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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE LANDSCAPE OF ABSENCE: EMILY DICKINSON'S POETRY

by



INDER NATH KHER

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE LANDSCAPE OF ABSENCE: EMILY DICKINSON'S POETRY, submitted by Inder Nath Kher in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

This study of Emily Dickinson's poetry attempts to deal with the whole of Dickinson's poetic Vision, and explores what constitutes the creative "terror" in her spiritual biography, showing its true significance in relation to her theory of Perception or Poetry. The assumptions that Dickinson's poetry concerns the human predicament and destiny; that it builds interchangeable and interpenetrating symbolic structures on such perennial and existential themes as Life, Despair, Love, Ecstasy, Death, Immortality, and Self; that it embodies fully the ironic but cosmic theme of life and art as a continuous process; that it contains its own aesthetic theory or Poetics; and that it is simultaneously concrete and intangible, present and absent--these are most fundamental to the discussion. The mythopoeic tendency of her art is explored through and in juxtaposition with the existentialist aesthetics which highlights the "experiential" concreteness of the "dream" or the "spontaneous." In essence, the present study provides a comprehensive view of Dickinson's creative mind, her way of Perception with which is linked the problem of phenomenological ontology, and the philosophy of poetic process. The detailed interpretation is based almost entirely on her poetry, and the "meanings" are discovered through a close examination of poetic structure, imagery and symbolism. Dickinson's intellectual sources, physical or external biography, and the cultural history of her immediate ethos are not emphasized. The eyes are kept steadily on the text--the metaphoric-metamorphic structures of her art.

Chapter I--CENTRE OF THE SEA: THE AESTHETICS OF TERROR--

delineates the nature of Dickinson's "terror - since September" through her aesthetics of Suffering, Dread, Danger, and Despair, and charts the relationship between "terror" and Dickinson's consecration to poetry as vocation and destiny. It deals with Dickinson's penetrating sense of Earth, Time, and Body, nay, her ontological response to Existence, and brings out the primordial--mythic and religious--character of her poetry. In short, it proposes Dickinson as a mytho-poetic, ontological, tragic, and an existential poet, and provides a basis for an encounter and dialogue with her creative mind.

Chapter II--THE LANDSCAPE OF ABSENCE: "MANSIONS OF MIRAGE"--

continues the "dialogue," and examines the paradox of Absence-Presence through its several modes and relationships. The Absence is considered as "Experience" which defines itself through silence, stillness, and the darkness of the human heart. It is viewed as Being or "Other" which contains the primeval magic and terror of Existence. It is looked at as "Distance" or "Beyond," which is also Inwardness that expresses the Existentialist-Romanticist's notions of "instress" and "inscape," rather than a simple-minded and naive idea of romantic "escape." It is regarded as "Withdrawal" from the world, which carries its own mode of encounter with the world. It is treated as "Deception" which affirms reality as "dream" and dream as "reality." It is contemplated as "Perception" which is "the angle of Vision," and which reveals instant relationship between the perceiver and the perceived in the act of creation. It is felt as "Love" which increases one's capacity for self-annihilation and the ability to remain in uncertainties.

It is apprehended as "Death" which negates and intensifies life at once. And it is identified as "Time" and "Deity" which remain ever present, though ever hid. But all these forms are proposed as ambivalent, and as referring to the condition of creation in which all the contradictions of life meet.

Chapter III--PERCEPTION: "THE BILLOWS OF CIRCUMFERENCE"--pertains to Dickinson's theory of Perception which is stated in terms of a fourfold structure of imagination, defining the nature of relationship between the poet and the realm of the existential reality, the poet and the poetic experience, the poet and the creative process, and the poet and the poem. It stresses the subjective-objective character of Perception, while recognizing the primacy of the creative mind in its search for fullness and/or Identity. Besides tracing the metamorphosis of the external reality, the archetypes of Dickinson's poetic experience, the solemn use of language in the creative process, and the becoming of the poet through the poem, it deals with the problems of the relationship between the poet and the reader or the critic, and the social function of the poet's art.

Chapter IV--LOVE: THE GARMENT OF FIRE--explores at considerable length the theme of Love or the mythology of God-Man relation in Dickinson's poetry. Love is apprehended within the bounds of a tradition in which eroticism merges with asceticism, and in which Eros is reconciled with Agape. It is pointed out that in the process of the inward journey of Love, Dickinson experiences all forms of contradictory emotions, and by passing through a number of levels or phases of suffering and moral pathos, she appropriates and enacts the

essential truth of Love. The levels or dimensions are integral and simultaneous; they are not mutually exclusive areas of human commitment. Aesthetically, they represent three different but overlapping levels of Possibility which are described as External-Temporal Possibility, Internal-Immanent Possibility, and Internal-Eternal Possibility.

Chapter V--DEATH: THE COSMIC DANCE--inquires into the pervasive theme of Death in Dickinson's poetry. It states that "death" haunts Dickinson in many paradoxical ways, and that before she realizes "death" as a primordial metaphor for "survival," before she fathoms tomb as womb, and before she makes it an integral ingredient of her Aesthetics of Continuity, she undergoes the excruciating experience of "death" as eternal "silence" and "darkness," as the "Unknown" mystery and "oblivion" from which there is no "return." The paradoxical and ambiguous vision of life-and-death continuity or unity is proposed as man's most stupendous attempt to rescue himself from the human condition of impermanence and transiency, and as a symbolic representation of man's "longing not to die."

Chapter VI--SELF: THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY--evaluates Dickinson's concern for Self or Being as the matrix of creation. It shows that Dickinson's poetry fully dramatizes the ontological necessity to realize the "seraphic self," and that Dickinson proposes this "as a continuous adventure and a perpetual crisis." The quest for "identity" entails infinite venture and infinite suffering. It is observed that for Dickinson the human body is not an impediment in the process of Self-awareness but if creatively apprehended it becomes an integral part of the human psyche; and that I-Thou relationship is not

antagonistic to pure and dynamic Subjectivity or Inwardness. Dickinson's Self is not equated with the Transcendent Self of Emerson, or the mystical Self of Meister Eckhart, or the highly metaphysical Self of Shankara. It is studied as a creative principle, for it dominates creativity, and its awareness occurs not through the forms of religious or spiritual meditation but through the very creative act. For Dickinson, the Creator-Artist, creative Self is the ultimate Self, and she realizes it as such by plunging into the abyss of her own Being.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTENTIONS	1
I CENTRE OF THE SEA: THE AESTHETICS OF TERROR	7
II THE LANDSCAPE OF ABSENCE: "MANSIONS OF MIRAGE"	56
III PERCEPTION: "THE BILLOWS OF CIRCUMFERENCE"	100
IV LOVE: THE GARMENT OF FIRE	157
V DEATH: THE COSMIC DANCE	207
VI SELF: THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY	263
POSTSCRIPT	313
REFERENCE NOTES	318
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	361

They say that "Time assuages" -
Time never did assuage -
An actual suffering strengthens
As Sinews do, with age -

Time is a Test of Trouble -
But not a Remedy -
If such it prove, it prove too
There was no Malady - (686)

- Emily Dickinson

. . . oh what a torture are all these great artists
and altogether these higher beings, what a torture
to him who has guessed their true nature.

- Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil

With nothing can one approach a work of art so
little as with critical words: they always come
down to more or less happy misunderstandings.
Things are not all so comprehensible and expressible
as one would mostly have us believe; most events
are inexpressible, taking place in a realm which
no word has ever entered, and more inexpressible
than all else are works of art, mysterious existences,
the life of which, while ours passes away, endures.

- Rilke, Letters To a Young Poet

INTENTIONS

You who desired so much - in vain to ask -
Yet fed your hunger like an endless task,
Dared dignify the labor, bless the quest -
Achieved that stillness ultimately best,

Being, of all, least sought for: Emily, hear!
O sweet, dead Silencer, most suddenly clear
When singing that Eternity possessed
And plundered momentarily in every breast;

- Truly no flower yet withers in your hand,
The harvest you descried and understand
Needs more than wit to gather, love to bind.
Some reconciliation of remotest mind -

- Hart Crane, "To Emily Dickinson"

In the Preface to Emily Dickinson's Poetry: Stairway of Surprise, Charles R. Anderson writes (xiii): "To give her poetry the serious attention it deserves is the real task that remains. To study it intensively, to stare a hole in the page until these apparently cryptic notations yield their full meanings--this is the great challenge to modern readers."¹ In the present study, I hope to meet the "challenge," and to fully explore the metaphoric-metamorphic structures of Dickinson's poetry. In order that the "task" should be accomplished, it is necessary, I think, to pay attention to "the larger structure of her imagination," to use Northrop Frye's words,² and to come to grips with the whole of Dickinson's poetic vision. In this direction, in so far as it is possible, an attempt will be made to study Dickinson's poetry as a whole. The detailed analysis will be based almost entirely on her

poetry and the "meanings" will be discovered through a close examination of poetic structure, imagery and symbolism.

In a very special sense, Dickinson's poetry can be regarded as one long poem of multi-dimensional Reality, each dimension presenting a certain mood, a certain phase, a certain stage of that Reality, and yet the whole of Reality. It is unwise to assume an easy distribution of Dickinson's poetry into various thematic concerns because her themes are overlapping and eventually merge with the fundamental concern of Existence itself as seen through the Eye of the creative power. To put it briefly, I intend to show that Emily Dickinson's poetry concerns the human predicament and destiny; that it builds interchangeable and interpenetrating symbolic structures on such perennial and existential themes as Life, Love, Despair, Ecstasy, Death, Immortality, and Self; that it embodies fully the ironic but cosmic theme of life and art as a continuous process; that it contains its own aesthetic theory or Poetics, and that it is simultaneously concrete and intangible, present and absent. In essence, I wish to provide a comprehensive study of Dickinson's creative mind, her way of Perception with which is linked the problem of phenomenological ontology, and the philosophy of poetic process.

Emily Dickinson creates her own poetic mythology. She shows a remarkable ability to peep into the material world and envisages in it the symbols of a spiritual reality. The mythopoeic tendency of her art will be explored through and in juxtaposition with the existentialist aesthetics which highlights the experiential concreteness of the "dream" or the "spontaneous." The theme of Love or the mythology

of God-Man relation in Dickinson's poetry will be apprehended within the bounds of a tradition in which eroticism merges with asceticism, and in which Eros is reconciled with Agape. The concepts of Death and Immortality in Dickinson's poetry will be considered as defining the two ends of the emotional spectrum. It will also be shown how Dickinson resolves the painful problem of Death by way of her Aesthetics of Continuity. And, finally, Dickinson's search for Identity or the Self will be viewed as a perpetual adventure and an endless process.

In my approach to Dickinson's poetry, I do not wish to emphasize her sources, physical or external biography, and cultural history. To discover a certain likemindedness or resemblance of ideas between different writers is always possible. But to explain a literary genius in terms of the books he or she might have read is simply impossible.³ Dickinson's poetry is born out of her active consecration to the inner call of her own mind, its creative "terror,"⁴ and its "polar privacy" (1695). She tells us of her intense reading of Shakespeare, the Bible, especially the Revelations, Sir Thomas Browne, Keats, the Brontë Sisters, the Brownings, George Eliot, Dickens, Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, and several others. But she does not make any attempt to arrive at a body of knowledge outside her own immediate perceptions. The secret of her unique and independent creative mind is contained in these words:

I had no Monarch in my life, and cannot rule myself, and when I try to organize - my little Force explodes - and leaves me bare and charred - I marked a line in One Verse - because I met it after I made it - and never consciously touch a paint, mixed by another person.
(L271)

For a proper appreciation of Dickinson's poetry, we should guard against the tendency to psychologize and to draw inferences of

an autobiographical sort. We should keep our eyes steady on the text because our responsibility is to interpret poetry and not the person. Dickinson writes to Higginson: "When I state myself, as the Representative of the Verse - it does not mean - me - but a supposed person" (L268). The "supposed person" is the creative I of the poem. The creative I is the real "personality" which the poet realizes as she creates it and realizes it persistently. This "personality" is not the ordinary individual, but a "type" which symbolizes the human existence. C.G. Jung has aptly observed:

. . . the personal life of the poet cannot be held essential to his art - but at most a help or a hindrance to his creative task. He may go the way of a Philistine, a good citizen, a neurotic, a fool or a criminal. His personal career may be inevitable and interesting, but it does not explain the poet.⁵

In his brilliant essay on "Emily Dickinson," Northrop Frye strongly admonishes that "We shall find Emily Dickinson most rewarding if we look in her poems for what her imagination has created, not for what event may have suggested it."⁶ Frye further remarks:

