metaphor is extended. Dickinson uses war metaphors all through the text: sword, barbed, pierce, armed, patriotic, epauletted,

victory, marksman, shot, target. While in the Bible the sword refers to the word of God, in the poem it can be either a reference to this or to the poetic word, to which special, supernatural power is attributed, comparable to the power of the word of God, thus giving the biblical metaphor a more complex meaning. In either interpretation, the word is linked to God and it has power over Man. The line “Where it fell” implies that it has an above position, and kills a person as an act of God. The words “sublimest”, “soul”, “saved” also suggest this connection as they evoke the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. The word has supernatural power: it overcomes both man and nature, that is the sun. One cannot run away from it, as the image of the breathlessly running sun and the roaming day as symbols of the passing time, and the repetition of “wherever” and “there is” imply. The word has the power to kill, it “can pierce” a man armed with traditional, man-made weapons. Similarly, in Paul’s Epistle the word of God is “sharper” than any sword, “piercing” both soul and body. In the first stanza of the poem the destructive power of the word concerns the body, while in the second stanza it reaches the “soul forgot”. The notion of quickness, present in the Bible, is also expressed in the poem: “It hurls it’s barbed syllables / And is mute again –”. The words “mute” and “noiseless” may reflect Dickinson’s preference of using words economically. The personification of the word suggests that Dickinson considered the language a living organism, her poetry had to “breathe”.

As the poems exist in different genres, the question of print publishing arises: what should be published, what is supposed to be publishable as subject to public property? And if a poem is publishable in this sense, which variant should be printed? Discussing the materiality and identity of the Dickinson poem, Suzanne Juhasz argues that Dickinson’s “writing forms possess such fluidity that we cannot precisely say what is prose and what is poetry” (Juhasz, “Materiality and the Poet” 427). Virginia Jackson speaks about Dickinson’s “only apparently transparent genre” (11), while Cameron goes further by claiming that her “poetic structures lie outside of the province of conventional genres (Cameron, “Amplified Contexts” 245). This trait of Dickinson’s poems is one of the reasons why they lie outside of conventional publishing, as well.

Dickinson did not only frequently enclose or embed poems in her letters and wrote letter-poems but she also wrote letters with poetic qualities, which further demonstrates the fluidity of genres. Sometimes the text flows into poetry and then back to prose unnoticed, which is another factor contributing to the unfixed quality of the texts. If there are letter-poems, these texts might be called poem-letters. The distinction between Dickinson’s letters and poems is even more difficult as after the late 1850s letters and poems began to

look similar, with short lines and no separation between lines of prose and lines of poetry (Hart, Smith XXIII). The appendix of Franklin's Variorum edition also mentions some prose passages that "exhibit characteristics of verse without being so written" (Franklin, *The Poems* 3:1578), but only in the early letters.

The fluidity and the lack of boundaries between genres can be seen in her letter written in the late 1850s, to Susan Dickinson:

"Thursday Eve

Susie –

You will forgive me, for I never visit. I am from the fields, you know, and while quite at home with the

Dandelion, make but sorry figure in a Drawing – room –

Did you ask me out with a bunch of Daisies, I should thank

you, and accept – but with Roses – "Lilies" – "Solomon"

himself – suffers much embarrassment! Do not mind me

Susie – If I do not come with feet, in my heart I come –

talk the most, and laugh the longest – stay when all the rest

have gone – kiss your cheek, perhaps, while those honest

people quite forget you in their Sleep!

Thank you for your frequent coming, and the flowers you bring – ..."

 (qtd. in Hart, Smith 73)

The addressee of the letter, Susan Dickinson entertained a wide range of intellectuals in her home, including some literary figures, editors and artists. Emily Dickinson attended many of these social gatherings in the 1850's, but later she secluded herself more and more increasingly. In this letter she describes her place in society and gives an ironical explanation of her unsociable personality with the mock hierarchy of flowers. She is at home in the company of simple dandelions and daisies but feels embarrassed with the high society of roses and lilies (Hart, Smith 73). The alliterations: Dandelion, drawing room, Daisies, the internal rhymes: Dandelion – Drawing room, accept – embarrassment, come – gone, cheek – Sleep, coming – bring, the rhythm, the flower-metaphors and the emphatic

word order: “in my heart I come” make the letter comparable to verse. In lines 2-6, 8-9, 11-12 we can find poem-like lines, although these are not separated.

The above letter-poem is definitely more than poetic prose. It looks more prose than poetry, however, it is characterized by poetic quality and poetic techniques. It reads like a modern prose poem with the difference that it is not the fusion of two genres but three as it is written in letter form. Nothing could fit better the definition of Peter Johnson, the editor of *The Prose Poem: An International Journal*: “Just as black humor straddles the fine line between comedy and tragedy, so the prose poem plants one foot in prose, the other in poetry, both heels resting precariously on banana peels” (qtd. in Poet.org homepage. Web. accessed 3 Jan 2014).

Variants and the problem of genre are not the only factors which destabilize Dickinson’s works. A typical characteristic feature of Dickinson’s poetry is the lack of titles. According to Franklin, she gave titles only to nine poems and referred to seventeen poems in her notes and letters, with two or three words which function like titles (Franklin, *The Poems* 3:1545). For example, she mentioned “A narrow fellow in the grass” (Fr 1096) as “my Snake” in her letter to Higginson (L316), maybe because it was given the title “The Snake” in *Springfield Republican*. However, when included in letters, the titles may function as mere references to the poems according to John Mulvihill’s supposition. He distinguishes between the way Dickinson marks others’ poems by title with quotation marks or underlining and the references to her own poems by capitalizing the first letter of major words. Mulvihill asserts that the reason for this is not only the fact that the latter are not titles but references to poems but also Dickinson’s practice of speaking about her poems as objects or phenomena. For instance, when sending the poem “How happy is the little stone” (Fr1570) in letter 749, she asks Thomas Niles, a publisher to accept a “Pebble” (“Why Dickinson Didn’t Title” Web. n.pag.). Although she did not express her objection to the titles given to her poems, she did not title them in her own book-like collections, the fascicles or the sets, either, except three poems (Franklin, *The Poems* 3:1545). The titles of the poems published during her lifetime were probably assigned by editors, another alteration to make the poems conform to the publishing conventions. As for Dickinson, she did not want titles in the social sense, either. On the few occasions that her poems were published, they were published unanimously. She did not wish to be “Somebody”, to “advertize” her name or her poetry, as she suggests in “I’m nobody! Who are you?” (Fr260).

Without titles, the poems are open-ended, open at both ends. They are not only unfinished but also lack a clear beginning, which contributes to their unfixed nature. Thus there is even more scope for interpretation. The function of the title should be to give the reader an idea about the subject or the message of the poem, to provide guidelines for interpretation. The lack of titles adds to the elliptical nature of the poems, thus the reader has a more difficult task when making guesses about the meaning, which seems to be part of Dickinson's "hide and seek" game as described in "Good to hide and hear them hunt" (Fr945). In addition, in their titleless form the poems are alien to print publication, especially in periodicals or anthologies, the media available for Dickinson, as it is indispensable to separate them from other authors' texts, especially if they are published anonymously. While it was customary, as Alexandra Socarides informs us, to draw lines between poems in "commonplace books", a practice that Dickinson also adopts in her fascicles", it would not have served as a sufficient separation in the above mentioned publications (Socarides, "Rethinking the Fascicles" 72). Nontitling is connected to nonpublishing, as if Dickinson did not want her poems to look like the ones written by professional, acknowledged, "Somebody" authors.

In addition to the lack of titles, the unfinished state of the poems is due to the following: the special strategies of reading they require, the existence of variants, the alternate elements within one particular version and the lack of a fixed, final version. Presumably, finishing a poem meant for Dickinson that the poem reached the stage of being ready for the reader to complete it.

Visual and other features of print resistance

The poems placed in the context of an artifact, or poems which can be regarded as artifacts are also texts which do not fit the concept of poetry or "any modern model of the lyric" (Jackson 13). Additionally, they may be difficult or impossible to be reproduced in print.

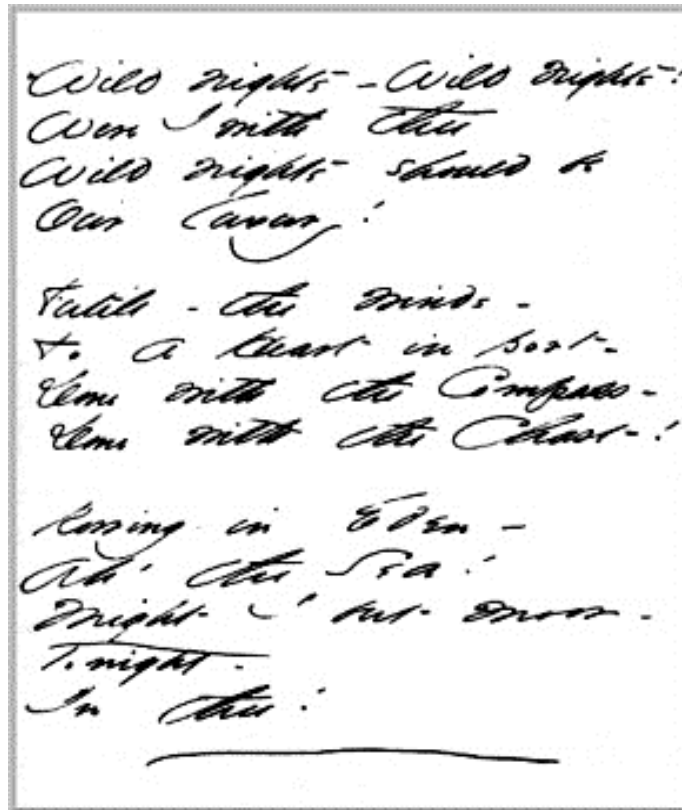
There appears to be three types of poems which may be considered artifacts. The first type includes poems which are part of an artifactual context, the copy of the poem combined with an object, usually a gift, for example some flowers or fruit, a leaf, a ribbon, a picture. The second type is constituted by the fair, holograph copies of the poem itself, while the third type contains the drafts of poems on scraps of paper where, as Melanie

Habbarth observes, the material realms, similarly to the variants, extend the bounds of the poem (54).

In each case, the visuality of the work has an impact on both its identity as an object and its meaning. Martha Nell Smith highlights the difference between print and non-print publication: “in holograph, the poems visually control the page while in print the white space of the page practically consumes the poems, miniaturizing them” (Smith, *Rowing in Eden* 79). She also attaches importance to Dickinson’s calligraphy of fair copies, when differentiating between the poet’s more casual handwriting on drafts and her dramatic “‘performance script’, a more stylized holograph for ‘publication’ ”, which is “somewhat seductive” (Smith, *Rowing in Eden* 63). The differences of the handwriting may also serve as evidence for Dickinson’s activity of self-publication targeting a wider audience. It is obvious that the poem in conventional print offers a different, less visual experience than the manuscript form. The calligraphy of the hand-written copy, which Dickinson frequently offered as a gift, as well as the unconventional lining, punctuation and spelling also contribute to the visual and poetic impact of the works.