A poet is entitled to speak in many voices, male, female, or childlike, to express many different moods and to develop an experience in reading or life into an imaginative form that has no resemblance whatever to the original experience. Just as she made the whole of her conception of nature out of the bees and bobolinks and roses of her garden, so she constructed her drama of life, death and immortality, of love and renunciation, ecstasy and suffering, out of tiny incidents in her life. But to read biographical allegory where we ought to be reading poetry is precisely the kind of vulgarity that made her dread publication and describe it as a foul thing.⁷

Throughout this study, then, the object of my attention will be Dickinson's poetry and not Dickinson herself. However, the events which are directly related to her creative life and which contribute to illuminate her spiritual biography will be treated as integral with the process of Dickinson's poetic career. In that case, the emphasis

will be on the "personality" from within, the "personality" which cannot be studied without the framework of its creative reference.⁸

Emily Dickinson has often been considered as belonging to the mainstream of American culture, beginning with the Calvinism of Jonathan Edwards and culminating in the transcendentalism of Emerson. The American culture or psyche is a complex phenomenon. It has always manifested itself in the intricate pattern of clash between idealism and opportunity, spiritualism and materialism, intuition and rationality, romanticism and matter-of-factness, individual conscience and the orthodox Christian ideal of Grace, private initiative and collective enterprise, transcendentalism and the purely pragmatic way, reverence for life and freedom and a certain delight in killing and human slavery. Both the extremes have been essentially ever present, and fairly mixed. Dickinson shows perfect awareness of her cultural milieu, and she occupies a unique position in the literary history of America. But, to study Dickinson's poetry within the confines of American history and culture only is to minimize the range of her poetic sensibility. Historical approach renders her as a nineteenth century American poet. I suggest that her sensibility cannot be confined to one particular ethos or climate. Being an Existentialist-Romanticist, Dickinson can be studied in the context of a vast literary tradition which starts with Gulliver's "flight from Laputa," to use William Barrett's expression.⁹ This tradition is a parody of Platonic thought and rationalism in general. Dickinson's poetic insights can be easily compared with those of the writers such as Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Kafka, Sartre, Hesse, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche,

and Kierkegaard, to mention only a few. In her tragic vision, she anticipates Rilke, and in daring with the word, she matches Hölderlin.¹⁰ In short, Dickinson's poetry can be read in any culture of the world because its primary concern is with the existential being. It is in this broad sense of the literary tradition that I intend to explore her poetry. My critical approach, however, will remain essentially centrifugal, that is to say, the emphasis will be on the "work" itself, and the "reading" will "proceed inductively through infinite adjustments of the stored energy of the text," to use Spencer's expression.¹¹

For Emily Dickinson's text, I am using the 1955 variorum edition.¹² But I am not taking into consideration the chronological order of poems provided by Johnson. Chronology, howsoever tentative it may be, leads to the supposition that Dickinson can be studied period-wise or "developmentally."¹³ Critics like Anderson, Sewall and Frye are agreed, and rightly so, that there are no definite periods in Dickinson's poetic career indicating any significant curve of development in her artistic power. Frye observes that "throughout her life Emily Dickinson was able to say what she had said at sixteen."¹⁴ For Dickinson, "There is no first, or last, in Forever - It is Centre, there, all the time" (L288). Since Dickinson sees backward and forward simultaneously, and sees as she creates, I intend to read her poetry back and forth, and "get a panoramic view of her work," to use Sewall's phrase.¹⁵

CHAPTER I

CENTRE OF THE SEA: THE AESTHETICS OF TERROR

That is my venture:
dedicated to yearning,
to rove through all days.
Then, sturdily and amply
With a thousand fibrous roots,
to penetrate deep into life -
and through suffering
to mature far beyond life,
far beyond time.

- Rainer Maria Rilke, Advent

The poetry of Emily Dickinson may be viewed as a primordial metaphor, unique in the fecundity of meaning and perplexing in the range of its vision. The poetic metaphor invites each and all to participate in the creative experience which is the very mode of being, and thereby increases our awareness of an ontology of existence. It is in this important sense that the metaphor embodies both the mythic and the Existential reality. In its metamorphic role, the metaphor points to the centre in which the concrete and the intangible meet, in which the contraries exist side by side, and in which all the doublenesses of life are encompassed. From the existential-aesthetic viewpoint, Dickinson's poetry, thus, represents a polar-monadic structure of reality in which are contained the encounter and the resolution, the quest and the fulfillment, the suffering and the exhilaration. In so far as both life and art reveal themselves in their creative continuity,

her poetry is an emblem of a continuous process, though it represents a movement towards the inscrutable centre of stillness.

As speech returns into silence, life merges into death. The life-creating womb, which is Time, becomes the life-annihilating tomb. But the images of silence, death, and the tomb do not refer to the negation of life. On the contrary, they affirm life. This brings in the paradox of movement and stillness, process and stasis. The paradox is surely subtle because it is reversible. The contraries of motion and motionlessness lend meaning to each other and intensify the paradox which moves, beyond its own completion, in its never-ending circularity. Both movement and stillness are simultaneously present in this complex structure. The poetic form suggested here is that of T.S. Eliot's "Chinese jar" which is "still" and which "Moves perpetually in its stillness,"¹ or that of Keats' "Grecian Urn" whose "silent form" teases "us out of thought/As doth eternity."

In Emily Dickinson's poetry there is a constant flow of life towards stillness, of the seen towards the unseen, of the concrete towards the abstract, and vice versa. Dickinson's genius unfolds itself within an oscillating pattern which is essential to her art. Her poetry makes resonant a world of tension between man's tragic sense of suffering and dissolution and his longing for repose which is possible only through and in suffering. As already implied, dissolution does not mean the End, but a new beginning:

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 foreign 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 -
 Slow tramp the Centuries,
 And the Cycles wheel!

(160)

It is in the moment of rebirth that man gains in perspective. He hears what before was "unheard" and sees what so far has been "Unscrutinized by Eye." While he is still existent in time, time's temporality does not bother him. "The Ages Steal," "The Centuries" tramp and "The Cycles Wheel" by him. He has achieved timelessness through his own dissolution and creation. Emily Dickinson builds upon this vision for the aesthetics of an endless process of creation and/or the myth of the eternal return. She enacts the myth through the interacting images and symbols such as the Spring and the Winter, the Summer and the Autumn, sunrise and sunset, light and dark, green and white, morn and night, dawn and dusk, East and West. Even in the heart of snowy, frosty winter, she visualizes her "Bumblebees" (86), "April woods" (179), and the "Harvest all the Year" (1025).² Her eschatology implies a new Creation. The "Nicodemus' Mystery" (140) which is also the mystery of "Being" (1274) can be resolved only in the spirit, in the regenerated self or in the Imagination where alone can one be born again (see John 3.3). This involves repetition and "the endeavoring Again" which makes possible the "Centre" to which "Each Life Converges" (680).

But the "Centre" is not easy to achieve. The endeavour is full of despair and frustrations; it is beset with fears and temptations, afflictions and horrors, hopes and perdition. Emily Dickinson looks at despair in a variety of ways: it is at once "the drop of Anguish" (193), "the Seal Despair" (258), "the instant of a Wreck" (305), "a Goalless Road" (477), "sumptuous - Despair" (505), "Chaos - Stopless - cool -" (510), "Confident Despair" (522), "a Cavern's Mouth" (590), "White Sustenance" (640), "A perfect - paralyzing Bliss -" (756), and "Safe Despair" (1243). Her acquaintance with despair is of the nature of permanent commitment:

The Trying on the Utmost
The Morning it is new
Is Terribler than wearing it
A whole existence through. (1277)

In her aesthetics of woe and suffering, the emphasis falls on experience because "Affliction feels impalpable/Until Ourselves are struck" (799). It is through experience that one can reap the harvest. The quality of harvest depends on the quality of experience--"thou reap'st what thou hast sown" (1). The usefulness of despair lies in passing through despair:

Despair's advantage is achieved
By suffering - Despair -
To be assisted of Reverse
One must Reverse have bore - (799)

Emily Dickinson is most intensely aware of the human predicament and, therefore, is fully prepared to meet the dangers and horrors that life is exposed to. The point of fascination is, however, not that she tries to escape dangers but that she meets them in the face and fits them into the "fearful symmetry" of her mind:

I lived on Dread
 To Those who know
 The Stimulus there is
 In Danger - Other impetus
 Is numb - and Vitalless -

As 't were a Spur - upon the Soul -
 A Fear will urge it where
 To go without the Spectre's aid
 Were Challenging Despair. (770)

Through her demonic mastery of Dread, Danger and Despair, Emily Dickinson seems to challenge even the fear and crisis of personal death:

I made my soul familiar - with her extremity -
 That at the last, it should not be a novel Agony -
 But she, and Death, acquainted -
 Meet tranquilly, as friends -
 Salute, and pass, without a Hint -
 And there, the Matter ends - (412)

The existential anguish and the spiritual tranquillity are instantaneously present in the structure of her imagination. The problem of death is intertwined with the problem of existence. There is no easy sense of security in her poetic vision. The experience of existence consists in what she calls her "extremity," her "final inch" and the "precarious Gate" (875). The ontological necessity which impels her to "measure every Grief/[she meets] With narrow, probing, Eyes -" (561) lends meaning to her art which embodies the imperative of existential danger:

The Province of the Saved
 Should be the Art - To save -
 Through Skill obtained in Themselves -
 The Science of the Grave

No Man can understand
But He that hath endured
The Dissolution - in Himself -
That Man - be qualified

To qualify Despair

[No stanza break]

To Those who failing new -
 Mistake Defeat for Death - Each time -
 Till acclimated - to - (539: Italics mine)

Gabriel Marcel writes that "the ontological need is emphasized, or sharpened, whenever a man's circumstances show up more clearly that state of danger which is an integral part of his being."³ Emily Dickinson knows no respite from danger, awe, grief, anguish, darkness and despair. The only flight she knows is not a flight from them but a flight into them:

The Soul's distinct connection
 With immortality
 Is best disclosed by Danger
 Or quick Calamity -

As lightning on a Landscape
 Exhibits Sheets of Place -
 Not yet suspected - but for Flash -
 And Click - and Suddenness. (974)

Suffering presses upon her with tremendous inexorability, and "Affliction ranges Boundlessness -" (963). But she has an equally awful capacity to "learn the Transport by the Pain -/As Blind Men learn the sun." (167). When "Night" and dark descend upon her, she mitigates their influence by proposing: "Transporting must the moment be -/Brewed from decades of Agony!" (207). She is used to wading "Grief -/Whole Pools of it -" (252). She makes a certain conscious choice to play with danger which is the secret of her power and life that she calls "A still - Volcano," or "A quiet - Earthquake," or "The Solemn - Torrid - Symbol -" (601). The choice of danger is clearly made known when she writes to Abiah Root:

The shore is safer, Abiah, but I love to buffet the sea - I can count the bitter wrecks here in these pleasant waters, and hear the murmuring winds, but oh, I love the danger! (L39)⁴

Or when she writes:

We like a Hairbreadth'scape
It tingles in the Mind
Far after Act or Accident
Like paragraphs of Wind

If we had ventured less
The Breeze were not so fine
That reaches to our utmost Hair
It's Tentacles divine. (1175)

I stated earlier that for Emily Dickinson the myth of "the eternal return" or "rebirth" is a concrete, "experiential" reality, felt and realized within the "dark luminosity" of her Heart. Similarly, it should be emphasized that her symbolism concerning suffering, awe, anguish, and despair is not generic but minutely particular. Her poems dramatize the Existential landscape of her heart, which is also the landscape of her being. Her experience of pain is acutely personal:

It ceased to hurt me, though so slow
I could not feel the Anguish go -
But only knew by looking back -
That something - had benumbed the Track - (584)

This "pain" is infinitely present in the ontological being. "It has no Future - but itself -/Its Infinite contain/Its Past - enlightened to perceive/New Periods - of Pain" (650). This pain is not caused, and therefore, it cannot be allayed. It is "utter" and absolute (599). It is the imperative that one has no choice but to choose:

Experience is the Angled Road
Preferred against the Mind
By - Paradox - the Mind itself -
Presuming it to lead

Quite Opposite - How Complicate
The Discipline of Man -
Compelling Him to Choose Himself
His Preappointed Pain - (910)

All mortal suffering fades in comparison with the "pain" of choosing

to be what one is but always trying to become or running away from it. No intellectual idea can equal this "Angled Experience" of one's Being in its perfect aloneness. But mortal agony of the non-being and the process of becoming are essential to the well-being of one's Self. Existence must be faced in all its concretenesses and not through abstract idealism:

Ideals are the Fairy Oil
With which we help the Wheel
But when the Vital Axle turns
The Eye rejects the Oil. (983)

One must make several choices before the final choice, and make them deliberately, suffer the pathos inherent in them, and eventually go beyond them. Emily Dickinson knows all the vacillations involved in the process, but she sees them as resolved in the spontaneity of her being where the ingredients of a total experience shine simultaneously and not sequentially.⁵ She realizes it fully that "For each ecstatic instant/We must an anguish pay/In keen and quivering ratio/To the ecstasy" (125). In her painful engagement with life she envisions:

The Dying, is a trifle, past,
But living, this include
The dying multifold - without
The Respite to be dead. (1013)

She explores her being in the heart which is "ordained to Suffering -" (405), and which experiences "The dying multifold." Living is a deadly serious business with her:

I never hear that one is dead
Without the chance of Life
Afresh annihilating me
That mightiest Belief,

Too mighty for the Daily mind
That tilling it's abyss,
Had Madness, had it once or twice
The yawning Consciousness,

Beliefs are Bandaged, like the Tongue
 When Terror were it told
 In any Tone commensurate
 Would strike us instant Dead

I do not know the man so bold
 He dare in lonely Place
 That awful stranger Consciousness
 Deliberately face -

(1323)

Emily Dickinson is not contemplating Life from without. For her, the "Chance of Life" is the "mightiest Belief" which annihilates her afresh in each moment. It has an abyssal face which the ordinary human mind cannot see, or even be casually conscious of, without losing sanity. The "Madness," however, is paradoxical. By losing ordinary sanity one becomes sane in the real and divine sense. But such "Beliefs" are "Bandaged" and sealed. The "Tongue" cannot communicate their secret. Their "Terror" is so pervasive that any attempt to make them vocal would be ineffective, death-like. The challenge of life consists precisely in its terror and silence. It needs a bold person to face Life which Dickinson calls "awful stranger Consciousness." The encounter must be deliberate. Emily Dickinson implies that she has encountered that Life because without this she could not have written about it. This encounter is the culminating point of Dickinson's spiritual biography; the encounter in which she realizes her destiny and vocation from within herself, the encounter in which the trivialities of existence fall off, and in which the seeming or real contradictions of life find a fitting place. In this perspective, I hope to show the real significance or import of her overnoted but not adequately explored statement:

I had a terror - since September - I could tell to none - and so I sing,
 as the Boy does by the Burying Ground - because I am afraid - (L261)

Critics have suggested various causes leading to the moment of terror in Dickinson's life. The major causes mentioned are the loss of a lover, the possible loss of her eyesight, and the fear of death. (A psychologist would not hesitate tracing it back to some sexual aberration in Dickinson, which was too embarrassing for her to discuss with anyone.) While these causes are not improbable, they fail to be convincing with regard to the nature of "terror" which does not indicate any external cause. Emily Dickinson does not offer any outward clue to her experience of "terror." It is a nameless "terror," ever present in the human psyche, the discovery or realization of which is the most stupendous event of one's life or being. It is uncaused like the "Preappointed Pain -" (910) in which Dickinson sees the chart of her vocation as a poet-singer. She does not communicate her discovery to anyone, as no one can share wholly the burden of a destiny with others. She is only moved to become the medium itself, the song that she sings, "as the Boy does by the Burying Ground." The mythic "Boy" seems to know the secret of the "Burying Ground," the secret of "dying multifold" (1013), because he sings. So does she. But she says, "I am afraid." Afraid of what? Afraid of the calling itself! The "terror" of being is also the "terror" of one's vocation. One has to remain in awe of one's destiny in order to be fully consecrated to it. Fear urges one "to go without the Spectre's aid" (770). Dickinson's "terror" of vocation which is poetry is consistent with her idea of what poetry is:

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 - (1247)

One always fears what one truly loves. One is struck with wonder in its presence. Emily Dickinson's Love is Poetry, therefore she fears poetry. It is in this sense that she appears to me to be afraid. Ruth Miller, however, suggests that Emily Dickinson "was fearful of death" and she wrote poetry to ease her "fear of death."⁶ This is a fairly limited view because it does not represent either Dickinson's idea of the function of a poet and his art, or her total experience of the reality of death. Fear of physical death is simply one of the several postures in which Dickinson experiences the totality of death. Fear in the mortal sense is not the whole. If the poet sings "To keep the Dark away" (850), the same poet sings that "We grow accustomed to the Dark" in which

A Moment - We uncertain step -
 For newness of the night -
 Then - fit our Vision to the Dark -
 And meet the Road - erect - (419)

Emily Dickinson's appointment with Poetry is so complete that even a slight hint of the probable loss of poetic power is bound to upset her immensely. Fortunately, it has not happened, though she seems to be dramatizing such a loss in "It would never be Common - more - I said" (430) with splendid poetic energy. Paradoxically, what looks like the loss is actually the gain in poetic vigour. At any rate, the problem of "terror" is not connected with any loss of poetic power because, then, the singing would be impossible. "Terror" is rather the sharp point of her aesthetics:

'Tis so appalling - it exhilarates -
 So over Horror, it half Captivates -
 The Soul stares after it, secure -
 A Sepulchre, fears frost, no more -

To scan a Ghost, is faint -
 But grappling, conquers it -
 How easy, Torment, now -
 Suspense kept sawing so -

The Truth, is Bald, and Cold -
 But that will hold -
 If any are not sure -
 We show them - prayer -
 But we, who know,
 Stop hoping, now -

Looking at Death, is Dying -
 Just let go the Breath -
 And not the pillow at your Cheek
 So Slumbereth -

Others, Can wrestle -
 Yours, is done -
 And so of Woe, bleak dreaded - come,
 It sets the Fright at liberty -
 And Terror's free -
 Gay, Ghastly, Holiday! (281)

"Terror" exhilarates Emily Dickinson by appalling her; its captivation lies precisely in its horror. It is by grappling it that one conquers it. Its bald, cold truth relieves one from the snare of false hopes. It teaches one the art of dying in which one can stare at Death. It is bleak dreaded woe, but it is welcome because it liberates one from fright. Terror is freedom, a "Gay, Ghastly, Holiday!"--a vacation which is also a vocation. Terror is Art and Art is Freedom; Freedom is Love and Love is Perception; Perception is Creation and Creation is Destruction, and thus the dancer moves within his dance. It is this vision which is the "imperial-Thunderbolt" (315) of the poet.⁷ The power of poetry shatters him with eternal "Dawn" (323). The "birth" of a poet is occasioned by the "Lightning" and "Fire" which

enkindle the spark of poetry (362). Emily Dickinson makes poetry her "Right"--"Right of the White Election"--confirmed "in Vision - and in Veto!" and calls this the "Delirious charter!" (528), which is also her "Sacrament" of "the Air" (535). Though she is painfully aware that "The Poets light but Lamps -/Themselves - go out -" (883); that they are "The Martyr Poets" who are fated to write "their Pang in syllable -" (544); and that they are engaged in the most difficult task of justifying "the Dream -" (569), Emily Dickinson takes upon herself the chosen fate of being a redeemer, a balm giver:

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. (919)

But this role of the poet-redeemer and of the sacrificial hero is undertaken with all its intrinsic humility and self-effacement though its other features: offence and self-assertiveness are not unknown to the world. In one of her poems, Emily Dickinson strikes a point of view, in perfect humility, that it is equally worthy, or perhaps better, to be able to admire the artist, and to wonder at his creation than to become the artist, though there seems to be a thin line between the artist and his admirer:

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

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!

(505)

In this triadic structure of painting, music and poetry, the I of the poem, while remaining as a "bright impossibility" or a never-ending possibility of being "a picture," wants to "Wonder" and to sensuously apprehend the feeling-fingers of the Painter whose creation "Evokes so sweet a Torment -/Such sumptuous - Despair." Instead of being the Musician, the I chooses to be lifted to the horizons, and to pass through them with the raising power of music. The I does not need any support for the journey "but a lip of Metal -" created by itself. In the realm of the Poet, the I looks for only one "privilege," the awful privilege of "the Ear," the listening power, with which it can "revere" the Poet, be contented with and "Enamored" of him, and be the passive recipient of the "Bolts of Melody," the Art with which the Poet stuns himself. In other words, the I seeks to appropriate the "fingers" of the Painter, the Metal-lip of the Musician and the "Ear" of the Poet, in order to be close to the Artist in spirit.

In "I would not paint - a picture," the hard-soft images of sweet Torment, sumptuous Despair, lip of Metal, and Bolts of Melody

once again confirm my view of Emily Dickinson as a Poet who creates the landscape of Beauty out of her own landscape of Terror, or for whom Terror and Beauty are One. In her ontology of existence, Life is the most momentous dwelling of harmonious dissonance, rich poverty, comforting danger, joyous grief, luminous darkness, and peaceful tempest.⁸ She measures victory by defeat:

Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne'er succeed.
To comprehend a nectar
Requires sorest need.

Not one of all the purple Host
Who took the Flag today
Can tell the definition
So clear of Victory

As he defeated - dying -
On whose forbidden ear
The distant strains of triumph
Burst agonized and clear!

(67)

Life's triumph is always in proportion to its awareness of defeat. Our harbour lies in our consciousness of shipwreck, to use Ortega Y. Gasset's favourite phrase.⁹ Our sense of security is vitalized by our sense of danger. This constitutes "ripeness" or "preparedness" which enables man to meet the stress and storm of existence with cheer. It is true that

Water, is taught by thirst.
Land - by the Oceans passed.
Transport - by throe -
Peace - by it's battles told -
Love, by Memorial Mold -
Birds, by the Snow.

(135)

Existence poses a constant threat, but this threat is the high watermark of Culture. Emily Dickinson shows a rare "courage to be" in this ever recurring danger, and finds her identity or freedom in the

fluxional paradox of Liberty-Captivity, or Captive-Liberty:

No Rack can torture me -
My Soul - at Liberty -
Behind this mortal Bone
There knits a bolder One -

You cannot prick with saw -
Nor pierce with Scimitar -
Two Bodies - therefore be -
Bind One - The Other fly -

The Eagle of his Nest
No easier divest -
And gain the Sky
Than mayest Thou -

Except Thyself may be
Thine Enemy -
Captivity is Consciousness -
So's Liberty.

(384)

The above poem embodies a unique sense of personal predicament. The danger implied in the images: "Rack," "torture," "mortal Bone," "prick," "saw," "pierce," "Scimitar," and "Bind," is reversed in the counter images: "Liberty," "a bolder One," "The Other fly," and "gain the Sky." The "Soul - at Liberty" of the first stanza becomes the "Eagle" of the third stanza, who gains "the Sky" by diving into the earth's abyss. The dive is certainly not an easy one; it requires "a bolder Bone" and the "Body" that can "Fly." Only then is it possible for man to know true Liberty or Freedom within the paradox of freedom-bondage. Freedom and Bondage are moods or aspects of Consciousness, or as a Blakean would say, they are contrary states of Mind, which are equally true in the human Imagination and man cannot rid himself of them without peril to his being. How can one run from the bondage of being free? The metaphor of "Two Bodies," or Bones, the "mortal" and the "bolder," enhances the relationship between mortality and freedom.

The "mortal" bone or body is subject to "torture" and binding. The "bolder" bone which is "Behind" the mortal, is free from suffering. But both the bones are linked with each other, and are contained in the "me" of the poem. The "bolder" bone reacts to the danger threatening the "mortal" one. Our sense of mortality activates our inner world, and the inner world casts its reflection upon the outer--the reflection in which we see the Eagle of our being soaring in full freedom, the freedom of authentic living. Man must achieve his freedom through his mortality. The Vision of Life consists precisely in the quality of one's gaze at mortality. If the gaze is pure, mortality becomes freedom, and "No Rack can torture" the gazer.

Emily Dickinson's "bolder" bone is her spiritual reality, her withinness where the drama of her contemplative thought takes place. Poetry is an enactment of the drama which embodies the reactions of the poet's innerness in the process of being juxtaposed upon his (her) withoutness. The outer existential world presses upon the identity of the inner existential world. But the inner transmutes the outer and gives it a new name. Transmutation is not rejection or some mystical transcendence of the world. It is a creative encounter or dialogue with its earth-bounded transient Body. No Artist can afford to set aside the gifts of the body and the world. Far from it, the Artist stares at the whole creation, and with his naked vision goes beyond the immediacy of things. Thus, the Things become transparent and reveal their eternal forms to the Artist. The permanence of existence, with all its tragic-ecstatic dimensions, becomes manifest in the moment of perception. Dickinson's manner of apprehension is revelatory of the

process in which the temporal world loses its temporality, without losing itself. Without concerning myself here at any length with the modes and theory of Dickinson's Perception, to which I shall return later in this study (See Chapters II and III), I wish to stress the point that there is no real scope for exploring the traditional mystical, esoteric or the occult in her poetry, though it might seem easy to do so. Her poetry proposes the mystery of existence in its most concrete and sensuous forms. Her images and symbols are rooted in the Body which can be realized only in the here and now of our being. Earth is our abode, and the moment in which we are fully alive is the present.¹⁰ In the fullness of the moment she writes to Mrs. J. G. Holland: ". . . if God had been here this Summer, and seen the things that I have seen - I guess that He would think His Paradise Superfluous -" (L185). "Contained in this short Life/Are magical extents" (L165). But in this "short Life," in this duration of time, we have to free the earth from its earthliness, the World from its worldliness, and the moment from its transitoriness. We must see them as they are:

Who has not found the Heaven - below -
Will fail of it above -
For Angels rent the House next ours,
Wherever we remove - (1544)

Emily Dickinson believes "The Fact that Earth is Heaven -." "Whether Heaven is Heaven or not," it does not concern her (1408). She writes in her letter to Susan: "Oh Matchless Earth - We underrate the Chance to dwell in Thee" (L347).¹¹ Her treatment of the moment resembles Blake's:¹²

Forever - is composed of Nows -
'Tis not a different time - [No stanza break]

Except for Infiniteness -
And Latitude of Home -

From this - experienced Here -
Remove the Dates - to These -
Let Months dissolve in further Months -
And Years - exhale in Years -

Without Debate - or Pause -
Or Celebrated Days -
No different Our Years would be -
From Anno Domini's - (624)

Eternity is made of temporal moments as seen through the Eye of the Imagination. Our experience of the "Nows," therefore, constitutes our experience of the Eternal Time, the mythic moment, the dateless Zone of Consciousness in which our linear months and years evaporate like fumes in the atmosphere. In our experience (going-throughness), then, time stands still, and it is perpetual sunshine:

There is a Zone whose even Years
No Solstice interrupt -
Whose Sun constructs perpetual Noon
Whose perfect Seasons wait -

Whose Summer set in Summer, till
The Centuries of June
And Centuries of August cease
And Consciousness - is Noon. (1056)

Dickinson's penetrating sense of Earth, Time and Body gives her an awesome control over life in spite of, or even because of, its mortality. She writes to Maria Whitney: "I fear we think too lightly of the gift of mortality, which, too gigantic to comprehend, certainly cannot be estimated" (L524):

To be alive - is Power -
Existence - in itself -
Without a further function -
Omnipotence - Enough -

To be alive - and Will!
 'Tis able as a God -
 The Maker - of Ourselves - be what -
 Such being Finitude! (677)

The very act of living constitutes "Power," which is comparable to the Creative energy of a God, "The Maker - of Ourselves -," even though we are made in a finite mould. In a sense, our "finitude" becomes our "Omnipotence" because that is all that we have. "I find ecstasy in living - the mere sense of living is joy enough," says Emily Dickinson (L342a). But the act of living involves much more than the mere fact of our having been born. Existence is not a mere survival; it is a challenging experiment with the forms that life reveals. Dickinson meets the challenge of Existence in the most sensuous and fearless manner. She writes:

Between the form of Life and Life
 The difference is as big
 As Liquor at the Lip between
 And Liquor in the Jug
 The latter - excellent to keep -
 But for ecstatic need
 The corkless is superior -
 I know for I have tried (1101)

One does not learn the secret of the sea by just standing at the shore. One's perception of life does not consist in only watching it and letting it go by. It is rather by plunging into life that one experiences its power and sway. Howsoever "excellent" it might be "to keep" the "Liquor in the Jug"--it is excellent to keep because it represents the possibility of being tasted--it does not carry any impact unless it is taken in. One should get drunk and intoxicated with life in order to know its secret and find its reward. Dickinson performs the ritual of drinking with utter solemnity:

I took one Draught of Life -
 I'll tell you what I paid -
 Precisely an existence -
 The market price, they said.

They weighed me, Dust by Dust -
 They balanced Film with Film,
 Then handed me my Being's worth -
 A single Dram of Heaven!

(1725)

Existence is its own price as well as reward. The mystery of Being is revealed to a person who passes through the "low Arch of Flesh -" (616), who considers life's little acts as infinite and keeps his "Senses - on -" (443), and who knows the "Art" of banishing himself from his real Self (642). We must lose ourselves in order to find ourselves. The exhilaration of this discovery makes our earth an "Enchanted Ground" (1118). The smallest thing expands into infinity:

The Life we have is very great,
 The Life that we shall see
 Surpasses it, we know, because
 It is Infinity.
 But when all Space has been beheld
 And all Dominion shown
 The smallest Human Heart's extent
 Reduces it to none.

(1162)

The mystery of the human heart includes every other mystery. "Nothing inclusive of a human Heart could be "trivial." That appalling Boon makes all things paltry but itself" (L970). The human heart is the centre of simultaneous growth and decay.

Emily Dickinson's search for Identity, however, is the most rigorous one. She knows well that within the interior land of our being, there is no place for the egocentric self, though the egocentric self continuously assaults the harmony of the inner being. The inner self has to guard itself persistently against the onslaughts of the

external reality. The fight seems perpetual, and both the loss and the recovery of Identity remain always within sight. Even when Identity is found, one has to constantly strive in order to keep it. There is an element of pathos in our discovery of our own being, our inner reality. The irony is that "human kind/Cannot bear very much reality."¹³ We are more prone to stay away from our reality. We shudder at the prospect of knowing ourselves, though we clamour to find the truth about ourselves. We are caught up in a pattern of contradictions. At any rate, the journey into the region of one's withinness demands courage:

Paradise (is) no Journey because it (he) is within - but for that very cause though - it is the most Arduous of Journeys - because as the Servant Conscientiously says at the Door We are (always - invariably -) out - (PF 99)

The arduousness of the "journey" is quite consistent with its ontological necessity. The "journey" involves its own horror and the experience of ghostly power. But this is the encounter in which we suddenly become aware of ourselves:

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 it's interior Confronting -
 That Cooler Host.

Far safer, through an Abbey gallop,
 The Stones a'chase -
 Than Unarmed, one's a'self encounter -
 In lonesome Place -

Ourself behind ourself, concealed -
 Should startle most -
 Assassin hid in our Apartment
 Be Horror's least.

The Body - borrows a Revolver -
 He bolts the Door -
 O'erlooking a superior spectre -
 Or More -

(670)

The "Corridors" of "Brain" surpass all the corporeal places in the quality of their being "Haunted." These "corridors" are the haunts of the spiritual bodies or thoughts in their pure spontaneity, irrationality, and darkness that sheds light. Our being resides in these "corridors." But, ironically, it is regarded as "safer" to meet the "External Ghost" in the darkness of the night than to confront the "interior," tranquil "Host" of the "Brain." "The Stones a'chase" on a galloping horse is considered "safer" than "one's a'self encounter" in some lonely place. If we are not fully armed or prepared, the startling discovery of "Ourself behind ourself" can cause us horror that we normally experience on discovering an "Assassin hid in our Apartment." Our being is a threat to our material, vegetative existence. The "superior spectre" of our inner reality vanquishes our external reality. Notwithstanding the horror and danger involved in the discovery of "Ourself behind ourself," the "interior confronting" or "one's a'self encounter" seems to be an everlasting necessity. This inner need has been expressed by Dickinson with aesthetic inevitability. Within the aesthetic structure, thus, the pain and horror of finding our being are transformed into delight and exultation. This is further clarified in Shelley's remarks in "A Defense of Poetry":

. . . poetry defeats the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions. And whether it spreads its own figured curtain, or withdraws life's dark veil from before the scene of things, it equally creates for us a being within our being. It makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos. It reproduces the common universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity

which obscures from us the wonder of our being. It compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know. It creates anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration.¹⁴

It follows that poetry reveals to us "a being within our being," and shows us "the wonder of our being." This calls for the wholeness of the poetic experience which, according to Jacques Maritain, "is concerned with the created world and the enigmatic and innumerable relations of beings with each other."¹⁵ "The created world" is not that of "the material appearances of things," but of their hidden, spiritual meanings.¹⁶ The "wonder" of our being, then, resides in our spiritual reality which, in order to be fully felt and seen, "purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity." Our knowledge of the "wonder of our being" is not discursive; its perception is felt in the Imagination which, according to Blake, is "Spiritual Sensation."¹⁷ Dickinson highlights, by implication, the experiential pain and suspense involved in our encounter with our being and its "wonder." She tells what constitutes a state of "wonder."

Wonder - is not precisely Knowing
And not precisely Knowing not -
A beautiful but bleak condition
He has not lived who has not felt -

Suspense - is his maturer Sister -
Whether Adult Delight is Pain
Or of itself a new misgiving -
This is the Gnat that mangles men - (1331)

Ambivalence is integral with poetic creation. Poetry enables man to put up with the laceration of everlasting questions. The "wonder" of our being is "A beautiful but bleak condition" which we must experience by feeling and not by debate. The questions of "Pain" and "Delight" or

Delightful Pain must also be endured within the heart.

As suggested earlier, Emily Dickinson is most intensely aware of the "horror" of an ontological discovery of "Ourself behind ourself." Her response to Existence is total and, therefore, dangerous. Her poetic vision is complete in so far as she is committed to, and is possessed by, its creative Power. Her singleminded devotion to her art compels one to observe that her whole life is a fully realized paradigm of poetic possibility--life which prompts her to write poetry of open form, with perfect consciousness of the ironies and tensions involved in the creative process itself, which includes the making of a poem. The nature of her commitment to poetry is delineated by her in the following words:

Perhaps you laugh at me! Perhaps the whole United States are laughing at me too! I can't stop for that! My business is to love. I found a bird, this morning, down - down - on a little bush at the foot of the garden, and wherefore sing, I said, since nobody hears? One sob in the throat, one flutter of bosom - "My business is to sing" - and away she rose! (L269)

Love is creativity; "to love" means "to create." Dickinson's "My business is to love" is identical with Blake's "my business is to create."¹⁸ Since the poet is a singer too, love is a metaphor for poetry. The "business" of poetry is tragic in so far as tragedy is a vision of Existence. Tragedy creates the despair in which we despair our vegetative existence and, for the first time, see life as a revelation of the Divine Spirit. The bird-poet sings even when "nobody hears." The "sob in the throat" and "flutter of bosom" are integral with the creative-singing process. The imperative voice in "My business is to sing" is no less than the imperative of destiny which unfolds

itself to man in his utter aloneness. Whitman's exploration of the bird-bard relationship provides an analogous experience.¹⁹

In Emily Dickinson's poetics the symbolic structures are interchangeable and interpenetrating. Her poetry defies any neat categorization. A sense of unity pervades the perennial and existential themes of Life, Love, Despair, Ecstasy, Death, Immortality and Self. Her system of symbols and her aesthetics make it possible to see the various thematic relationships. As pure aesthetic possibilities, and not as prosy equations, Dickinson's poetry embodies Love as Death, Death as Immortality, Immortality as Self, Self as Perception, Perception as Poetry, and Poetry as Life. Permutations of themes render repetitions in evaluation unavoidable. But it is this network of themes which intensifies the meaning of her poetry. The range of her poetic experience is rather deep. To those who think her world limited she says, "Area - no test of depth" (L811). She regards Existence by its "depth" which includes all dimensions: "How deep this Lifetime is - One guess at the Waters, and we are plunged beneath!" (L822). It is by plunging beneath "the Waters" that she finds her poetic vision. She grasps life's beliefs and doubts, certainties and uncertainties, facts and conjectures, realities and dreams with an uncanny vigor-ness.²⁰ She considers life itself as a great vision. She writes to Maria Whitney:

You speak of "disillusion." That is one of the few subjects on which I am an infidel. Life is so strong a vision, not one of it shall fail. Not what the stars have done, but what they are to do, is what detains the sky. (L860)

Emily Dickinson's themes are profusely mythic and religious:

mythic, because they pertain to Creation and Quest in a variety of forms, religious, because they concern the human predicament and destiny. Both mythology and religion are modes which help us to discover our being from the "depth of Existence," in which alone can we find lasting happiness. Paul Tillich writes:

. . . eternal joy is not to be reached by living on the surface. It is rather attained by breaking through the surface, by penetrating the deep things of ourselves, of our world, and of God. The moment in which we reach the last depth of our lives is the moment in which we can experience the joy that has eternity within it, the hope that cannot be destroyed, and the truth on which life and death are built. For in the depth is truth; and in the depth is hope; and in the depth is joy.²¹

Emily Dickinson's poetry poses a soul-scathing challenge for us to break "through the surface" of existence. It is in this particular sense that her poetry is religious. Dickinson is not religious in the conventional sense of the term. She does not show any faith in an established, institutionalized form of prayer. She does not respect "doctrines" and dogmas (L200). Her Church is the ever-beating human heart. She writes to Susan Gilbert:

The bells are ringing, Susie, north, and east, and south, and your own village bell, and the people who love God, are expecting to go to meeting; don't you go Susie, not to their meeting, but come with me this morning to the Church within our hearts, where the bells are always ringing, and the preacher whose name is Love - shall intercede there for us! (L77)