Jerome McGann stresses the importance of unusual lineation. He reminds us of the dramatic shift of style between fascicles 1-8 and those written later: while in the early fascicles “the linear metrical units correspond to their scriptural presentation”, in the later ones the lines are distributed over more lines and “the metrical scheme is drastically altered from the metrical norm”. He agrees with Susan Howe when he recognizes the above change as a proof of Dickinson being a poetic innovator (McGann, “Composition and explanation” 118-9). Martha Nell Smith presumes that the reason for the change was that in the first eight fascicles Dickinson had publication in mind, this is why she regularized her poetic forms (Smith “Dickinson’s Manuscripts” 115).

Martha Nell Smith goes further when she supposes that “especially in later works Dickinson’s letter formation is at least sometimes freighted with meaning” (Smith, *Rowing in Eden* 83). In my view the formal changes indicate not only the fact that Dickinson renounced print publication but also her increasing interest in the visual features of her poetry. Smith provides “The sea said “Come” to the brook” (Fr1275) as an example, in which the “letters ‘look like’ waves”. Smith argues that in the poem mimesis should be considered in the most literal sense (Smith, *Rowing in Eden* 85). Another example of the dramatic, “wave-like” letter-formation of the hand-written copy, which contributes to the message of the poem is “Wild Nights - Wild nights! (Fr269):



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

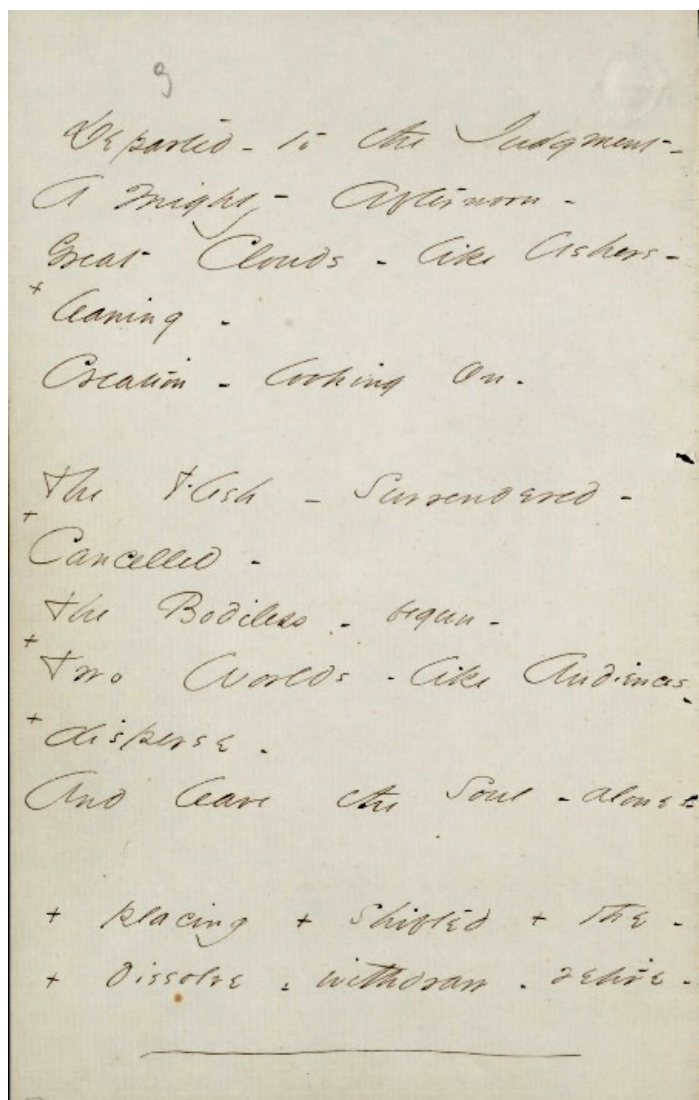
Futile - the Winds -
To a Heart in port -
Done with the Compass -
Done with the Chart!

Rowing in Eden -
Ah, the Sea!
Might I but moor - Tonight -
In Thee!

The form of the letters “W”, “C”, “y”, “g”, “S”, “O”, “A” the long “t”-bars and the closing line slanting downward make the reader associate to the image of a stormy sea

reflecting the passionate, overheated message of the poem and mirroring the rowing and sea metaphors. The calligraphy and the white spaces on the page make the image of the poem so expressive that it may be considered not only a poem but an artifact. Looking at the page, one has the impression that handwriting itself and the composition of the handwritten page was part of artistic creation for Dickinson.

Even if we disregard the calligraphy, the handwritten poem as an artifact as contrasted to its printed version has some added value which is certainly lost in print. For example, the original fair copy of "Departed to the Judgment" (Fr399) in fascicle 20 makes an entirely different impression on the reader than its printed version, the lineation of which follows the metrical rules:



Departed - to the Judgment -

A Mighty - Afternoon -

Great Clouds - like Ushers - leaning -
Creation - looking on -

The Flesh - Surrendered - Cancelled -
The Bodiless - begun -
Two Worlds - like Audiences - disperse -
And leave the Soul - alone -

Unlike in “Wild Nights - Wild nights!”, where only the last but first line division is dissimilar in the published version, in the above poem every third or fourth line is divided differently in the original copy: the words “learning”, “Cancelled” and “disperse” are written in separate lines, thus given special emphasis and a dramatic effect. The page is filled with careful economy, the remaining white spaces are proportionally arranged. The poet does not leave any unused space below the text. Presumably, Dickinson did not apply the above-mentioned line divisions because she did not have enough space for the remaining words of the given line. The white spaces give the poem some air, they make it “breathe”, much more than on the printed page which it shares with other poems. The isolation of poems on a separate page each also gives them independence, freeing them from the interference of context. On the manuscript of the above poem, there are twenty-six short horizontal marks including the dashes and the lines crossing the t-bars while the six places for variants as well as the alternate words are marked with a tiny “x”. All these make the page look like a strange embroidery of cross stitch, that is a living, breathing, woven, hand-worked material rather than a piece of dead paper. As Dickinson’s light-handed, artistic handwriting reflects, she may have found pleasure in the physical act of writing as part of the process of artistic creation.

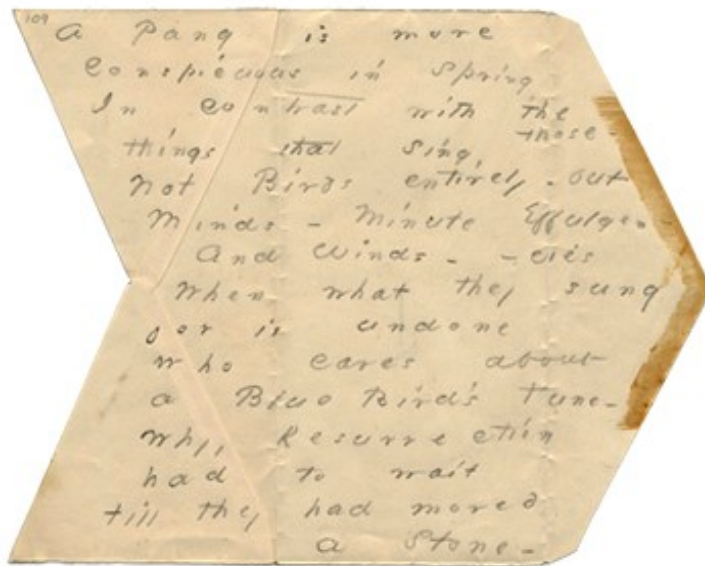
In the case of the workshop scraps or different cut-outs, it is not only the handwriting but also the material on which the poem appears that makes the poem an artifact. The material may contribute to the meaning, however, it may also serve as a barrier to interpretation. As Melanie Hubbard claims, the refusal to print and editorial intervention “allowed her to explore the materiality of representation” (54). Dickinson probably used whatever she could find to write on – both the material and the already existing content of the cut-out, envelope, advertisement, recipe or shopping list she used may have influenced the writing process and sometimes led the poet to respond to them, both as author and reader, as if creating a work of applied art. Although Hubbard considers the graphic

resistance of the poems a barrier for the reader, she asserts that in some cases material “seems clearly to have been designed” (56). In spite of the fact that it remains a question whether the poet’s reaction to the shape, material and content of the paper she wrote on was intentional or not, it is obvious that the interaction between the poem and its material may result in inspiration and, at the same time, restriction for both poet and reader.

The following poem (Fr 1545) was written on the inside of an envelope in about 1881:

A Pang is more conspicuous in Spring
In contrast with the things that sing
Not Birds entirely - but Minds -
And Winds - Minute Effulgencies
When what they sung for is undone
Who cares about a Blue Bird's Tune -
Why, Resurrection had to wait
Till they had moved a Stone -

The poem may have been tailored to the shape of the flattened envelope, as not only the lineation but also the message seems to fit it. The shape is that of an arrow which may cause the sharp, tense feeling of pain described as “Pang” at the beginning of the poem:



Owing to the line division of the original manuscript, the text precisely follows the arrow-shape of the envelope as an objectified symbol of pang. In contrast with the eight line version of both the Johnson and the Franklin edition, in the manuscript there are enough lines to fill the entire space of the envelope. The final words: “a Stone” constituting a separate closing line are given special emphasis. Thus, “Stone” as another object which might cause sharp pain becomes a symbol of “Pang”, giving the poem some circular symmetry. Interestingly, although the line “And Winds” is obviously below “Minute Effulgencies” on the manuscript, and is printed accordingly in the Johnson edition, in the Franklin edition the line ending with “Minds –“ is followed by the line beginning with “And Winds -”, as if both were described as “Minute Effulgencies”. Interestingly, the last four lines also appear on the inside of an envelope addressed to Louise Norcross by Dickinson (Franklin, *The Poems* 3:1353).

The above example demonstrates that both the text and the visual image of the handwritten poem on the page contribute to the meaning of the work. Typically of Dickinson’s genre-blurring, it is difficult to say if it is a poem or an artifact. Jerome McGann is right when he speaks about the “dramatic interplays between a poetics of the eye and a poetics of the ear” characterizing Dickinson’s poetry from the winter of 1861. At this time, instead of following the conventions of text presentation of print, she began

using experimental writing techniques which, in McGann's view, make her a forerunner of Modernism ("Emily Dickinson's Visible Language" 248-9).

As we have seen, the appearance of the poems on the paper is not necessarily accidental. Thus, I cannot share Ralph Franklin's view, who writes as follows in his letter to Susan Howe:

"I transcribed the letters line-for-physical line solely for purposes of reference with the facsimiles. If I were doing a text as such, I would surely opt for run-on treatment since it is prose and there is no expected (genre) form generating the line. In the poems, of course, there is such a form and that is what I intend to follow – not the accidents of physical line breaks on the paper. Except of course – where they coincide" (Howe n.pag.).

Domhnall Mitchell also finds the question of deliberate visual layout of the orthographs problematic because of the inconsistency of the use of capital letters and the irregularity of meter (Mitchell, *Measures* 21). At the same time, Susan Howe writes as follows:

"As a poet I cannot assert that Dickinson composed in stanzas and was careless about line breaks. In the precinct of Poetry, a word, the space around a word, each letter, every mark silence or sound, volatizes an inner law of form; moves on a rigorous line" (Howe n.pag.).

It is possible that there are instances of draft poems in which the division of lines is accidental, however, in fair copies of poems and poems like the above one, in which the line breaks radically differ from the conventional, Franklin's argument concerning the accidental nature of physical line breaks on the paper seems to be mistaken. As I attempt to demonstrate in the chapter "Tricks of the Trade", Dickinson was highly conscious of her art. It is obvious from Dickinson's letter to Higginson, in which she expresses her discontent with the printed version of "A narrow fellow in the grass" (Fr1096) as the editors of *Springfield Weekly Republican* added a question mark which she left out, although her use of irregular punctuation was deliberate (White 89): "Lest you meet my Snake and suppose I deceive it was robed of me – defeated too of the third line by punctuation. The third and fourth were one" (L316).