Her use of the Bible, particularly the Revelations, is not orthodox but aesthetic. The Biblical Revelation is transmuted into a poetic apocalypse in which she finds the sources "of the permanence and the mystery of human suffering," to use Richard Sewall's phrase,²² and of the greatness of man who discovers his reality, his identity, his being through suffering. Her awareness of the human situation is rooted in her creative Imagination, and not in any system of philosophical

mythic, because they pertain to Creation and Quest in a variety of forms, religious, because they concern the human predicament and destiny. Both mythology and religion are modes which help us to discover our being from the "depth of Existence," in which alone can we find lasting happiness. Paul Tillich writes:

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or theological thought. It is significant that her themes, her images, and her symbols evince a profound concern for the existential depths of man. Charles R. Anderson says that in her "explorations of the self and external nature in poetry, Dickinson often begins with Biblical language and metaphor, but transmutes these into new forms through the creative power of words, to render her experience of what it means to be human."²³ "To be human," says Emily Dickinson, "is more than to be divine, for when Christ was divine, he was uncontented till he had been human" (L519). Her treatment of Christ is far from being traditional; in several of her poems she identifies herself with Christ and his Crucifixion,²⁴ and knows Christ mainly through his humanity, his suffering. She writes to Mrs. Henry Hills:

When Jesus tells us about his Father, we distrust him. When he shows us his Home, we turn away, but when he confides to us that he is "acquainted with Grief," we listen, for that also is an Acquaintance of our own. (L932)

By appropriating Christ's "Acquaintance" with "Grief," Emily Dickinson, like Kierkegaard, makes Christ contemporaneous. The realization that "suffering" and "crucifixion" belong perennially in the centre of one's being, relieves Christ's Crucifixion from the burden of temporal history:

One Crucifixion is recorded - only -
How many be
Is not affirmed of Mathematics -
Or History -

One Calvary - exhibited to Stranger -
As many be
As persons - or Peninsulas -
Gethsemane -

Is but a Province - in the Being's Centre -
Judea -
For Journey - or Crusade's Achieving -
Too near -

Our Lord - indeed - made Compound Witness -
 And yet -
 There's newer - nearer Crucifixion
 Than That - (553)

"Crucifixion" is a daily occurrence; it happens "in the Being's Centre" which History cannot record. Within the framework of aesthetics, then, Christ becomes a "type" for suffering which is realized only within the human Heart. And, Christ's resurrection serves as a typology of expanded perception:

Obtaining but our own Extent
 In whatsoever Realm -
 'Twas Christ's own personal Expanse
 That bore him from the Tomb - (1543)

Being a true Christian, Emily Dickinson is not committed to an organized religion. Her soul refuses to be contained within the four walls of a Church. Religious denominations do not fit her. She is primarily a poet who consummates herself by dramatizing her inner world through her poetry. She thinks almost every thing and she sees her thoughts. She is not a partisan in her way of seeing. She cares for "the balm of that religion/That doubts as fervently as it believes" (1144). "Sermons on unbelief" always attract her (L176). The poems such as "The Sweetest Heresy received," "Only God - detect the Sorrow -," "Given in Marriage unto Thee," "Far from Love the Heavenly Father," "God made no act without a cause," and "The grave my little cottage is" indicate Dickinson's idea of Christian Trinity and her belief in the Christian notions of Grace, Election, Union and Causality.²⁵ She also betrays interest in a somewhat pantheistic but "illegible" God:

All Circumstances are the Frame
 In which His Face is set -
 All Latitudes exist for His [No stanza break]

Sufficient Continent -

The Light His Action, and the Dark
 The Leisure of His Will -
 In Him Existence serve or set
 A Force illegible. (820)

But even a most casual reading of "Papa above!" "I have a King, who does not speak -," "I had some things that I called mine," "Should you but fail at - Sea -," "You're right - 'the way is narrow' -," "Why - do they shut Me out of Heaven?" "Of Course - I prayed -," "I never felt at Home - Below -," "I meant to have but modest needs -," "I pray at first, a little Girl," "It's easy to invent a Life -," "The Devil - Had the fidelity," and several other poems will convince one of the mockingly humorous, sceptical and sarcastic manner in which Dickinson treats the themes involving conventional religious motifs.²⁶ Her attitude toward the "Forbidden Fruit" can be construed as shocking and irreverent:

Forbidden Fruit a flavor has
 That lawful Orchards mocks -
 How luscious lies within the Pod
 The Pea that Duty locks - (1377)

Her notion of "a jealous God" can be considered as opposing the all-loving God of a Pauline theology:

God is indeed a jealous God -
 He cannot bear to see
 That we had rather not with Him
 But with each other play. (1719)

Her treatment of the theme of Baptism is very daring:

I'm ceded - I've stopped being Theirs -
 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 - (508)

The external event or ritual of Baptism is meaningless because it cannot guarantee that the baptized child will become a Christian.²⁷ Emily Dickinson relegates this event of her childhood to the world of her Dolls that she no longer plays with, and to the neglected spools of yarn that she no longer uses for "threading." There is no "choice" involved in the childhood Baptism. The real Baptism, however, takes place in the conscious, inner experience, in the fullness of one's being. The sexual symbolism of "The Crescent dropped -/Existence's Whole Arc, filled up,/With one small Diadem," is used to suggest the fertilization of the Experience in which one matures to true Baptism. True Baptism grants one the "Will to choose, or to reject," which is the "Crown" of one's Freedom.

The above discussion proves to me that Emily Dickinson approaches the sacred themes in her own creative way and gives them a new life. She creates her own Bible in the form of her poetry. Charles R. Anderson has rightly pointed out that "she poked the Scriptures to make them come alive. The Bible was one of her chief sources of imagery and of truth but, as with all original religious thinkers, only when she could test it against her own experience and rewrite it

in her own language."²⁸ Her "Bible" poem reveals this double-edged activity:

The Bible is an antique Volume -
 Written by faded Men
 At the suggestion of Holy Spectres -
 Subjects - Bethlehem -
 Eden - the ancient Homestead -
 Satan - the Brigadier -
 Judas - the Great Defaulter -
 David - the Troubadour -
 Sin - a distinguished Precipice
 Others must resist -
 Boys that "believe" are very lonesome -
 Other boys are "lost" -
 Had but the Tale a warbling Teller -
 All the Boys would come -
 Orpheus' Sermon captivated -
 It did not condemn - (1545)

The Bible, especially the Old Testament is old-fashioned and is written by "faded," uninspiring "Men." Since there is no "warbling Teller" of the Story of Man, the events, the characters, and the locales of the Bible do not transcend their historic-geographic dimension. Emily Dickinson is concerned with creating new dimensions and relating these to Man in all his predicament and glory. Bethlehem becomes the divine "Body," the inner "Jerusalem," and the "Road" leading to It is "A rugged billion Miles -" long (1487). True Eden is not found by dwelling in Eden, but by facing the experience of having been removed from Eden:

Eden is that old-fashioned House
 We dwell in every day
 Without suspecting our abode
 Until we drive away

 How fair on looking back, the Day
 We sauntered from the Door -
 Unconscious our returning,
 But discover it no more. (1657)

Paradise is regained only if Paradise is lost. The awareness of having lost it gives us the new perspective of its immensity and worth, which

in itself is a discovery. In one of her poses, Dickinson writes:

Let me not mar that perfect Dream
By an Auroral stain
But so adjust my daily Night
That it will come again.

Not when we know, the Power accosts -
The Garment of Surprise
Was all our timid Mother wore
At Home - in Paradise

(1335)

Emily Dickinson, the American Eve, also wears "the Garment of Surprise," and is "timid," in a paradoxical and ironic sense. But her "Power" is precisely the poetic knowledge, and the aurora of her poetry cannot "stain" the "perfect Dream" which she adjusts in her "daily Night." Her "Dream" becomes continuous, and then, remains unreflected. Since the poetic reflection is not ordinary knowing, the question of the "Power" not accosting her does not arise. It is in this poetic sense that Dickinson visualizes Eve wearing the "Garment of Surprise" "At Home - in Paradise," though finally, like Eve, Dickinson leaves the Paradise of religion, in order to find it, and find it in her heart, within her own being. Dickinson wrestles with religious questions like Jacob in "A little East of Jordan" (59). She sees Satan as "The Brigadier" and also as a personage of "ability." If Satan had "fidelity" and no "perfidy" as his virtue, "The Devil - without question/Were thoroughly divine" (1479). "Judas the Great Defaulter" incites the rebel-poet in her, and "David - the Troubadour -," inspires the lyric quality of her poetry. "Sin" is "a distinguished Precipice" because it afflicts all men, and is an archetype of the eternal ignorance of man. We must resist Sin by a constant drive towards the awareness of our own existence. We can reach this awareness by participating in

life, and not by watching it through the dim glass of an ideal Palace. Those who "believe" in the Old Testament without testing it against their own spiritual experience and without recreating it according to their own Existential needs "are very lonesome." The "Other Boys" who do not show any faith are "lost," from a dogmatic viewpoint, like "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."²⁹ Emily Dickinson enacts her own creative version of the Bible. She does not abide by the version of "faded Men." She becomes its "warbling teller" and captivates as Orpheus' song does. Like Orpheus--the mythical poet-singer--Dickinson sings her songs without moral judgement or condemnation. In this way she tries to restore "the Circumference" to "the Bible" which she thinks deals only "with the Centre" (L950). But there is no "Centre" without "Circumference." Dickinson makes it her "business" to deal with the "Circumference" (L268), or with "the Centre of many Circumferences," to use Melville's phrase, in order to encompass both the inner and the outer limits of man's Being.

At this point, I should mention that even though each poem dealt with in this section has an integrity of its own, it is unwise to read every poem in its own isolation, without linking it up with the poems expressing related religious concerns. The two clusters of poems, opposing each other in their manner of handling the religious motifs, should be read simultaneously. This way of reading can illuminate Dickinson's aesthetic strategy in dealing with the religious themes. In her poetic system, one is perfectly free either to seek the existential-aesthetic answers which are implied in the questions themselves, or face courageously the questions as questions.

Let me reiterate that Emily Dickinson is the poet of the sacred,

using that word only in its ontological dimension. Her sense of religion is seething with her sense of life in all its "startling"

(L381) concretenesses and evanescences. She writes to Mrs. J.G. Holland:

There is not so much Life as talk of Life, as a general thing. Had we the first intimation of the Definition of Life, the calmest of us would be Lunatics! (L492)

Her experience of Life as an "exquisite spell" "that everything conspires to break," or as being "so rotatory" "that the wilderness falls to each, sometime," reveals the precise quality of her commitment to Existence itself, beyond which there is no religious reality.³⁰

Nicolai Berdyaev states the case of religion and existence in these words:

In the objective history of the world there is nothing sacred, only a conditioned symbolization; the sacred obtains only in the world of existence, only in existential subjects. The real depth of the spirit is known existentially in experiencing one's destiny, in suffering, yearning, death, love, creativity, in freedom rather than in objects. Religion is above all existential in its nature, it is rooted in the spirit; it is contact with primal realities. (Reality, p. 49)³¹

In these pages I have tried to show Emily Dickinson as a mythopoeic, ontological, tragic and an existential poet. The terms are not mutually exclusive; they complement each other. She is mythopoeic in that she explores the primal reality of man who, while putting up with the tensions and ironies of ordinary, mundane existence, strives, consciously or unconsciously, to discover the island of his dream, (dream which is the reality), spontaneity and creative continuity. She is ontological in that her perception, which is both reception and creation, tries to reveal the mystery of Being in the concrete though ambivalent symbolic structures--the mythic-symbolic constructs always

reveal as much as they hide; they reveal by hiding, or perhaps, hide by revealing. She is a poet of the tragic vision in so far as the sense of "terror" remains pervasive in her poetry. And, finally, she is an Existentialist because she attempts to know the spiritual reality of her own life, and by implication all lives, through "suffering, yearning, love, death, creativity and freedom." My purpose, however, is not to provide any definitive system of values through which one might presume to understand Dickinson's poetic world. My chief endeavour is to create a basis for an encounter and dialogue with the creative mind of Dickinson, her particular way of perception and poetizing. The dialogue can never be closed in a world where nothing is certain and everything is in a flux.

The major concern of the remaining Chapters (II-VI) of this study, is, then, to carry on the dialogue, and to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the overlapping themes of Absence-Presence, Perception, Love, Death and Self, as they become the everlasting concerns of Dickinson's poetry. Since the themes are interpenetrating, the Chapters will not remain within their conventional boundaries, nor will they indicate any hard and fast categorizations. In so far as it is possible, an attempt is being made to study Dickinson's poetry as a whole. The dialogue, therefore, will be a continuous one. All along the way, auxiliary matters concerning the poet and her art will receive due attention.