The most characteristic irregularity of Dickinson's punctuation is the excessive use of dashes. While the problem of punctuation is beyond the scope of my research, it should be mentioned as an important factor which leads to the poems' resistance to print. Although the preference for dashes, often regularized in print, is considered part of the female orthographic culture of Dickinson's time and as Mitchell argues, dashes may not be

unique to Dickinson as “they were quite common and casually applied substitutes for other forms of punctuation” (Mitchell, *Measures* 61), in her poetry dashes contribute to the unfinished nature and thus the flexibility of the poems.

Dashes constitute silence, ellipsis, gaps to be filled. Similarly to the variants, dashes signaling ellipsis provide the impression of both the limitation of the language and openness. They offer the reader the opportunity to complete the fragmented ideas followed by dashes, to decode the meaning, as well as to apply the punctuation mark of their choice. As Paul Crumbly writes, dashes “play an important role in defining a poetic project designed to present readers a wide range of simultaneous meaning” (Crumbly 1).

Smith also agrees that dashes suggest Dickinson’s expectations concerning readers’ co-authoring (Smith, *Rowing in Eden* 52-53). Consequently, replacing them with a different punctuation mark in order to conform to the conventions of grammar, as editors would often do, means depriving them of the above opportunities and producing a fixed and thus inflexible element of the poem.

For example, there are two fair copies of “The missing all prevented me” (Fr995), with variant capitalization and punctuation. The pencil copy, addressed to Susan, has five dashes, including one at the end of the final line:

The missing all - prevented me
From missing minor things -
If nothing larger than a world's
Departure from a Hinge -
Or Sun's extinction - be observed -
'Twas not so large that I
Could lift my Forehead from my work
For Curiosity -

The copy in Set 7 has regular punctuation instead of dashes:

The Missing All, prevented Me
From missing minor Things.
If nothing larger than a World's
Departure from a Hinge
Or Sun's Extinction, be observed

'Twas not so large that I
Could lift my Forehead from my work
For Curiosity.

Mitchell notes that Dickinson's punctuation is more casual in informal letters written to Sue (Mitchel, *Measures* 110). While it is possible that she paid less attention to the rules of grammar in the letters written to her closest friends, presumably, her revising practices indicate that the poems are results of careful work.

Even though the difficulty of reading the poet's handwriting is a barrier, it does not function as a distancing effect, unlike print. The printed and thus simplified and impoverished form of the poems, which meets the readers' expectations and preconceptions, not only diminishes the challenge for them but also restricts the scope of interpretation. Paradoxically, while the poems do not get a static form fixed at the moment of printing and keep changing in time with each interpretation, the handwritten pages still preserve the spell of the moment of creation and the strokes of the pen or pencil recall the momentary mental and psychological state of their creator. Thus, the private poet who refuses to print as she does not want to become a public or published author reveals more about her personality and, in a way, gives up more of her privacy than that of her published peers.

The significant difference between the manuscript form of poems including those unfinished, offering variant options and the printed versions may serve as a further evidence of the poems' resistance to print. Given the stage of technological development of Dickinson's time, the extra dimension of the former would have been impossible to be reproduced in conventional print publications. In addition, editors preferred to regularize the oddities of the poems. The poet was possibly aware of the fact that printing misrepresented her work, which may have been one of the reasons why she rejected publishing. She wanted to see her poems as she left them. David Porter mentions the example of "This was a poet" (Fr 446), "which, significantly, was not published until 1929, and then, with only two of the original twenty dashes" (Porter13).

The refusal of print publication resulted in three freedoms: freedom from the demands of editors giving Dickinson free control of the works, freedom from inflexible typographical conventions and freedom to experiment. Dickinson did not wish to be controlled and censored by editors. She wanted to obtain full control of her works, editing included. She refused the editors' work of co-authorship, instead, she charged the readers

to do some of the editors' tasks. By producing variant versions of her poems, she constantly revised and edited them. At the same time, she did not only grant the readers unusual freedom for interpretation and creation but also shared the job of editing with them when she kept the alternatives, without producing a finalized text fixed on the page. Instead, the text gets fixed in a different space, in each interpreter's mind. After all, the manuscript original is a different medium than a printed publication, for instance, a book or a periodical. Roland Barthes' proclamation that "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author" could be completed to fit Dickinson's "writerly text" which involves the readers' active participation in the production of meanings (Barthes 150). In her poetry "the death of the author" is accompanied by the death and rebirth of the editor in the author and the reader. McGann claims that Dickinson "regularly reimagined and reconstructed her texts, not least when she would make variant and particular copies of her poems for different correspondents and occasions" (McGann "Composition and Explanation" 132). Dickinson did not need the services of editors as intermediaries between the poet and the public, either. She acted as an intermediary herself, the mediator between God and the readers, thus she established direct relationship, characterized by intimacy, with them. There is nothing to come between them, to interfere with the poet-reader relationship. The poet's pen or pencil strokes on the manuscript page bring them together.

This dissertation does not undertake to find an answer to the question whether the Dickinson oeuvre should be published in print or reproduced in manuscript form, nor do we know Dickinson's intentions for certain about this issue. It has long been a challenge for Dickinson scholars to decide whether the scriptural characteristics of the manuscripts are results of a deliberate strategy or not. Martha Nell Smith is certain that Dickinson focused more and more on the possibilities of the manuscript page and began to exploit more fully the details of scriptural corporealization (Smith, "Corporealizations" 196). Damhnall Mitchell has doubts about Dickinson's intentionality. As he sums up, Dickinson's writing practices can be understood "as nineteenth-century graphic initiatives", "as the accidental by products of a nineteenth-century home-based literary production not oriented toward publication" or "as formal deviations" interpreted as "fully deliberate graphic experiments" (Mitchell, *Monarch* 226). However, the poet's intentions are beyond the point: the physical, graphic and contextual features of her orthograph pages exist and have a significant impact on interpretation. Thus they influence the way they are

or are not published, as they do not conform to the standards of print representation. Moreover, the poems are characterized by some features which make them resistant to print. Given the technological limitations of Dickinson's time, many of the visual features were not even translatable into print. In conventional and mechanical print reproduction the "anti-print" features were and still often are either regularized or eliminated by editors. As a result, some important layers of meaning may be lost in print publication.

Dickinson and Publication

In order to form an opinion concerning Dickinson's ideas in terms of publishing, first of all, distinction should be made between private distribution publishing of the works and printing for commercial distribution. Dickinson was aware of the fact that publishing was possible through other media than print, as well. She did not reject publishing in the sense of making her works known to her chosen public. However, she did not approve of printing for commercial purposes as the poems analyzed below will attest. In order to understand her motives it is important to be informed about the circumstances of publishing that she refused. Thus the first part of this chapter will outline the expectations of the literary market and the editors' requirements that she could not or did not wish to meet. The second part will attempt to get as close to Dickinson's notion of publishing as possible through her poems. Finally, it will discuss the alternative ways of publishing Dickinson employed.

Dickinson's refusal of commercial publishing implies that she did not wish to meet editors' and readers' expectations of the published writers of her time. Publishing either in books or in periodicals was considered business rather than art, consequently writers were to meet the editors' requirements and conform to the public taste.

Women writers, as we will see, had to satisfy special requirements, thus for Dickinson the question was not merely whether to publish or not. The dilemma also concerned publishing as a poetess. It appears that she said no to publishing as a woman poet.

Women writers were considered to be emotional beings, concerned about their feelings, religion and domestic life. In the first place they were expected to be wives, mothers and housewives who could do some writing as a pastime. Those seriously building a writing career were accused of unwomanly behavior, unless they had other motivation than the writing career itself. As Joanne Dobson remarks, "only two motives for publication were seen as viable for women: the desire to be 'an instrument of good'...and

the pressing need for money”. She remarks that the latter was the case with several women writers, for instance Harriet Beecher Stowe, Elizabeth Oakes Smith, Louisa May Alcott, who told her publisher about her pressing financial need or Susan Warner, who began her career as she had to support her family (Dobson 50-51). Similarly, Dickinson’s friend, Helen Hunt Jackson also took to writing as a source of living after the death of her husband and her son.

Emily Dickinson had neither moral motives to serve the public good nor was she under the financial pressure since she came from a well-to-do middle class family. She did not need to make compromises in order to satisfy the editors’ demands. She did not need or want to submit her works to a kind of mass production. She could afford to be a “barefoot” amateur regarding the financial-economic implications of the word, although otherwise, she did regard herself as a professional poet. Elisabeth A. Petrino observes that the poetry of women writers between 1820 and 1880 was characterized by reviewers of the time as affective, emotional, natural but less intellectual than that of male authors. Women’s verse was often compared to child’s voice or birdsong. (Petrino 6). In spite of this, as Betsy Erkkila observes, in Dickinson’s time American literature became dominated by sentimental domestic literature written by women who had a primary role in the production of American culture. When speaking about the feminization of poetry, Erkkila quotes Nathaniel Hawthorne’s complaint about “scribbling” women who leave him “no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash” (Hawthorne 56). Editors wanted poems which suited the above-mentioned preconceptions about women’s verse. Dickinson, at the same time, did not wish to belong to this line of sentimental feminine poetry. As Erkkila remarks, she did not seem to feel solidarity with women writers, rather shared Hawthorne’s opinion. She rejected both sentimentalism and the domestic ideology which characterized the kind of female literature she would have been expected to produce if she had entered the literary marketplace (Erkkila, *The Wicked Sisters* 56). Dickinson’s resistance to domesticism is revealed by her lifestyle. She could not fulfill herself in housework, which she did not like and was not involved in home-making.

Her negative attitude to female sentimentalism is expressed, for example in “Poor little heart!” (Fr214):

Poor little Heart!
Did they forget thee?
Then dinna care! Then dinna care!

Proud little Heart!
Did they forsake thee?
Be debonnaire! Be debonnaire!

Frail little Heart!
I would not break thee -
Could'st credit me? Could'st credit me?

Gay little Heart -
Like Morning Glory!
Wind and Sun - wilt thee array!

The poem employs the linguistic and poetic tools of sentimental female verse to overturn the traditional stereotype: this time the weak, fragile, helpless woman, while in several other poems the female persona is the little girl, the bride or the wife. In the above poem the rejection of emotions is treated with irony, no matter what the subject of rejection is, the poet's own heart or another woman's heart. The speaker's distance from the suffering heart is revealed firstly by the use of the Irish dialect she may have learned from the servants working for her family. Secondly, she does not seem to sympathize with the "little heart" or partake in its suffering as she is persuading the forgotten, forsaken person not to care and be "debonnaire", that is be cheerful in spite of her sad situation. Indeed, as a strange result of the negative events the first two stanzas refer to, the "little Heart" appears to go through a positive change: in the final stanza it becomes "Gay" "Like Morning Glory". Thirdly, the poem adopts the form of simple folk songs, alien to Dickinson's cultural background. Thus, the poem may be read as a mockery of sentimental female poetry.

A reason for Dickinson's rejection could be the fact that in many cases editors insisted on having significant control over the works. They were compelled to keep the laws of supply and demand, which increasingly influenced creative work. Petrino points out that editors had a paternalistic attitude to women writers, as they were afraid of ruining their reputation by publishing poetry which was not tailored for the current literary standards (Petrino 23, 32). The commercialization of literature was a new phenomenon, not regarded as a positive one by everybody. Erkkila quotes an author of North American

Review who “expressed anxiety about the increasing commercialization and democratization of literature as the production of the written word” and complained that “authorship became subject to laws of marketplace economy” (Erkkila, *The Wicked Sisters* 55). Robert J. Scholnick speaks about a literary marketplace where “for instance in 1852 Graham’s offered fifty dollars per poem to...William Cullen Bryant and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, but it insisted on dictating the length of poems, their subject matter and treatment, and the frequency of composition”. (Scholnik 171).

Publishing magazines was meant to be a profitable rather than an artistic activity. Giordano quotes Frank Luther Mott’s *A History of American Magazines* and informs us that the periodical trade has become increasingly popular with entrepreneurs, especially after the Civil War. The unprecedented growth of the periodical market due to the growing demand, the demographic and geographic changes as well as the advances of transportation and printing technologies resulted in about 3300 magazines by 1885 instead of the 700 in 1865. (Mott 10-11). Periodical authors had to meet the requirements of this market. Dickinson did not only refuse to become a celebrity but she also insisted on maintaining her artistic freedom. Just as she would not agree to be restricted in her choice of form, she did not wish to be restricted in her choice of topics, either, in spite of the fact that the typical female themes are included in the Dickinson oeuvre, as well, albeit usually with a different, unusual or reversed approach.

Emily Dickinson did not intend to be a published author. More specifically, in spite of several quests she definitely rejected to become a periodical author. Reading periodicals herself, Dickinson was presumably aware that the usually broad target audience of magazines preferred conventional genteel poetry which was concerned with the blessings of bourgeois life. Periodicals wanted to appeal to the audience and meet their demand, and, “poetry suffered as a result of the laws of supply and demand” (Giordano 14). The magazines were characterized by heterogeneity, fusing high and low art, popular and elite forms (Giordano 12). Matthew Giordano remarks that it was a “manifestly public form of poetic authorship”, a central publishing outlet for authors, who wrote to serve a range of extending and unsophisticated audiences (Giordano 2-4). A periodical poet had no choice but to accept the context of the other poets mostly following the genteel tradition. Even if some of them did not conform in terms of content, they still tried to satisfy the demand of a broad, heterogenic and often unsophisticated public at least by following the conventions of form. Moreover, magazine poetry written by women served as filler for editors and women magazine poets were treated as a “forgettable horde” (Bennet 202). Obviously,

Dickinson did not want to “mingle” and become one of the popular “Somebody” authors. Her lines in her letter written to Higginson in April 1861 reveal that she could be afraid of losing her unique voice by satisfying the requirements of the market: “While my thought is undressed – I can make the distinction, but when I put them in the gown – they look alike, and numb” (L261).

Although she was an avid reader of sometimes lower quality sentimental literature, and, as mentioned above, most of the approved female topics can be found in her oeuvre, she preferred to keep her own voice and “select her own society”, her own audience. She did not wish to conform to the taste of the general public. Alexandra Socarites regards it as a sign of Dickinson’s rejection of commercialization that she even avoided autograph albums which were used for copying poetry because of their mass-marketed, commercialized nature and chose to prepare her unmarketable, hand-sewn fascicles instead (Socarites 28-29).

At the same time, she wanted to be part of the literary world. This did not seem to be possible without being involved, at least indirectly, in the publishing world, through her relationship with its representatives. Dickinson kept contact with well-known personalities, editors and publishers of the literary “business”, for example, Samuel Bowles, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Thomas Niles, Josiah Holland, although she may not have had the underlying intention of getting them publish her works. Besides, she admired some of the popular, successful women writers, such as Elisabeth Barrett Browning or Helen Hunt Jackson. She did not seem to mind if an author, like Jackson, her good friend, was known to write for a living. Jackson was not only a poet but also a businesswoman as she admitted herself in 1870 when negotiating the price for her travel letters: “I never write for money, I write for love, then after it is written, I print for money” (Banning 90). Dickinson wished to be part of the literary world, however, she avoided active participation in the commercialized world of publishing.

The reasons for her refusal of the commercialization of poetry are clearly expressed in “Publication is the auction” (Fr788):

Publication - is the Auction
Of the Mind of Man -
Poverty - be justifying
For so foul a thing

Possibly - but We - would rather
From Our Garret go
White - Unto the White Creator -
Than invest - Our Snow -

Thought belong to Him who gave it -
Then - to Him Who bear
It's Corporeal illustration - sell
The Royal Air -

In the Parcel - Be the Merchant
Of the Heavenly Grace -
But reduce no Human Spirit
To Disgrace of Price -

The above poem is one of Dickinson's typical definition poems, thus it is quite obvious what the speaker equates publication with. However, it is more important what she means by publication as such. It is not the mere act of making a work available for the public by distribution, for instance, by printing that she condemns, rather, as the final word "Price" suggests, the act of doing so in exchange for money, that is commercial distribution. At the same time, the commercialization of the "Mind of Man" or "Thought" or "Human Spirit" or "Snow" involves their materialization in print. This is how thought is turned into a product to be taken into possession by the public. As it is implied in the third stanza, the distribution of works without the involvement of money does not result in the reader possessing the text. It may not be taken into possession as it belongs to God, without whose grace it could not have been created.

Besides God, it may belong to two persons, however, definitely not to those who buy literature in books or journals. One of the owners is the poet, as the possessive pronoun of the phrase "our Snow" suggests. Mitchell presumes that the poet complained about her "Snake" ("A narrow fellow in the grass" Fr 1096) having been robbed from her as she regarded editorial change as a theft and the poems a private property (Mitchell, *Monarch* 78). Consequently, Dickinson rejects the idea of literature as a commodity for sale.

The color white, evoked by the above phrase, establishes a tie between God and the poet: “White” is God’s attribute while “Snow” presumably refers to Dickinson’s poems being unaffected by print publication or the public eye. The poems belong to God and the poet, and the latter she may choose to offer them to the selected few as a gift. This gesture does not involve reproduction, unlike commercial publication. The purity and the irreproducible nature of snow is contrasted to print reproduction evoking the idea of sexual reproduction.

Elisabeth A. Petrino believes that the white of “Snow” refers to the blank page, while Mitchell supposes that the poet’s anonymity and her decision to remain blank has a religious purpose: she writes in honor of God (Petrino 48, Mitchell, *Monarch* 80). Martin Greenup goes further when he offers a double interpretation for the term “White Creator” arguing that it may refer to both God and Dickinson, who creates poems in a white dress (Greenup 347). Mitchell assumes that the color white implies that non-publication is associated with purity and the condition of being untouched, unspoilt by the influence of the market and editorial intervention, being even unread, or at least unread by the general public, that is a mass of strangers. Thus the speaker preserves her privacy in her garret which she will not leave before she appears in front of God. As Mitchell mentions, Dickinson could afford not to compromise her artistic integrity and not to meet market demands owing to her privileged social situation (Mitchell, *Monarch* 84).

Indeed, her attitude seems to involve a sense of elitism and distinction. The majestic plural, the royal “we” of the second stanza recalls her language of royal and divine symbols in other poems, for instance “The face I carry with me last” (Fr 395), “Title divine is mine!” (Fr 194A), “The soul selects her own society” (Fr 409), “I’m ceded - I’ve stopped being their’s” (Fr353). The plural form suggests that she sees herself standing above those who print for financial reasons. She prefers seclusion, both literally, as she spent most of her adult years confined to her home, and metaphorically, as she did not seem to have the intention of sharing her works with the general public. The reason for this could be not only the fact that her secluded lifestyle gave her more opportunity for writing but also her targeting a special circle of readers, her “selected society”. Dickinson demonstrated her sense of difference in social life, as well. As Betsy Erkkila mentions, her self-enclosure “in ever smaller social units – first within Amherst, then within her house, and ultimately within her room and the space of her mind” was not only an act of protecting her artistic creation but also a social act to separate herself from the masses. Erkkila argues that Dickinson’s refusal to publish is characterized by an “aristocratic

resistance to the twin forces of democratization and commercialization” (Erkkila, “Emily Dickinson and Class” 7,17). She attributes this to Dickinson’s conservative, upper-class Whig family background with elitist, antidemocratic values. However, as the poems about poetic vocation attest, Dickinson’s elitism was based on artistic merits rather than social or financial privileges. Although she profited of her advantageous social position, her sense of distinction was rooted in and justified by her art.

The third owner of the poems is the one who “bear it’s corporeal illustration”. “It’s” in the third stanza is probably a possessive pronoun referring to “Thought” as this is Dickinson’s usual spelling of “its”. Thus the embodiment of God’s thought, its “corporeal illustration” may be Christ as the capitalized “Man” in the second line suggests. Similarly, the phrase “Human Spirit” may be an allusion to the presence of the Holy Spirit in a human being, that is Christ. Consequently, the poet identifies herself with Christ as the conveyor of God’s message, as an intermediary between God and the world. Poetry as the subject of publication represents the word of God, this is why it is unacceptable to sell it. Petrino finds that Dickinson’s refusal of publication may be rooted in the transcendentalist belief that publication is the violation of the soul (Petrino 36). In the poem the rejection is emphasized by the contrasting vocabulary: the financial terms, for example “auction”, “invest”, “sell”, “parcel”, “reduce” as opposed to the words describing the mental, spiritual world. Some scholars, for instance Mitchell (81), Alik Barnstone (120) and Petrino(48) think that auction may be a reference to slavery. However, as the above interpretation testifies, the subject of auction is not a human being but the thought granted by God. At the same time, the poem, as a result of thought is downgraded as a material object when published.

Pollack argues that print is condemned as inconsistent with female modesty and as a form of business activity characteristic of men (Pollack 229). Obviously, Dickinson did not mingle with the world of business and, as Joanne Dobson argues, her rejection of publishing is congruent with the conservative norms of femininity, the role of the retired woman devoted to her family and friends, which resulted in conflicts between the above role and her art (Dobson 54). As Mitchell informs us, both Emily Dickinson and Susan Dickinson were uncomfortable with the idea of publishing. Not only their economic and social background but their gender also played an important role in their attitude, which was typical of nineteenth century women of their class (Mitchell, *Monarch* 155-156). Undoubtedly, the concept of the feminine placed special emphasis on the privacy of the domestic sphere which women were confined to. However, Dickinson did not seem to

regard this expectation toward women as a confinement, she rather transformed it into freedom from social responsibilities as well as professional ones. In addition, the freedom of non-publication implied freedom from the obligation to satisfy the demand of the market and turn her poems into commodities for sale. It also meant freedom from the publicity linked to published authors. Confinement for her was escape from the public eye, from exposing herself and giving up her privacy. In her letter to Higginson she seems to regard her refusal to publish as self-evident and natural: “He spoke about a “Charity” – I refused but didn’t inquire” (L676). Dickinson’s quotation marks suggest that she may have regarded charity merely as a good excuse to persuade her and make it acceptable for her to publish. Emily Dickinson, who concealed most of her poetic activity even from her family and friends, considered print publishing a degradation of poetry to a paid occupation. She presumably assumed that private authorship could be considered artistic activity while being a public author was merely a job pursued for a living, which would have been disgrace for a woman in her social situation. At the same time, the poem does not limit the condemnation of publication to women, in the first stanza the speaker declares that commercial publication is objectionable in all cases, except for pressing financial need.