Before moving on to the paradoxical theme of Absence-Presence in Dickinson's poetry (Ch. II), it seems more appropriate to first deal with her network of Nature symbolism which includes her other

symbolic structures, for it can provide some rare insights into her anagogic way of perception and creative process. Dickinson's treatment of Nature brings into focus the problems of interrelationship of various existential themes, the mystery and ambivalence of reality, the inadequacy of the linear language to cope with the poetic vision, the implicit social function of the artist, and so on. Nature, like Life, fills her with a sense of awe and wonder. She is sometimes baffled at the speaking silences of Nature, but she never gives up her quest to probe its layers, in order to find its root. There are several poems which illustrate this quest. But there is a poem, like "a Tree, of many, one,"³² which illuminates both the quest and the fulfillment simultaneously. It reads:

What mystery pervades a well!
That water lives so far -
A neighbor from another world
Residing in a jar

Whose limit none have ever seen,
But just his lid of glass -
Like looking every time you please
In an abyss's face!

The grass does not appear afraid,
I often wonder he
Can stand so close and look so bold
At what is awe to me.

Related somehow they may be,
The sedge stands next the sea -
Where he is floorless
And does no timidity betray

But nature is a stranger yet;
The ones that cite her most
Have never passed her haunted house,
Nor simplified her ghost.

To pity those that know her not
Is helped by the regret
That those who know her, know her less
The nearer her they get.

(1400)

A full-length evaluation of "What mystery pervades a well! " demands a simultaneous treatment of several other poems, related through their patterns of imagery and symbolisms. Viewed in itself and in conjunction with other poems, the poem becomes its own multi-eyed Perception, its own Window. It is unique in its process: it tells us how the subject-object relationship is perceived and how it is created in the moment of perception. Every image is fused with the central "feeling" or idea: the human dilemma of being surrounded and engulfed by a sense of reality which is at once so remote and so close. The whole external world, which is also internal because "The Outer-from the Inner/Derives its Magnitude" (451), like Thoreau's Walden Pond, is embodied in the haunting image of a "well." It functions as a paradox in that it is enclosed by man's comprehension as water in a "jar," and yet it eludes intellectual grasp. In so far as water symbolism refers to destruction and chaos, and a consequent new creation of the world, its aura of mystery is understandable. It becomes "that Great Water in the West-," which is "Termed Immortality" (726). Its "mystery" resides in its unbounded "limit" which "none have ever seen." This "mystery" is also the "mystery" of one's Being which is the only reality--"All the rest is Perjury-" (1768). But the precise condition of apprehension can arise from the ontological perception in which the "jar" becomes the "well," and in which the "feeling" created by the phenomenon is a part of its totality. Unless the "lid of glass" is pierced through with the Imagination, any self-conscious attempt to fathom its depths will result in nothing. The "well" remains unknowable like the darkness of the "abyss"; "every time" one tries to penetrate

it, one is confronted with "an abyss's face" with all its terrible nothingness (no-thing-ness). But "'Nothing' is the force/That renovates the World-" (1563). We must come to terms with the "abyss" of existence. We should not seek the "Rope" which will save us "from an Abyss" (1322). The abyss cannot be "soldered" either (546). The "Bliss" of Abyss consists precisely in our existential plunge into it (340). Dickinson writes that "Emerging from an Abyss and entering it again - that is Life - is it not?" (PF32 and L1024). The "Abyss," she thinks, "is its own Apology" (L968). However, the Maya-mirror reflects only the anxiety and the bewilderment of the beholder. But as soon as the "lid of glass" is passed through, the darkness of the abyss brightens up with an ever-revealing clarity; its "face" becomes a concrete reality in the Human Imagination, which Blake calls the Whole Existence (Milton 32, 32). The poetic or mythic image compels the reader to encounter this reality in spite of, or perhaps because of, its ambivalent character.

The entire nature which is represented in this poem through the images of "water," "grass," "sedge," and "sea" is embodied in the wholeness of the "well" --the root metaphor of the poem. The "grass" is so close to the waters of the well that it does not betray any fear and trembling. The "sedge" also acquires a similar relationship with the "sea"--the basic symbolic construct--which is "floorless." The nature of this relationship is "awe" inspiring. The implied challenge of the middle stanzas is soul-scathing. The "grass" and "sedge" have appropriated the mystery of the "well" and "sea." The poet "demands" of the reader to become humble and free and bold like the grass and

"understand" the nature of the "well" which is a miniature "sea." The fundamental human problem is always that of the right relationship and dialogue with the depth of Life. The apocalypse is precisely the relation between the "grass" and the well, or between the "sedge" and the "sea." Man must come out of his puny self which is a "jar" and become a "well" which is a form of awakened consciousness, and reach the dimension of the "sea" which is his real Self, his freedom, and which is as vast as humanity, the real "Harbor" of our existence in time (825). The stanzas being mentioned here are indeed inexhaustible in the quality of their suggestiveness. They offer, as it were, the methodology of poetic apprehension of this our baffling and miasmatic reality, the methodology of seeing the various levels of being and identity.

The last two stanzas complete the open form of the poem by extending the scope and mood of "mystery" prevailing over the whole structure. The "haunted house" or the "ghost" of nature cannot be understood by the pragmatists who talk so much about her. Nature, with all her simultaneous creations and destructions, lights and darknesses, births and deaths, or deaths and rebirths, baffles and haunts the ordinary human sensibility. Nature "Wills Silence - Everywhere -" (790); her ruthless "imposing negative" of death "Nulls opportunity" of Life (1673). Nature and God are the "Executors" of one's "identity" (853). "Nature's Experience would make/Our Reddest Second pale" (841). Nature appears to be a "Juggler" because of the quick change in her moods (1170). But "Nature" is also "the Gentlest Mother" (792), "the infinite Aurora" (925), and a "Sweet Wonder" (977). These variations speak for

the lack of any rational order in nature. However there is unity in multitude. The cosmic schema or the archetype of nature, with her ghostlike terrors can never be "simplified" by deductive or inductive methods. Those who really know nature "the nearer" they get, they "know her less" for communication. The ambiguity is quite obvious: the more man knows the nature of reality or truth, the less he can communicate it:

"Nature" is what we see -
 The Hill - the Afternoon
 Squirrel - Eclipse - the Bumble bee -
 Nay - Nature is Heaven -
 Nature is what we hear -
 The Bobolink - the Sea -
 Thunder - the Cricket
 Nay - Nature is Harmony -
 Nature is what we know -
 Yet have no art to say -
 So impotent our Wisdom is
 To her Simplicity. (668)

"We see," "we hear," "we know," but we "have no art to say." Silence overtakes a man who grasps the reality of the universe and his own precise relationship with it. Silence expresses the mode of one's being, and is experienced in the centre of one's heart:

There is no Silence in the Earth - so silent
 As that endured
 Which uttered, would discourage Nature
 And haunt the World. (1004)

But the poem embodies Silence, "Silence which is Communication," to use Martin Buber's phrase.³³ Silence becomes the medium to tell the encounter, and also what happens in the encounter by way of symbolic constructs. It is like the cosmic Dance of Shiva which typologically represents a simultaneous destruction and creation of the world, and, hence an instant death and rebirth within the human heart. In this

dimension, the poem invites comparisons with the mythic and tragic works of writers such as Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Melville and Hesse, in so far as their writings embody some of the finest grapplings with the Abyss of the human spirit in world literature, and in so far as their works defeat the notion of rationalistic humanism, as opposed to self-deification.

It should be clear from the above discussion that when Dickinson writes: "nature is a stranger yet," she does not imply that nature is wholly hostile to man. Hostility, wrath, and indifference are certainly some of the moods of nature, but they are mixed with the moods of tenderness, love, compassion, charity, harmony and so on. The simultaneous presence of these characteristics enhances nature's ambivalence and her haunting character. Nor does she mean that "nature" is completely unknown to her. Her intimacy with nature is manifested in "The Bee is not afraid of me" (111), "The Grass so little has to do -" (333), "My Garden - like the Beach -" (484), "I know where Wells grow - Droughtless Wells -" (460), "The Well upon the Brook" (1091), "Nature rarer uses Yellow" (1045), "The Sky is low - the Clouds are mean" (1075), "These are the Signs to Nature's Inns -" (1077), "After the Sun comes out" (1148), "Of Nature I shall have enough" (1220), and "Touch lightly Nature's sweet Guitar" (1389), to mention only a few poems.³⁴

"What mystery pervades a well!" has a significant place in the Emily Dickinson corpus. It symbolizes the whole range of her poetic thought and sensibility. Its structure, as is evident from the above discussion, represents the full scope of Dickinson's themes and interpenetrating symbolisms. The "Well" is simultaneously Life, Love, Death,

Immortality, Self, Perception, and Poetry. It is Life in that a deep sense of "mystery" pervades it, which cannot be the subject of literal communication: "Life is the finest secret/So long as that remains, we must all whisper," says Emily Dickinson (L354). It is Love in its "depth" and in its unbounded or "free" relationship with the "grass." It is Death in that it resides "in a jar" which is still, and in that it projects its abyssal face on the human consciousness with a fearful sense of inevitability: "Declaiming waters none may dread -/But Waters that are still/Are so for that most fatal cause/In nature - they are full -" (1595). It is Immortality for it reflects in the now "another world" beyond its "lid of glass." It is one's Self or Being whose spiritual terror or "ghost" cannot be "simplified" without violence to the very meaning of existence which encompasses all ambivalences. It is Perception (ontological) in that it yields being, free and "bold," untouched by the practical and theoretical concerns of our everyday, mundane existence--or as Fallico would say, it is a self-contained world of pure possibilities, truly felt, imagined, and realized.³⁵ It is the presence of the aesthetic-existential landscape. From the non-aesthetic point of view, it is merely the absence--an absurd state in which the vision is not possible. (Here, I am not thinking of the paradox and the aesthetics of Absence-Presence, or in the terms of Heidegger's absence as unpresent presence.) And it (the well) is Poetry in that its churning waters create their own music from the silence of the deep, and in so far as it, with all its haunting shapes and forms, echoes the human voice with a finer tone.

The "well" in the poem, by being a haunted house of nature

becomes a metaphor for art. Emily Dickinson writes to Higginson: "Nature is a Haunted House - but Art - a House that tries to be haunted" (L459a). In other words, a work of art is an attempt to appropriate or reach the condition of nature in which, to quote Goethe, "we never see anything isolated, but everything in connection with something else which is before it, beside it, under it and over it."³⁶ Appropriation is not imitation. A work of art, in this case, becomes Nature, and embodies all the terror and tenderness inherent in Nature. It reflects the puzzling clarity of the artist's being, his "haunted house" and invites the reader to dive into his/her own abyss, in order to find the existential Truth in concreto, and find it perpetually.³⁷ But only a fully realized metaphor which is the very essence of language can achieve this identity-- a "possibility actualized as possibility."³⁸ The power of the poem, then, belongs to its many-faceted metaphor. It is in this sense that the poem becomes its own poetics and tells us of the chronic inability of the linear language to portray or communicate the poetic experience.

The poetic language, however, is not one dimensional; it creates its own limitless peripheries. It releases words from their denotative, and scientific bondage. In its purely aesthetic form, language becomes a "living act," an "original utterance." Metaphor is an incarnation of the freedom and spontaneity of our being. It is in this sense that "language is the matrix of meaning, and not something consisting of meanings. The symbolic use or adaptation of language is so far from being language itself that it could just as well be called a super-addition to language proper."³⁹ The poet really knows the art of the

words; he alone, to use Fallico's expression, "really speaks and wants to speak with language."⁴⁰

Emily Dickinson shows a keen awareness of the "power" of words, and an equally keen sensitivity to use them:⁴¹

Could mortal dip divine
The undeveloped Freight
Of a delivered syllable
'T would crumble with the weight. (1409)

The "delivered syllable" which is the basic metaphor, is pregnant with the "weight" of its perfect (undeveloped or elemental) force. The "Freight" is the elemental or primordial "power." It is loaded with meaning, but also enjoys "freedom" because it is "delivered." The mortal "lip" (vessel or body) "would crumble" at the mere "guess" of its energy. The "syllable," thus, becomes the moving spirit of the creative act which is embodied in these four lines. Dickinson believes in the living power of words: "A word is dead/When it is said,/Some say/I say it just/Begins to live/That day" (1212 and L374). She also tells us how the poet looks for words (word after word) to match the poetic vision, and how the "right" word takes its place in poetic creation by itself:

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 - (1126)

The "word" is the Angelic Being--"The Cherubim"--who comes forth spontaneously, out of the spontaneity of the poet, and not out of the poet's search in Philology. This means that the poetic vision carries within itself its own medium, its "free" expression. But it is a common complaint of and about poets and men of genius that their "inner fire is never completely transmitted in their works, and that the perfection of the created object is something other than the creative flame itself."⁴² In this "cry" the tension between the Inner Vision and the language that encloses it, or seems to enclose it, comes to light. Poets are fully conscious of this tension: while they believe in the "power" of the words, there always lurks a painful feeling that they cannot, somehow, "Tell" the "Ultimate of Talk" (407).⁴³ The "Ultimate" defies language. Dickinson confesses:

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? (581)

On the gap between poetry written on paper and poetry as original perception, Dickinson writes:

To see the Summer Sky
Is Poetry, though never in a Book it lie -
True Poems flee - (1472)

Thoreau has expressed a similar notion, in a somewhat different manner, and with an emphasis on the poet himself:

The true poem is not that which the public read. There is always a poem not printed on paper, coincident with the production of this, stereotyped in the poet's life. It is what he has become through his work. Not how

which is the very core or "kernel" of being, but which is above knowledge; or that "original conception" which becomes "probably a feeble shadow" of itself in the act of re-creation. The Vision embodies all the "terror," "freedom," and "beauty" of Creation. The poet stands in awe and wonder at its haunting size and immensity. He comprehends it, but he is also comprehended by it. He cannot utter this relation straight. Therefore, he enacts it in his own creativity, so far as the enactment is possible. But each enactment implies a new Creation, a new "terror," which partakes of the "first," but is not necessarily identical with it. It is something more or something less than the "original" but it is essentially and concretely the "same" in nature--a divine act of Creation. It is this "terror" of being a God which makes the poet "modest" enough, in so far as he does not claim the full realization of his inner power, in the objectivized form of his art. But, paradoxically, the poet becomes offensive in telling that his art, however "glorious" it may be, is "probably a feeble shadow" of the "original" that he contains within his being. At any rate, the poet continues to pour out his Soul, his Being and Non-Being, his sorrows and joys, in the form of "words" which dramatize the mythic act of creation. He transcends the logical limits of language, and when the inner experience converges on silence, he "knocks upon silence for an answering music."⁴⁸ Language as a means of ordinary human discourse does not interest him. He uses the "words," so that the "words" should breathe longer than the human beings do. Does it not seem paradoxical that the "language" should fail the poet?