Becoming a published author would have meant becoming a public figure, which she did not seek to become. Thus, her refusal of the commercialized world of “professional” writing may be also due to her wish to maintain control over her private life as well as her poems. Losing control over her published work would have meant not only the deprivation of her artistic freedom but also that of her privacy. This was the case with a number of popular authors of her time. As Mitchell argues, the increase in population, in literacy, the improvement of printing technology and that of transportation resulted in the replacement of the genteel traditions of authorship with a competitive marketplace economy in which the community had influence over the type of literature it wanted to read. Thus the sales figures became one of the defining factors of literary success (Mitchell, *Monarch* 175). Robert J. Scholnik adds that publishers wished “to boost not only the sales of a particular work but also the author’s celebrity in the hopes of pushing his or her previous works”, thus they “more than ever came before the public eye” (Scholnik 170-171). Consequently, the widening of the reading public had an important effect: a celebrity-culture began to form. Readers, increasingly interested in the authors’ background and personality, paid visits to their homes. Longfellow, for instance, had so many admirers visiting his home that he kept a box of pre-signed autographs on his mantelpiece (Blake 4). As Dandurand writes, “a public that knew the writings would not be

satisfied until it also knew about the writer (“Dickinson and the Public” 269). She quotes Louisa May Alcott, who complained in her journal in 1869 after the publication of *Little Women* as follows: “People begin to come and stare at the Alcotts. Reporters haunt the place to look at the authoress” (Alcott 271).

We can imagine, how Emily Dickinson would have been terrified of such intrusion into her privacy. Dickinson, who hardly ever left her room in her later years and would talk to friends or listen to music played in the sitting room from the top of the stairs, unseen, was surely aware of these side effects of fame. Her heated, emotional lyric, a genre of intimacy in itself, could have elicited powerful responses from fan readers. Interestingly, while Walt Whitman writes “I was chilled with the cold types, cylinder, wet paper/between us” (Whitman 143) rejecting print as a means of separation between him and his readers, Dickinson, on the contrary, sees print publication as a violation of her separation and privacy.

While Dickinson chose to keep close contact with her selected circle of readers, she was content to be set apart from the general public. On the rare occasions when she made an exception to allow her work to be printed, she did so behind the protective facelessness of anonymity. Obviously, anonymous publishing was not at all unusual in the nineteenth century. The editors of the Round table, Charles Humphreys Sweetser and his cousin Henry Edward Sweetser encouraged this practice as they assumed that anonymous journalism would help the readers concentrate on the important questions if they were not distracted by personalities (Scholnick 176). Unnamed publications were quite frequent with writers, especially women whose works were often printed without a name or with the initials only, whereas some of them used a pseudonym or a pen-name. For female authors this could be a means of balancing the contradiction of women exposing their private life while adhering to the female ideal of domesticity. “The image of the woman poet continues to be modest and retiring, reflecting a degree of uncertainty regarding the right of women to speak and modes for doing so,” thus poetry shows the public/private distinction to be highly unstable” (*The Cambridge History of American Literature* 4:176-177). This controversy is indicated by the phenomenon Mitchell mentions: in prefaces women authors would explain that they published reluctantly because they were persuaded or because of social or financial necessity (Mitchell, *Monarch* 168). Petrino adds that female authors “continued to ask the public to be tolerant in reading their poems, expressing shock and embarrassment that their verse was subject to public scrutiny” (Petrino 34). We can assume that for Dickinson leaving the imprints of her inner self on

the page and thus giving her thoughts and feelings a materialized form outside her mind involved the hazard of the violation of her privacy. If writing itself meant such a risk, we can imagine how perilous publication of any kind, let alone mass reproduction could seem to her.

Unlike many of the published authors, Dickinson insisted on full control of her work, including its context and the audience who read it. Herself as the mediator of “Truth”, she refused the mediation of editors and publishers. She claimed absolute control of her poems including their appearance on the page. As Martha Nell Smith writes, she refuses the regularization and uniformity of typography, as “no conventional mode of typesetting can reproduce her visual nuances” (63). She chose to leave her works in manuscript form preserving her original capitalization, punctuation, line and stanza divisions, variants instead, which, as Franklin claims, “resist translation into the conventions of print” (Franklin, *The Manuscript Books* x).

“How happy is the little stone” (Fr 1570 E) may serve as further evidence that Dickinson wished to maintain her authorial independence with absolute control over her poems:

How happy is the little Stone
That rambles in the Road alone
And does’nt care about Careers -
And Exigencies never fears -
Whose Coat of elemental Brown
A passing Universe put on,
And independent as the Sun
Associates or glows alone -
Fulfilling absolute Decree
In casual simplicity -

The above version was sent to Thomas Niles in late April 1882 in a letter with the following remark: “The kind but incredible opinion of “H.H.” and yourself, I would like to deserve - Would you accept a Pebble I think I gave to her, though I am not sure - ” (Franklin, *The Poems* 3:1374). Robert Sewall informs us that the poem and the above lines were Dickinson’s answer to a letter from Thomas Niles, in which he suggested that Dickinson should publish a volume of poems (Sewall 585). Niles was the publisher of “A

Masque of Poets" (1878), a collection of anonymous verse, in which her "Success is counted sweetest" was included. Dickinson obviously refuses Nile's suggestion and also gives her reasons for the refusal. The words "independent" and "alone", the latter used twice, imply that she chooses to remain a private poet, who is not interested in writing as a career and is not willing to satisfy the readers' needs. The repetition of the syllable "care" in line three: "And does'nt care about Careers -" suggests some irony concerning writing as a source of living and success. The poet is described as the representative of the "Universe", the communicator of universal truth and compared to the "Sun". Her mission is nothing less but to communicate "absolute Decree", that is God's will, unaffected and uncontrolled by any other power, as simply as inspiration is given by God's grace. The last line may be a reference to the "barefoot rank" Dickinson wished to keep.

"I'm nobody! Who are you?"(Fr260), also discussed in the chapters on readers and success and fame, is concerned not only with Dickinson's idea of audience but also that of publishing and published authors, to whom she refers to as "Somebody". The speaker of the poem identifies herself and her reader as "Nobody". The two of them stand up against the acknowledged authors referred to as "Somebody". The adjectives characterizing the state of being "Somebody" are definitely pejorative: "How dreary - to be - Somebody! / How public - like a Frog -". The "Somebody" character of the poem is described as disappointing and coarse, comparable to a rather disgusting, inferior animal to which not much intelligence is attributed. Consequently, similarly to its croaking, the author's writing can not be too elevated or valuable, either. "Somebody" authors seem to suit their audience of fans, the "admiring Bog". The word "Bog" also suggests negative qualities.

What the poet finds ordinary and disgusting may be the practice of well-known writers publishing sometimes shallow work in order to earn money and fame. It may be also an allusion to male writers in particular, as their names could be better known to the public. As mentioned above, women preferred anonymity and pseudonymity. As Elisabeth A. Petrino writes, in order to guarantee privacy, "many women give little or no actual biographical information about themselves to collections". Petrino remarks that the word "Nobody" might also refer to the poet's refusal of the physicality (no body) connected to the image of nineteenth century women by male critics (32-33). Surely, the poem is also a reflection of the female stereotype, that of the anonymous, modest, silent woman who lives withdrawn into her home. Dobson mentions the "ideology of female reticence", according to which women "were expected to maintain a decorous silence", to withhold everything "that would reveal to the world the presence of any passion or aspiration beyond the

ordained” (Dobson 57). Thus the speaker’s identification as “Nobody” may be interpreted as an allusion to women’s role, a sarcastic declaration of being a female poet. Moreover, being nameless, the expression of the poet distinguishing herself from “Somebody” authors since she finds it “dreary” and “public” “to tell your name”, as Mitchell claims, is “also a defensive gesture” which serves the protection of the poet’s identity “from prying eyes” (Mitchell, *Monarch* 159).

“Advertize”, the alternate word offered for “banish” in line four implies the selling of goods, thus the poet’s fear of being advertized may suggest her fear of her poems being sold, that is printed for commercial purposes. Advertizing is tied to publicity, which unavoidably involves revealing information about one’s private life. The poet and her distinguished reader might be banished as a result of the very act of advertizing: if they wish to avoid it and safeguard their privacy, they are compelled to escape from society. Domhnall Mitchell presumes that publishing involves becoming public property by revealing personal information, which may be avoided by the refusal of publication (*Monarch* 159). Mitchell believes that the poem “can be read as an antilyric” (*Monarch* 157) as lyric implies self-exposure and this is Dickinson’s refusal of expressing her private self. I think it is not self-expression that she denies but the selling of the products of self-expression. At first sight equal rank is attributed to the “Nobody” and the “Somebody” of the poem as both words are written with capital initials. However, Dickinson’s elitism is manifest again: the “Nobody” character rejects and excludes the society of “Somebody” poets. The question “Who are you?” in the first line of the poem offers a definition for the “Nobody” identity: “Nobody” is a person who is unknown but not worthless or meritless. A parallel may be found between Dickinson’s poems and “Nobody” authors: the untitled poems are similarly nameless, which makes publicity practically impossible for both.

Dickinson’s rejection of publishing may also imply the certainty that she will become a recognized poet even anonymously and without “advertizing”. The same idea is suggested in “I cannot dance upon my toes” (Fr381). The speaker proudly announces that although she is unknown and unpromoted on “any Placard”, she has the appreciation of the audience: “Till I was out of sight in sound - / The House encore me so -”. The term “out of sight” emphasizes that she, as a person, prefers to be invisible. She does not only object to publicity but also conceals her poetic profession: “Nor any know I know the Art”.

“I’m nobody! Who are you?” reveals that it is not only publishing as the selling of art for commercial purposes that Dickinson finds degrading but also the act of advertizing authors or publications. As Robert J. Scholnick explains, in 1861, when the poem was

written, “advertising had become part of periodicals which were established to advertise the publishing house that owned them, for example Harper’s Magazine. Periodicals carried advertising of the books they published as well as nonliterary, commercial products using the same language for both” (Scholnick 169-170). This fact reveals that literature was not differentiated from other merchandise.

The ten poems which are known to have appeared during Dickinson’s lifetime were all published anonymously and probably without her knowledge (Dobson 132). While concluding that Dickinson refused to print her poems, we should note that she is not known to have protested against the printing or reprinting of her poems without her permission. Moreover, as mentioned in the chapter on readers, Dickinson, as Karen Dandurand argues, was aware that the poems were reprinted in the newspapers, It was common practice that once a poem had been published, the other papers could reprint it free of charge. Thus a poem could circulate even for years (Dandurand, “Dickinson and the Public” 257-8). This is why Dickinson mentions a poem “which has been going through the papers” to her friend, Abiah Root and writes the following to Higginson referring to the publication and the reprint of “A narrow fellow in the grass” in Springfield Daily Republican: “Lest you meet my Snake” (L12, L316).

Considering the number of her published poems, Dickinson may have been regarded as an unknown, unpublished author during her lifetime. Still, we should not assume that she had merely twenty publications including reprints. Besides the traditional print publications, she seems to have found other, non-traditional ways to access readers. Although several scholars have been investigating whether she intended to publish or not, the question of how she wanted to publish seems to be more relevant. The first part of this chapter attempted to reveal the reasons why she refused print publishing. As clarified at the beginning of the chapter, she did not refuse publishing as such, only commercial distribution. “I told you I did not print” (L316) – she wrote to Higginson. Presumably, she had print publishing in mind when she wrote in response to Higginson’s advice to “delay” publishing that it was “foreign” to her thought, “as Firmament to Fin – “ (L265). Michael Kearns supposes that her statement “I smile when you suggest that I delay ‘to publish’ ” (L265) is a “private joke” as “she had already been publishing in her own fashion – circulating poems with letters – and by receiving her manuscripts Higginson was unknowingly furthering that end” (Kearns 65). Her words written to Susan suggest that she may have thought of publishing, but did not seem to be convinced that it would or should happen: “Could I make you and Austin proud – sometime – a great way off- ‘twould give

me taller feet – ” (L238) Certainly, the phrases “sometime” and “a great way off” imply that she did not expect this to happen soon, maybe not in her lifetime. As Martha Nell Smith observes, the image of “taller feet” suggests that Dickinson ridicules the idea of becoming a reputed published author (Smith, “Corporealizations” 213).

Still, as a private poet, she found her ways of private publishing, intended for a limited circle of readers. Her preferred medium was the handwritten page. Paradoxically, while this is an alternative to print publishing which she found intruding her privacy, it reveals much more about the author as a private person. Although Dickinson’s poems are not necessarily personal messages, as manuscripts, they appear in a personalized framework, bearing the personal touch of their author, evoking her memory. The reader’s interpretative freedom is combined with and maybe limited by the authorial presence. Her manuscript distribution of the poems is in sharp contrast with her silence as a non-published poet, just like the highly emotional, intimate nature of her lyric.

The following part of this chapter will scrutinize Dickinson’s bypasses of conventional print publishing which include the following: manuscript booklets known as fascicles, unbound sets, fair copies of poems on individual sheets sent to recipients as gifts, poems included in letters, poems or lines of poems embedded in letters, letter-poems and reading out poems to family members or friends.

Dickinson’s most characteristic products of private publishing are the forty fascicles which contain eight hundred poems altogether. Scholars agree that the fascicles, prepared between 1858 and 1864, are gatherings of poems, interrelated by theme, imagery, or emotion. The organizing principle and the relation of the poems is a complex and unexploitable topic which raises several questions, the examination of which is beyond the scope of this study. Instead, fascicles are discussed as an alternative form of publishing. These home-made books enabled Dickinson to exercise control not only over the text and the readers but also over the context of her poems. We could say that this method of self-publishing involves less publicity but more activity on the poet’s behalf, as she both writes and edits the poems.

The fascicles as alternatives to print publishing raise the following questions:

Were they meant to be shared at all or intended for private publication or are they preparations for print publication in the future? Are they rather the results of the poet’s private bookmaking activity?

Alexandra Socarides notes that the idea of fascicles as homemade books was not unknown in Dickinson’s time. It was customary to write or copy poems or passages of

prose into commonplace books, which often contained lines between the entries, like the fascicles. Autograph albums were also popular among Dickinson's contemporaries. They usually included the writings of others, addressed to the owner of the album (Socarides, "Rethinking the Fascicles" 71-72). Another kind of blank book which served the purpose of copying as well as clipping and pasting different texts and pictures was the scrapbook (Socarides, "Rethinking the Fascicles" 76). These blank books were mass-market products, however, Dickinson did not use ready-made ones but, as we know, constructed and sew the fascicles herself. Socarides finds that this "affected their status and genre" (Socarides, "Rethinking the Fascicles" 78).

Although the first fascicle is from 1858, Franklin supposes that Dickinson learned fascicle-making at Amherst Academy, where student writing was included in a manuscript called "Forest Leaves", "often hand-copied on single sheets of folded paper to form a volume". He suspects that "the little manuscript" (L247) and "the little volumes" (L280) Dickinson mentions in her letters to her college friend, Henry Vaughan Emmons "may have been gatherings of her poems" (Franklin, *The Poems* 1:9). Thomas Wentworth Higginson labeled Dickinson's poetry "the poetry of the portfolio" using Emerson's term for private, unedited poetry, which had a well established tradition (Heginbotham 107). As Eleanor Elson Heginbotham points out, it was not uncommon to produce individual collections of others' poetry, as, for instance, Dickinson's friend, Helen Hunt Jackson did among many others. She mentions Emily Brontë, who made prepublication books, copying them into notebooks, then after rearranging them, copied them again. Heginbotham presumes that Dickinson must have been familiar with this practice of professional writers (Heginbotham 108,110). According to Elisabeth A. Petrino "the portfolio tradition takes on a distinctly feminine cast by mid-century". Its sketches and fragments were not meant for publication. She finds that it was a suitable genre for women both for its unfinished and private nature which was recognized by Ralph Waldo Emerson (Petrino 35-36). However, Dickinson's fascicles are not unfinished in the sense of being fragmented. They are rather unfixed, open, and mobile. Nor are they private, in the sense of being the products of an amateur. They are very carefully written and edited self-publications. Moreover, as discussed in the chapter about her readers, although there is no evidence that the fascicles had any readers, they might have been circulated.

In order to decide whether Dickinson regarded the fascicles as finished products, it is important to understand her method of book-making, which is described by Franklin as follows: she copied the selected poems in ink onto sheets of letter paper, folded by the

manufacturer into a bifolium. Then she stacked the sheets and bound them by stabbing two holes through the sheets on the left side and tied them with a string. Dickinson would prepare a formal copy of the worksheet, destroy the first copy, then prepare a further copy to be sent to family members or friends or to be retained. Following this she would enter the poem into the fascicle or later the unbound set. Some further copies to be sent or retained could follow this process. In Fascicles 1-4 we can find only finished poems with the alternative readings resolved, and before 1860 she did not revise them in the fascicles. Later there are more and more variants, turning the fascicles into worksheets. It appears that Dickinson gave up making fascicles in early 1862, when she began to copy individual poems, sometimes fair copies, sometimes texts with alternative reading. She always destroyed the working drafts, which had served as basis for the fascicles. In the summer of 1862 she returned to fascicle making with Fascicle 16, to produce twenty-six new ones. Unlike concerning the previous fascicles, now copying and binding were close to each other, as the handwriting indicates. (Franklin, *The poems* 1:22-25).

Franklin presumes that Dickinson's goal could be merely "stocktaking, sifting and winnowing" the whole corpus, although at the beginning her intention was to produce finished products while later she just prepared fascicles "with no other purpose in mind than her own interest in the poems" (Franklin, *The poems* 1:11-20). At the same time, almost two decades earlier, in the Introduction to *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson* Franklin allows for the supposition that the fascicles "may have served privately as publication" besides the motif "to reduce disorder in her manuscripts" as they were as a "systematic and comprehensive record" of the poems (Franklin, *The Manuscript Books* ix). There are no titles or title pages, the poems are not numbered or arranged alphabetically, there is nothing, like contents or indexes to facilitate finding one particular poem (Franklin, *The poems* 1:7).

The fact that the fascicles do not bear the poet's name emphasize that she was comfortable, indeed, with anonymity for the reasons discussed above. Her non-titling may be explained by her preference of anonymity as John Mulvihill suggests, and may serve as evidence that "she never had any interest in publishing" (Mulvihill 2). However, this statement may be true for traditional print publication only, not for publication as such.

There is no evidence that Dickinson shared the fascicles with anyone. Even the family members were surprised to learn about them when her sister, Lavinia Dickinson found them after her death. Franklin supposes that the later fascicles, especially from Fascicle 9, which contain alternative readings and are less carefully copied were not

intended for readers and would have been unsuitable for circulation (Franklin, *The Poems* 20). However, as discussed in the chapter “Emily Dickinson On Readers”, Dickinson intended to leave the creative task of finishing the poem to readers through creative interpretation. Thus the existence of unresolved readings is not necessarily evidence of her renouncement of an audience. As no one knew about the fascicles, it seems that she was storing them for future use, although if it was the near or the distant future, we do not know. However, she must have had a definite purpose with them, probably that of leaving her poems in order for some kind of circulation before or after her death. Mitchell assumes that Dickinson was preparing for future “textual or print distribution”, a project that she gave up later. The fact that the fascicles were not sent to anyone, unlike individual poems “suggests that their intended audience may not have been an intimate, or local, or even contemporaneous one” (Mitchell, *Monarch* 166, 225). Mitchell thinks that the construction of handmade editions and the high quality of the language indicate a desire for permanence as well as “her awareness of a larger nexus of relations between herself as a writer and an unknown audience of the future” (Mitchell 170). Nevertheless, the unfinished nature of her poems and her demands from readers appear to contradict this supposition. Considering the existence of alternative readings, the later fascicles seem like interactive books denying permanence. As far as her intentions are concerned, fascicles 1-8 may have been written with print publication in mind. Jerome McGann observes that in these fascicles “she arranges the lines as they would be expected to appear in a printed book. These texts are being copied to imitate, at their basic scriptural level, the formalities of print”. McGann thinks that Dickinson rejected publishing “with its medium of print, because she came to see how restrictive and conventional that medium had become” (McGann 250). Sharon Cameron also argues that the fascicles were a form of private bookmaking. She contests Franklin’s assumption that they were merely a means of stocktaking. Cameron finds that Dickinson destroyed the worksheets as she might have regarded the fascicles “as definitive, if privately published, texts”, although Dickinson adopted variants from the fascicles in the copies of individual poems she sent to friends, and included variants in fair copies, as well, in the last thirty fascicles (Cameron, “Dickinson’s Fascicles” 142). Contrary to Franklin’s view, Sharon Cameron believes that the fascicles were intended not for ordering but for arranging the poems. It is possible that Dickinson left single poems temporarily separate to stitch them to the place where they would fit later. Cameron also sees it as an evidence that twenty of the forty fascicles were copied in 1862 but not all written in the same year. The facts that sometimes she repeated a poem within a fascicle as,

for instance, “Portraits are to daily faces” (Fr174) copied in Fascicle 8 with variant first lines or copied on matching leaves poems from different fascicles or included in fascicles poems from different years suggest that there should have been a conceptual scheme (Cameron, *Choosing not choosing* 14-18).

This method of changing arrangement may lead to the conclusion that for Dickinson the manuscript copy was the only possible way of publishing. Additionally, her binding practice of stacking the sheets instead of nesting them meant that the sheets were prepared individually, thus the fascicle sheet is Dickinson’s unit, and “she did not necessarily have the unit of book in mind (Socarides, “Rethinking the Fascicles” 84). In this form the unfixd openness of the text could be retained. It also offered the possibility of the constant revision of the texts for the poet. Furthermore, if we agree with Smith’s supposition that from the early 1860’s Dickinson regarded her poems as “holographic entities” (Smith, “Corporealizations” 205), as discussed in the chapter “Resistance to Print”, the manuscript collections seem to be the most suitable form, indeed. Martha Nell Smith also assumes that both Dickinson’s manuscript books and letters were her method of publishing, and calls them “a consciously designed alternative mode of textual reproduction and distribution” (Smith, *Rowing in Eden* 2). Similarly to Sharon Cameron, Dorothy Oberhaus, Susan Howe and others, she finds another evidence that the fascicles are the results of Dickinson’s bookmaking activity: “the lyrics within the manuscript books require the context of the fascicles for poetic identity”, she writes, and, just as the variant words and lines are “constitutive parts of the poems”, the poems of the same fascicle may be variants of one another (Smith, “Corporealizations” 203). Consequently, the fascicles are not just products of stocktaking, nor are they preparations for print but carefully compiled and edited publications. Moreover, they are not mere substitute for publication as an unavailable opportunity for Dickinson. It seems that manuscript publishing was her chosen medium.