Emily Dickinson's poetic verbalizations embody the paradox of

the failure and the glory of the "word" in being inadequate to define the Vision, and yet defining it by its silence. When she "fails" to find the "word" to contain her "syllable-less Sea," Dickinson does not regret it. On the contrary, she seems to exult over the fact that her inner reality exists and can be felt by itself, without any outward expression, and still she expresses it in so many words:

To tell the Beauty would decrease
 To state the Spell demean -
 There is a syllable-less Sea
 Of which it is the sign -
 My will endeavours for its word
 And fails, but entertains
 A Rapture as of Legacies -
 Of introspective Mines -

(1700)

But the "syllable-less Sea" of her poetry is in reality the Sea of infinite syllables, speaking as well as silent, or all silently speaking in their eternal silence, which is another name for speech.

CHAPTER II

THE LANDSCAPE OF ABSENCE: "MANSIONS OF MIRAGE"

In placid hours well-pleased we dream
Of many a brave unbodied scheme.
But form to lend, pulsed life create,
What unlike things must meet and mate:
A flame to melt - a wind to freeze;
Sad patience - joyous energies;
Humility - yet pride and scorn;
Instinct and study; love and hate;
Audacity - reverence. These must mate,
And fuse with Jacob's mystic heart,
To wrestle with the angel - Art.

- Herman Melville, "Art"

The existential aesthetics presents the domains of the visible and the invisible, the known and the unknown, being and the non-being as one. There is always the inner--whether we are conscious of it or not--behind every object which we project out of ourselves in the form of a concrete manifestation. The ratiocinative mind functions on the surface of the concrete phenomena as projected into time and space. The poetic mind, however, fructifies by moving on both the planes, the outward and the inward, simultaneously, and thereby, transcends the merely spatio-temporal dimension of things. The poet, then, sees the Invisible in its visibility or the Visible in its invisibility. What remains absent to the "eyesight" becomes present to the "insight." The concreteness of what is absent is self-evident to one who sees creatively, one who transforms the opacity of objects into their transparency. This

inner-outer movement which is fully embodied in Dickinson's poetry, can be further clarified in the words of Arturo B. Fallico:

It is, in fact, with such internal live sense of my own body - the thing that I myself am - that I begin to "see" the thing which stands before me. But, of course, I have already crossed the line between the obscure, unyielding, positively dumb thing as it first confronted me A world of transparent qualities is now emerging "in" and "outside" my concrete bodily being, gradually supplanting what was there obscurely "given" to me earlier.¹

The inner-outer movement of "the thing that I myself am" and "the thing which stands before me," suggests a constant relationship and metamorphosis. In this interaction, the absence is felt as most intense presence, though, paradoxically, the presence is presence only in so far as it is absence because it is beyond scientific verification. It is due to the richness and complexity of this paradox that Emily Dickinson's poetry is being called the "Landscape of Absence"--the phrase itself is paradoxical and suggests "something" tangibly intangible, concrete yet vanishing, near and remote, apprehensible and elusive:

A something in a summer's Day
As slow her flambeaux burn away
Which solemnizes me.

A something in a summer's noon -
A depth - an Azure - a perfume -
Transcending ecstasy.

And still within a summer's night
A something so transporting bright
I clap my hands to see -

Then veil my too inspecting face
Lest such a subtle - shimmering grace
Flutter too far for me -

The wizard fingers never rest -
The purple brook within the breast
Still chafes its narrow bed -

Still rears the East her amber Flag -
 Guides still the Sun along the Crag
 His Caravan of Red -

So looking on - the night - the morn
 Conclude the wonder gay -
 And I meet, coming thro' the dews
 Another summer's Day! (122)

The "total" impact of the poem is consonant with the mystery and wonder of "existence." The feminine-creative flame of "a summer's Day" "solemnizes" the poet. But the ambivalence of "something" remains pervasive. The poet hints at "A depth - an Azure - a perfume -" as characteristics of a "something in a summer's noon," and thereby suggests the inner-outer movement of the creative mind through the images of "depth" and "Azure." But the image of "perfume" makes that "something" out of grasp, like the source of light in the heart of "a summer's night." The poet finally gives up the posture of inquiry, and veils her face as the "polite Archangels/Do in meeting God" (65), so that "a subtle-shimmering grace" of "A summer's Day" be not withdrawn from her. The human heart continues to contain the magic of "the wizard fingers" that move "the night - the morn" in an endless, cyclic pattern. The "wonder" of life cannot be resolved by mediation; it has to be encountered "directly," in order to be realized as a concrete presence.

In the above interpretation, the "Landscape of Absence" has been considered as wonder or mystery. Mystery epitomizes a fundamental condition of "Absence" which is "condensed presence" (L587). Dickinson shows a deep sense of creative fidelity to the essential mystery of being, which is also the mystery of her art. Even her personal relationships derive force from within the realm of the mysterious. She

writes to Austin Dickinson: "it is a comfort to know that you are here - that your whole soul is here, and tho' apparently absent, yet present in the highest, and the truest sense" (L72). At another occasion she states: "Were Departure Separation, there would be neither Nature nor Art, for there would be no World" (PF52). The complex structure of absence-presence-mystery-being-art may be rendered in the words of Gabriel Marcel:

It is of the nature of presence as presence to be uncircumscribed Presence is mystery in the exact measure in which it is presence. Now fidelity is the active perpetuation of presence, the renewal of its benefits - of its virtue which consists in a mysterious incitement to create. Here again we may be helped by the consideration of aesthetic creativeness; for if artistic creation is conceivable, it can only be on condition that the world is present to the artist in a certain way - present to his heart and to his mind, present to his very being.²

Within the framework of "aesthetic creativeness," the true scope of "mystery" or "absence" is limitless. Absence can be considered in many ways. I can consider it as "Experience" which defines itself through silence, stillness, and the darkness of the human heart. I can view it as Being or "Other" which contains the primeval magic and terror of existence. I can look at it as "Distance" or "Beyond," which is also Inwardness, that expresses the Existentialist-Romanticist's notions of "instress" and "inscape," rather than a simpleminded and naive idea of romantic "escape." I can regard it as "Withdrawal" from the world, which carries its own mode of encounter with the world. I can treat it as "Deception" which affirms reality as "dream" and dream as "reality." I can contemplate it as "Perception" which is "the angle of Vision," and which reveals instant relationship between the perceiver and the perceived in the act of creation. I can feel it as Love which increases

one's capacity for self-annihilation and the ability to remain in uncertainties. I can apprehend it as Death which negates and intensifies life at once. And I can identify it as Time and Deity which remain ever present, though ever hid. But all these forms are ambivalent, and refer to the condition of creation in which all the seeming contradictions of life meet.

In the following pages of this Chapter, I shall examine each one of the above-mentioned modes of looking at "Absence" separately, while at the same time imply their integration from the viewpoint of aesthetic creation. The "Absence" as "Experience" implies a creative ability to go through Existence, especially through the regions of stillness, silence, and the darkness, which do not oppose but contain their counterparts--motion, sound, and light. Dickinson's poetic experience constantly reminds us of the "stillness" of the "Landscape" in which "movement" has been perfectly harmonized:

And yet, how still the Landscape stands!
How nonchalant the Hedge!
As if the "Resurrection"
Were nothing very strange! (74)

The "motion" involved in "Resurrection" is the "still Riddle" of Nature and its eschatology which means "revival":

There are that resting, rise,
Can I expound the skies?
How still the Riddle lies! (89)

Nature "abides" and "creates and federates/Without a syllable" (811). But her "speechlessness" or "Silence" is integral with her infinite sounds. The "Bird" or the "Bard" does not contradict the silence of creation by singing (1650). Rather, he creates the depth-dimension of silence by singing what is silent, or what is "Out of Plumb of Speech"

(989):

A House upon the Height -
 That Wagon never reached -
 No Dead, were ever carried down -
 No Peddler's Cart - approached -

Whose Chimney never smoked -
 Whose Windows - Night and Morn -
 Caught Sunrise first - and Sunset - last -
 Then - held an Empty Pane -

Whose fate - Conjecture knew -
 No other neighbor - did -
 And what it was - we never lisped -
 Because He - never told -

(399)

The poet tells us of the things which are mute and which speak only through and in their muteness. Dickinson's "House upon the Height" is an autonomous symbolic construct. It is self-contained and has no transaction with the outside-world of "Peddler's Cart and Wagon." There is no report of death from this House. Death seems to have been inter-fused with Life. But, then, there is no life that one could see through the Chimney smoke, a sign of human habitation. Life seems to have been merged with Death. In its "Windows" or "the doors of perception," which hold "Empty," unreflecting panes, is celebrated the aesthetic marriage of "Morn and Night," "Sunrise and Sunset," life and death, the waking and the sleeping, the light and the dark, the voice and the silence, the presence and the absence. The "House" is a metaphor for art. The artist does not talk about his creation. Like God, he leaves it in silence, only to be known through "Conjecture," and not through laboriously dull methods of knowledge. We cannot even lisp its eternal power. Even when the silence is transformed into sound, its music falls not on "the sensual ear," but on the "spirit" which resides in silence. Music, in this sense, is silence speaking to silence:

I've heard an Organ talk, sometimes
 In a Cathedral Aisle,
 And understood no word it said -
 Yet held my breath, the while -

And risen up - and gone away,
 A more Bernardine Girl -
 Yet - know not what was done to me
 In that old Chapel Aisle. (183)

Listening to music which is silence, is essentially a religious experience, and therefore, has all the undertones and overtones of awe. "Yet held my breath, the while -" and "Yet - know not what was done to me," reveal the precise nature of the "experience" and the religious conversion which takes place in the human heart which is above rational knowledge. Sound is only the external manifestation of the internal Silence which is, paradoxically, the profusion of sound:

When Bells stop ringing - Church - begins -
 The Positive - of Bells -
 When Cogs - stop - that's Circumference -
 The Ultimate - of wheels. (633)

In Emily Dickinson's poetic vocabulary, "Church" is interchangeable with the human Heart. It is "The Positive - of Bells -" which ring internally. It is also the Centre and "Circumference" of reality. It is "The Ultimate - of wheels" in which the external "cogs" do not function.³ It is the "Tree" on which the Bird-Bard perches to sing his song "for nothing scrutable/But intimate Delight" (1265). The "intimate Delight" is also "intimate" Pain. The human Heart, thus, becomes the reservoir of constant growth, spontaneity, light, and darkness. It is the seat of eternal creation. From it emanate the still, tranquil mountains and the devouring "volcanoes" (175):

The Mountains - grow unnoticed -
 Their Purple figures rise [No stanza break]

Without attempt - Exhaustion -
Assistance - or Applause -

In Their Eternal Faces
The Sun - with just delight
Looks long - and last - and golden -
For fellowship - at night - (757)

The growth of "mountains" is analogous to the "Growth of Man" because it "Gravitates within" (750). It remains "unnoticed," for it is not identified by outward signs of "Exhaustion -/Assistance - or Applause." The images of "Purple figures" and "Eternal Faces" suggest the infinite value of growing from within. Eternity is reflected in the face of a man whose inner growth is complete. "The Sun" shines "long - and last - and golden" on the "Mountains," and even "at night" keeps "fellowship" with them by going down behind the mountains. This means that for "the Mountains," there would be light even in the heart of darkness. In eternity, Man sees light by the dark and dark by the light, and sees it whole. This seeing or experience constitutes man's reality which is embodied in the human Heart which "measures like the Sea" (928).