Nonetheless, it remains doubtful whether Dickinson meant the fascicles for a contemporary or a future audience. Nell Smith is not certain, unlike Franklin, that the manuscript books were private documents, not shown or sent to anyone. She suspects that Helen Hunt Jackson’s letter may include a reference to a fascicle: “I have a little manuscript volume with a few of your verses in it” (L444a). In another letter (L976a), ten years later Jackson writes: “I wish I knew what your portfolios, by this time, hold” (Smith, *Rowing in Eden* 73). As it was pointed out above, portfolio poetry was quite common at the time, and Jackson knew about Dickinson’s poetic activity. Thus the word “portfolio”

could be just a reference to the poems she may have written, not necessarily to the fascicles.

The sets represent an ostensibly similar form of nonprint publication. They contain unbound sheets similar to those of the fascicles. Franklin presumes that Dickinson may have given up binding as “her need for self-publication declined” or because “unbound sheets may have been easier for her to use” (Franklin, *The Manuscript Books* xii). Franklin contributes the interruption of fascicle-making in 1864 to the problems related to her eyes. Her ophthalmologist, Dr. Williams forbade her the use of pen and ink, thus she wrote everything in pencil. When she returned to copying the poems in ink onto the fascicle sheet, she did not bind them (Franklin, *The Poems* 1:25). Still, the need for organizing and editing her poems suggests that the unbound sheets may have had a similar publishing function as the fascicles. Nevertheless, fascicles and sets represent different forms of self-publication. Fascicles are characterized by the relationship of the poems as lyric sequences, the poems they include are dependant on each other, with an interplay among them. Conversely, sets are both literally and metaphorically unbound. Alexandra Socarides supposes that the poems become more independent and self-contained as the individual poems become Dickinson’s prominent concern (Socarides, *Dickinson Unbound* 129).

In my interpretation, as loose sheets are interchangeable, the shift of Dickinson’s publishing practice could make it possible for her to experiment with the unfixed openness method she established with the variants. It was easier to rearrange the unbound fascicle sheets than the bound ones, although, as Franklin mentions, we have some information about the close context of the poems in the sets, since, as Franklin writes, the order within a given sheet is known (Franklin, *The Poems* 3:1542). However, it does not necessarily imply that Dickinson did not think of the sets as sequences of poems the order and context of which could be altered. Consequently, the change of method may be seen as a means of further loosening the limitations of the fixed text. Interestingly, the wish for a somewhat permanent form of nonprint preservation contradicts the desire for multiplicity.

As an evidence of the existence of some editing principle and the need to rearrange the poems, it is interesting to observe that sometimes she grouped the poems differently in the fascicles than in the sets or within the letters including more poems. Occasionally, Dickinson would leave some of them out of gatherings. This suggests that the purpose of her activity could be more than stocktaking. For example, the first version of “Knows how to forget!” (391) is included in Fascicle 19 while its longer variant appears in Set 7 (Franklin, *The Poems* 1:415-6). The latter is copied on the same sheet as “’tis anguish

grander than delight” (Fr 192), which is not included in Fascicle 19 at all, although it is thought to have been written in about 1861, earlier than Fr 391. The three variants of “Sweet – you forgot –but I remembered” (Fr 635) were included in both Fascicle 31 and Set 7. However, in the fascicle the poem is on the same sheet as Fr634, Fr636 and Fr637, while in the set it shares the sheet with the poems Fr996-1000, which are not included in Fascicle 31. The above changes seem to be the results of an editing activity rather than the simple arrangement of the poems.

Emily Dickinson’s bypasses of publication appear to be inventively numerous. Her letters represent another medium which enables her to reinvent an old cultural tradition and adopt it to her needs. In her correspondence she finds different ways to meet the goal of publishing. There are letters enclosing poems, letters parts of which have qualities of poems and it is for the reader to decide which genre they belong to, poems which are letters referred to as letter-poems, and poems embedded in letters. Similarly to her unwillingness to fix her work in print, she does not have the intention to fix the context or the genre of the poems, either.

Correspondence as a form of publishing offers the same advantage as fascicles and sets: the poems appear in Dickinson’s own context. This may be true for the enclosed poems, as well, since the recipients probably read the poems before or after reading the letter itself. Franklin observes that in case of the incorporated poems, it is often obvious that the passages are poetry, however, sometimes the only evidence that she meant them as poetry is that she capitalized the first words of lines (Franklin, *The Poems* 1:32). Letters could also enable the poet to customize the poem to the recipient that is she would sometimes produce a different variant for a different addressee. As Agnieszka Salska informs us, sometimes the same poem was included or embedded in different letters, “its meaning changed by the new context or adjusted to suit it” (Salska178). “I have a bird in spring” (Fr49), an example of this is examined in the chapter “Resistance to Print”, as well as the influence of the change of context and genre on the poems.

According to Franklin, there were more than forty recipients of the poems, most of which were sent through correspondence. Susan Dickinson received about two hundred and fifty poems, other recipients included Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Louise and Frances Norcross, Samuel Bowles, Elisabeth Holland, Mabel Todd and Helen Hunt Jackson and Maria Whitney (Franklin, *The Poems* 3:1547). In the case of the letter-related poems, the context of the letter may clarify the message of the poem, or at least facilitate interpretation for the critical reader, who may, in turn, respond to the poem. The

distribution of poems in letters thus enhances critical reading and establishes an interactive situation with the possibility of a dialogue. Given the conversational-dialogic voice of the letters, the poems make the impression of being part of oral rather than written communication, as if they were read out or recited, which could probably make them “breathe” better. Contrary to the impersonal character of print, letters provide a personal context for the poems, as if they were written for or addressed to the owner of the letter, even if they were not. The audience of these poems is also personalized, it is not the faceless mass of printed publications. It could serve as a source of inspiration for Dickinson that she knew at least the first readers of her poems. Thus, she was in control not only of the poems but the audience, as well.

The letter-poem is Dickinson’s characteristic genre in which she may have intended to create the intimacy of correspondence for her poems. In many of the letter-poems some standard clichés characteristic of conventional letters are employed: at least an opening salutation and a signature, disguising the poems as letters. Thus, the Dickinsonian letter-poem constitutes a transition between private letters and epistles, typically meant for publication. This hybrid genre may be also regarded as a form of self-publication. The letter-poems are intended for a narrow, appreciative audience, an individualized, target readership. Unlike in the case of the poems enclosed or embedded in letters, there is no context to assist interpretation. Furthermore, the intimacy of these texts and the enigmatic language rich in allusions, comprehensible for the addressee only, act as factors of alienation, as obstacles to reception by hindering understanding. Composed for sending like prose letters, their style is defined by the addressee’s social standing and relationship with the author. The private nature of the texts is violently changed by print publication. Moreover, this form serves as a mask to reduce the risk of revealing herself in her art, a risk she seems to fear so much. Certainly, she was not the only poet to use letters for the transmission of poetry, examples of this transitional genre may be found as early as antiquity. However, in Emily Dickinson’s case this genre is of special importance. She managed to create a form suitable for her reserved, reticent nature, a disguise tailored to her personality and to that of the intended reader.

Yet, we cannot assume that she had full control of the public of her letter-related poems, as the private sharing of letters was customary in Dickinson’s times. Dickinson chose the intimate and private medium of correspondence as one of the means to distribute her poems. However, it lost some of its privacy when the recipients shared the letters with others. In spite of her secluded lifestyle and non-published status, she was known as a poet

not only by her personal acquaintances. According to Karen Dandurand, Higginson was the most active in sharing Dickinson's letters and poems with his friends and family members, for example, Helen Hunt Jackson or his sisters. As a comment to his sister in L481n he mentions a parody of a Dickinson-letter his close friends, Theodora and Sarah Woolsey produced at a party. It is known that he spoke about and read poems by two unknown women poets, Dickinson and his sister, Louisa in a women's club on 29 November 1875 (Dandurand, "Dickinson and the Public" 265, 266). As Dandurand points out, the audience "potentially included many of the leaders of literary Boston and, indeed, some of the major writers of the time". Although Dickinson's name was not revealed, Dandurand believes that some of the audience may have recognized her poems (Dandurand, "Dickinson and the Public" 267, 268).

Dickinson would also read out some of her poems to family members. Fred D. White quotes Martha Ackman, who tells the story of Emily Dickinson's relative, who heard Dickinson "declaim her poetry". Ackman also describes as Dickinson's cousin, Louise Norcross would sit behind the pantry door and listen to Dickinson reading her poems to her (Ackman qtd. in White 91-2).

The private sharing of the poems included gift-poems, as well. Dickinson would prepare a hand-written copy to be offered to a friend or a family member, sometimes accompanied with some fruit, sweets, flowers or some other present. "When Katie walks, this simple pair accompany her side" (Fr49), for instance, was sent to Dickinson's friend, Katherine Scott Turner during one of her visits to Amherst between 1859 and 1861, who later added the following lines to her transcript of the poem: "Emilie knitted a pair of garters for me & sent them over with these lines" (Franklin, *The Poems* 1:99). The same person received the poem "It cant be 'summer'!" (Fr265) in October 1861. Turner explained on the transcript she prepared for Susan Dickinson several years later: "Emily sent over this poem, with three clover heads & some bright autumn leaves (Franklin, *The Poems* 1:284). A copy of "South winds jostle them" (Fr 98) accompanied flowers which Dickinson sent to her cousins, Louise and Frances Norcross probably in 1859. Another copy of the same poem and two more poems were enclosed with pressed flowers in Dickinson's second letter to T.W. Higginson in April 1862 (Franklin, *The Poems* 1:135, 136).

As revealed in this chapter, Dickinson refused print publishing as she objected to the commercialization and mass reproduction of literature. She was not willing to regularize her poems or tailor them to meet the requirements of the editors and satisfy the

demands of the market. Neither did she intend to become part of the literary business. She insisted on full control of her work, not only as a poet but also as an editor, a bookmaker and even as a marketer, who wanted the select, as much as it was possible, her target audience. Her negative experience of editors printing her poems without her permission and altering them as it happened, for instance to her “Snake” could have contributed to her rejection. She may have found it objectionable that once a poem was published in a paper, its reprinting could not be controlled, either. Instead of traditional print distribution she found alternative ways of publishing, which involved poems included or enclosed in letters, letter-poems, fascicles, unbound sets and gift-poems. She opted for the more intimate and personalized handwritten, handmade media, she preferred to control and safeguard her privacy characterized by female reticence along with her artistic integrity.

Conclusion

In the foregoing chapters of the dissertation I attempted to explore the aspects of Emily Dickinson's concept of publication, the reasons for her avoidance of print reproduction and her substitutes for the latter. All the arguments and observations I made are based on the implicit evidence of the poems. Each of the main issues I identified as worth considering in connection with the subject of the dissertation constitute a chapter.

Thus Chapter I treats Dickinson's attitude to poetic vocation as an unpublished poet. While her forming inclination was intertwined with the feeling of shame resulting from her idea of poetry as an unwomanly and rebellious activity, her poems from the early 1860's attest that she proudly declared poetry to be her profession and expressed her satisfaction over her choice. Dickinson's dedication to poetry was rooted in the conviction that she was elected for the divine occupation of poet, which she expressed with the metaphors of rank, title, royalty, divinity and the color white. She regarded poets as mediators between God and human beings and saw poetic inspiration as deriving from God.

Chapter II examines Dickinson's highly professional poetic method and writing technique as well as her notion of poetry and the role of poet. I assume that her method was characterized by circumferential expression and "slant telling", as she wrote in poem 1263. Examining her poems on the process of writing, I found that the poetic activity she described included selection, reproduction, mimesis, distillation, condensation and transformation. Her *ars poetica* reveals that she aimed at communicating the truth, that of God and that of nature, as a service to mankind.

Chapter III undertakes to scrutinize Dickinson's approach to public recognition and fame, which is a significant issue as Dickinson's refusal of publication implies her renunciations of public acclaim. The poems analyzed in this chapter expose her disinterest in immediate success, which she considered transitory and consequently valueless.

Dickinson rejected the appreciation of the contemporary audience as she targeted posterity and the deferred reward of immortality instead of fast, time-bound success.

Chapter IV is concerned with Dickinson's attitude to readers. By refusing the traditional print circulation of the poems, she also rejected the public reached by the print publications of her time. I argued that Dickinson was not interested in public recognition during her lifetime. Yet, she was aware that she needed readers just as readers needed her poetry. She hoped for the immortality of her poems, thus she intended her poetry for future generations together with a restricted group of understanding contemporary readers who could meet her requirements and appreciated her condensed, circumferential and cryptic expression. She challenged them with her intentional irregularities and barriers to interpretation, and expected their active participation in the process of creation as co-authors of the poems. Those who were not able to satisfy the above expectations appear to have been excluded from the circle of Dickinson's desired audience.

Chapter V asserts that the poems resisted print publication due to their unfinished, unfixd, dynamic nature, their visual elements, the lack of titles, the co-existence of the variants and the fluidity of genres. Dickinson was conscious of her art and she was aware of the unique features of her poetry. Consequently, she refused to preserve and stabilize a final, static and permanent form of the poems in print. Although some visual characteristics of the autographs are unintentional, still, regardless of Dickinson's intentions, her calligraphic handwriting and the visual features of the manuscript pages which would have been difficult or impossible to translate into print in the nineteenth century exert considerable influence on the interpretation of the poems.

Chapter VI discusses Dickinson's idea of print as a means of commercialization of literature. She refused to alter her poems to satisfy editorial expectations and the market demand. She wished to maintain control over her poems, not only as an author but also as an editor, publisher, bookbinder, and a marketing specialist who selected the target group she intended to write for. Dickinson sought out alternative ways to make her art known to her public. The forms of chirographic publication included her handmade books, the fascicles and the unbound collections, the sets, the private circulation of poems embedded or enclosed in letters, letter-poems, and gift copies of poems. The private sharing of letters and Dickinson's habit of occasionally reading out her work to her family or visitors also contributed to the distribution of her poems to a widening circle of readers.

Having scrutinized Dickinson's concept of publication through her poetry in the present dissertation, I would like to conclude that her choice of publishing media was

based on the handwritten page. We should allow for the supposition that she might have had the idea of traditional print publishing in mind at the beginning of her career, however, later she definitely refused to print. I do not believe that she had to renounce of publication because of the lack of encouragement, appreciation or opportunities. She could have published her work in print if she intended to. As Karen A. Dandurand writes, in spite of the fact that in 1864, within two months the publication of five poems resulted in ten appearances due to reprints, she did not exploit the interest in her poems shown by editors” (*Why Dickinson did not publish* 1, 59).

Nevertheless, Dickinson wished to publish her work and she did so, in manuscript form. Her refutation of the commercialization of literature coupled with her female reticence and the poems’ resistance to print may have contributed to her decision as much as her fear of a non-understanding audience and her fear of success and the resulting fame, publicity and the loss of her privacy.

Emily Dickinson was a professional poet committed to her vocation. She was convinced that poets were elected for their divine occupation as communicators of God’s truth. Thus she created a non-print publishing scene for her poetry. Consequently, she was neither an unknown nor an unpublished poet during her lifetime, she only used different publishing media to represent her work. Her choice of the bypasses of publication implied neither renunciation nor compromise, much rather the revision and reinvention of the manuscript culture behind her times, which resulted in the synergy of the old and the new as well as that of the private and the public sphere.

Hopefully, the findings of this dissertation enhance our understanding of Dickinson’s attitude to publication, however, by no means do they constitute the absolute truth, merely a possible “variant”.

Notes

Abbreviations:

The following abbreviations are used:

L:

Johnson, Thomas H., and Ward, Theodora, ed. *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*. 3 vols. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1965. Print. Citation by letter number.

Fr:

Franklin, R.W., ed. *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Variorum Edition*. 3 vols. Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1998. Print. Citation by poem number.

The poems known to have been published during Dickinson's lifetime (Emily Dickinson Museum n. pag.):

1852: "Sic transit gloria mundi"

Published in Springfield Daily Republican (February 20), titled "A Valentine"

1858: "Nobody knows this little rose"

First published Springfield Daily Republican (August 2), titled "To Mrs -, with a Rose."

1861: "I taste a liquor never brewed"

First published Springfield Daily Republican (May 4), titled "The May-Wine"

1862: "Safe in their alabaster chambers"

First published in Springfield Daily Republican (March 1), titled "The Sleeping"

1864: "Blazing in gold and quenching in purple"

First published in Drum Beat, Brooklyn, NY (February 29), titled "Sunset"

"Flowers - Well - if anybody"

First published in Drum Beat, Brooklyn, NY (March 2), titled "Flowers"

“These are the days when birds come back”

First published in Drum Beat, Brooklyn, NY (March 11), titled “October”

“Some keep the Sabbath going to church”

First published in Round Table, New York (March 12), titled “My Sabbath”

“Success is counted sweetest”

First published in Brooklyn Daily Union (April 27), untitled

1866: “A narrow fellow in the grass”

First published in Springfield Daily Republican (February 14), titled “The Snake”

1878: “Success is counted sweetest” (the only known publication in a book)

Published in A Masque of Poets (Boston: Roberts Bros.)

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Summary

Emily Dickinson, one of the most reputed American poets today, avoided print publication all her life. The present dissertation seeks to investigate the reasons for Dickinson's refusal to publish her poems in print while it also intends to clarify Dickinson's concept of publication and public acknowledgement, and examine her bypasses which seem to aim at substituting the print reproduction of her poetry. The dissertation argues that it was Dickinson's intention to publish her poems by sharing their hand-written copies with readers, while she rejected print as a means of commercialized reproduction endangering the autonomy and the integrity of the texts.

Thus the dissertation makes a distinction between print and the other forms of publication, that is the non-print distribution of Dickinson's work. Print could have limited the scope of interpretation of the poems since in Dickinson's time the print technology available could not have represented every aspect of her work as it appeared on the manuscript page, including the chirographic and visual features. Besides their visuality, Dickinson's poems are characterized by certain qualities which make them withstand print publication, such as their dynamic, unfinished nature, the ambiguity and multiplicity attached not only to the text including variant elements but also to the genre of the poems, which demands special reading strategies. Dickinson was devoted to poetry which she regarded a divine occupation aiming at communicating God's and nature's truth to humanity. However, she may have been aware of the above-mentioned print resistant features of her poems, which could have contributed to her refusal of printing technology besides her female reticence and her disapproval of the commercialization of literature. Her alternative ways of publishing involve her handmade manuscript booklets, the fascicles, which she produced from about 1858 to 1864. After 1864 until the 1870s Dickinson's attempts at self-publishing are represented by the sets, which were written, similarly to the fascicles, on letter paper but were unbound. There is, however, no evidence that these home-made collections were meant for the public, while it is known that in several cases Dickinson prepared copies of individual poems for one or sometimes more readers. These were often sent embedded or attached to a letter.

Based on the implicit evidence of the poems, this dissertation demonstrates that Dickinson intended to share her work through her chosen medium, the handwritten page, not only with the future generations but also with the contemporary public, including her family members, friends and acquaintances and the selected few that are ready to meet the challenge of creative reading and co-authoring demanded by her enigmatic, metaphorical and irregular expression.

Összefoglalás

Emily Dickinson, aki napjainkban az egyik legismertebb és legelismertebb amerikai költő, egész életében került a publikálás nyomtatott formáját. A disszertáció azokat az okokat szeretné feltárni, amelyek miatt elutasította verseinek nyomtatásban való megjelenését. A doktori értekezés emellett körvonalazni kívánja Dickinson publikációival és nyilvános elismeréssel kapcsolatos nézeteit, valamint megvizsgálni azokat a kerülőutakat, amelyeket alkalmazott verseinek nyomtatásos közzététele helyett. A disszertáció érvelése szerint Dickinsonnak szándékában állt verseinek publikálása oly módon, hogy azok kéziratos példányaikat megosztotta az olvasókkal, miközben a nyomtatást, mint kommercializált reprodukciós formát elvetette, mivel az veszélyezteti a szövegek autonómiáját és integritását.

Az értekezés tehát különbséget tesz a publikálás nyomtatott és egyéb, nem nyomtatásos formái között. A nyomtatás korlátozhatta volna Dickinson verseinek értelmezési lehetőségeit, mivel a költő idejében rendelkezésre álló nyomdatechnika nem lett volna alkalmas arra, hogy műveinek minden kirografikus és vizuális vonását megjelenítse úgy, ahogyan azok a kéziratokban ábrázolódtak. Dickinson versei vizualitásuk mellett olyan tulajdonságokkal jellemezhetők, amelyek ellenállnak a nyomtatásnak. Ilyen például a versek dinamikus, befejezetlen jellege, a kétértelműség és a multiplicitás, amely nemcsak a versvariánsokat tartalmazó szövegekre, de a műfajokra is igaz. Ezért a versek értelmezése különleges olvasási technikát igényel. Dickinson a költészet elkötelezettje volt, isteni hivatásnak tekintette, melynek célja Isten és a természet igazságának közvetítése az emberiség felé. Azonban tudatában lehetett költészetének fent említett nyomtatás-rezisztens vonásainak, ami, nőies tartózkodása és az irodalom üzletiesedésének elítélése mellett feltehetően hozzájárult ahhoz, hogy elutasítsa verseinek nyomtatott formában való terjesztését. Az általa választott alternatív publikálás egyik módja volt például a kézzel írott könyvecskék, úgynevezett verskötegek készítése 1858 és 1864 között. Ezt követően az 1870-es évekig pedig szintén kéziratos, de nem egybefűzött versgyűjteményeket készített. Nincs bizonyíték, mely arra engedne következtetni, hogy ezeket a nagyközönségnek szánta, ugyanakkor köztudott, hogy egyes versek lemásolt példányát egy vagy több olvasónak adományozta, gyakran levél része vagy mellékleteként.

A doktori értekezés a versek által kínált implicit bizonyítékokra alapozva azt kívánja igazolni, hogy Dickinson választott médiumán, a kéziratos oldalon keresztül szándékozott megosztani műveit nemcsak az utókorral, hanem a kortárs közönséggel is, beleértve saját családtagjait, barátait és ismerőseit, és azt a kevés kiválasztottat, akik képesek megbirkózni a kreatív olvasás és társszerzőség kihívásaival, melyeket Dickinson enigmatikus, metaforikus és szokatlan kifejezésmódja állít eléük.