In its most palpable form, the human Heart becomes the inner theatre in which the "tragedy" and "romance" of existence are enacted infinitely. Emily Dickinson contrasts the inner theatre with the outer theatre in these lines:

Drama's Vitallest Expression is the Common Day
That arise and set about Us -
Other Tragedy

Perish in the Recitation -
This - the best enact
When the Audience is scattered
And the Boxes shut -

"Hamlet" to Himself were Hamlet -
Had not Shakespeare wrote -
Though the "Romeo" left no Record
Of his Juliet.

It were infinite enacted
 In the Human Heart-
 Only Theatre recorded
 Owner cannot shut-

(741)

The "Vitallest Expression" of the Human "Drama" is embodied in the symbolic structure of "the Common Day" which "arise and set about Us --." Our "birth" and our "death" are dramatized every "Day." The vision of "tragedy" is best enacted "when the Audience is scattered," when each individual is alone and immersed in the silence of his own solitude. In "Recitation" the "Tragedy" perishes. The point is that the real drama of the lives of Hamlet, Romeo, and Juliet is played within themselves. Hamlet has "that within which passes show" (Hamlet I.2.85). Juliet wears "the mask of night," and her love is "as boundless as the sea." Romeo's love is "Blind" and "best befits the dark."⁴ The infinity and the darkness of their souls cannot be transcribed into words. The outer "Theatre" which merely "records" the inner secret of the "Human Heart" pales into insignificance before the "inner theatre" which the "Owner cannot shut." True "Experience" or "drama" occurs within and can be defined only through the symbols of silence, stillness and the dark.

The "Absence" as Being carries all the "dread" and "terror" of existence, because it remains ever unfathomable, apparelled in its own mystery. It cannot be objectivized, though it has myriad forms which appear and disappear. It is like a thought which cannot be crystallized in the human intellect:

A Thought went up my mind today -
 That I have had before -
 But did not finish - some way back -
 I could not fix the Year -

Nor where it went - nor why it came
 The second time to me -
 Nor definitely, what it was -
 Have I the Art to say -

But somewhere - in my Soul - I know -
 I've met the Thing before -
 It just reminded me - 'twas all -
 And came my way no more - (701)

The invisible presence of Being can be encountered in the human spirit in the form of "the Thing." Its concreteness is experienced in the full experience of existence itself. In the existentialistic-aesthetic way, Being is realized, paradoxically, in the awareness of non-being, in the very act of living in which existence fulfills itself. "And came my way no more" does not mean the negation of Being. It indicates the veil of Being in the non-being. Paul Tillich describes the relationship between Being and non-being in these words:

If one is asked how nonbeing is related to being-itself, one can only answer metaphorically: being "embraces" itself and nonbeing. Being has nonbeing "within" itself as that which is eternally present and eternally overcome in the process of the divine life. The ground of everything that is not a dead identity without movement and becoming; it is living creativity. Creatively it affirms itself, eternally conquering its own nonbeing. As such it is the pattern of the self-affirmation of every finite being and the source of the courage to be.⁵

The concepts of "process" and "becoming" are basic to the ontology of "being" as well as "nonbeing." Emily Dickinson regards Being as a continuous process and relates it to the creative power of "anguish" and "terror":

One Anguish - in a Crowd -
 A Minor thing - it sounds -
 And yet, unto the single Doe
 Attempted of the Hounds

'Tis Terror as consummate
 As Legions of Alarm
 Did leap, full flanked, upon the Host -
 'Tis Units - make the Swarm -

A Small Leech - on the Vitals -
 A sliver, in the Lung -
 The Bung out - of an Artery -
 Are scarce accounted - Harms -

Yet mighty - by relation
 To that Repealless thing -
 A Being - impotent to end -
 When once it has begun -

(565)

The "One Anguish" of existence is the "Terror" of Being which is "Repealless." By "relation" to Being, the "Anguish" which seems "Minor" becomes interminable. Its immediate impact can be felt by empathizing "the single Doe" being chased by a crowd of wild dogs. The imagery of "Leech - on the Vitals -," "sliver, in the Lung," and "Bung out - of an Artery" also suggest the presence of pain and danger as the conditions in which one can realize Being. And yet, the "terror" of Being is something much more subtle than physical crises. It cannot be seen:

No man saw awe, nor to his house
 Admitted he a man
 Though by his awful residence
 Has human nature been.

(1733)

The primeval magic and mystery of existence can be fathomed only through the excess of mystery itself. We should remain "Immured the whole of Life/Within a magic Prison" (1601), so that we may know the secret of true "freedom." We perceive more by the "dark" than by the light, provided we know how to see:

Sunset that screens, reveals -
 Enhancing what we see
 By menaces of Amethyst
 And Moats of Mystery.

(1609)

The Being is, thus, understood in the terms of "becoming" through "anguish," "terror," "awe," and "mystery" of Nothing. Emily Dickinson's view of Being may be likened to Heidegger's:

This, the purely "Other" than everything that "is," is that-which-is not (das Nicht-Seiende). Yet this "Nothing" functions as Being. It would be premature to stop thinking at this point and adopt the facile explanation that Nothing is merely the nugatory, equating it with the non-existent (das Wesenlose). Instead of giving way to such precipitate and empty ingenuity and abandoning Nothing in all its mysterious multiplicity of meanings, we should rather equip ourselves and make ready for one thing only: to experience in Nothing the vastness of that which gives every being the warrant to be. That is Being itself One of the essential theatres of speechlessness is dread in the sense of the terror into which the abyss of Nothing plunges us. Nothing, conceived as the pure "Other" than what-is, is the veil of Being. In Being all that comes to pass in what-is is perfected from everlasting.⁶

Both Dickinson and Heidegger imply the being of the existent involved in the concrete human experience of existence itself. There is no place for a rational system of ideas in Dickinson. She lingers on the ambiguous and loves to raise questions about the "hidden," in the manner of a Kafka:

What Inn is this
Where for the night
Peculiar Traveller comes?
Who is the Landlord?
Where the maids?
Behold, what curious rooms!
No ruddy fires on the hearth -
No brimming Tankards flow -
Necromancer! Landlord!
Who are these below? (115)

The dimensions of life or being are curiously linked with the weird atmosphere of the "Inn" which is being run by a "Necromancer," a magician who deals with the dead. But, the "grave" or man's finitude does not stop man from fulfilling his existence. Existence can be fulfilled in each "moment." "Life - is what we make it" (698). Simone de Beauvoir has aptly pointed out that "the individual alone has the power of laying the foundations of his own existence."⁷ She has further emphasized:

Regardless of the staggering dimensions of the world about us, the density of our ignorance, the risks of catastrophes to come, and our individual weakness within the immense collectivity, the fact remains that we are absolutely free today if we choose to will our existence in its finiteness, a finiteness which is open on the infinite.⁸

The "Absence" as "Distance" or "Beyond" represents, paradoxically, what is so close and within the grasp of the human psyche. It is a quality of Inwardness which cannot be rendered directly. As "Experience" is made concrete through the symbolism of stillness, silence and the dark, and as the Being is made manifest through "Nothing" and "nonbeing," the closeness and withinness of "Absence" is projected through the indirect, or even negative, symbolism of "Distance" or "Beyond." Whatever might be the content of "distance," it is always felt and experienced as a concrete presence:

Undue Significance a starving man attaches
To Food -
Far off - He sighs - and therefore - Hopeless -
And therefore - Good -

Partaken - it relieves - indeed -
But proves us
That spices fly
In the Receipt - It was the Distance -
Was Savory - (439)

Apart from the implication that "Expectation - is Contentment -/Gain Satiety -"(807), the poem presents the paradox that the real savour of "Food" consists in its absence. As soon as the hunger is relieved, "Spices fly." It is the absence or the "Distance" of food which is present as an inner reality. "Wisdom is more becoming viewed/At distance than at hand" (1269). The closeness of human reality becomes plastic when seen through its remoteness and negatives:

Delight - becomes pictorial -
When viewed through Pain - [No stanza break]

More fair - because impossible
That any gain -

The Mountain - at a given distance -
In Amber - lies
Approached - the Amber flits - a little -
And That's - the Skies - (572)

In aesthetic terms, "Distance" is controlled by the human "Will," and not by the "Equator" (863). "Distance" defines the relationship "Between Ourselves and the Dead!" (949). "Distance" enhances love, though itself abates (1155).

The symbolism of "Beyond" does not indicate any other worldliness. Its consciousness refers to something eternally present, and here, though wearing the garb of mystery:

If I should cease to bring a Rose
Upon a festal day,
'T will be because beyond the Rose
I have been called away -

If I should cease to take the names
My buds commemorate -
'T will be because Death's finger
Clasps my murmuring lip! (56)

In symbolic terms, "Rose" refers to some consummate accomplishment, and, therefore, the occasion for celebration. The "buds commemorate" the whole process of regeneration, though "Death's finger" touches and joins together the "murmuring" lips, silencing its own secret, the secret of the "beyond." Death's enigma cannot be sufficiently vocalized. But Death or beyond remain ever tangible, tactile like the "Death's finger." This is how Dickinson sees her "Bird" "beyond the sea," her "Bumblebees" "beyond the Sun," "The lonesome" "beyond the Amber line," "the Coast - beyond," "The Reefs - in old Gethsemane," "The Stimulus, beyond the Grave," and "A Wind" "Beyond the Realm of Bird."⁹ In all

this seeing, a quality of Inwardness, referred to earlier, comes to the fore. It is the inward presence which paints "the Landscape of Absence":

The Inner - paints the Outer -
 The Brush without the Hand -
 Its Picture publishes - precise -
 As is the inner Brand -

On fine - Arterial Canvas -
 A Cheek - perchance a Brow -
 The Star's whole Secret - in the Lake -
 Eyes were not meant to know. (451)

The "Arterial Canvas" and the process of inner painting remains essentially "inscrutable," as the "Campaign of the Interior" (1188). But the poetic mind operates upon this inscrutability and renders it legible through the metaphor. The whole external world is internalized, and in the process the external world loses its externality without losing itself. This conception is developed by Rilke in his famous letter to Witold Von Hulewicz:

We must introduce what is here seen and touched into the wider, into the widest orbit. Not into a beyond whose shadow darkens the earth, but into a whole, into the whole It is our task to imprint this provisional, perishable earth so deeply, so patiently and passionately in ourselves that its reality shall arise in us again "invisibly." We are the bees of the invisible The earth has no way out other than to become invisible: in us who with a part of our natures partake of the invisible, have (at least) stock in it, and can increase our holdings in the invisible during our sojourn here, - in us alone can be consummated this intimate and lasting conversion of the visible into an invisible no longer dependent upon being visible and tangible, as our own destiny continually grows at the same time MORE PRESENT AND INVISIBLE in us We are, let it be emphasized once more, in the sense of the Elegies, we are these transformers of the earth; our entire existence, the flights and plunges of our love, everything qualifies us for this task (beside which there exists, essentially, no other).¹⁰

The air of ambivalence and mystery is widely pervasive in the "Landscape" of Dickinson's poetry. The "earth" becomes "invisible" in her,

and is "no longer dependent upon being visible and tangible," though it is always "PRESENT" in the highest sense. The poetic tension of Absence-Presence is embodied in the imagery and symbolism of "But Nobody was there," "Mists," "Veil," "Riddle," "seal," "Arrestless as invisible," "Best Things dwell out of Sight," "With something hid in her," "The Gem were best unknown," "out of sight," "Lands with Locks," "To disappear enhances," "a Wheel of Cloud," "The Suburbs of a Secret," "In feats inscrutable," "Enchantment's Syndicate," "reportless places," " 'Tis threaded in the Air," "A Route of Evanescence," "Above the Haunts of men," "Pastures of Oblivion," "That somewhere," "guile is where it goes," "ablative to show," and "Unnoticed dwell."¹¹ However, the tangibility of the "Landscape" is a constant reality in the human Consciousness which cannot be detailed in terms of an external topography:

Conscious am I in my Chamber,
Of a shapeless friend -
He doth not attest by Posture -
Nor Confirm - by Word -

Neither Place - need I present Him -
Fitter Courtesy
Hospitable intuition
Of His Company -

Presence - is His furthest license -
Neither He to Me
Nor Myself to Him - by Accent -
Forfeit Probity -

(679)

Also, the awareness of the "Landscape" can occur suddenly like a flash, and reveal what has so far been in and of the Dark:

The Lightning is a yellow Fork
From Tables in the Sky
By inadvertent fingers dropt
The awful Cutlery

Of mansions never quite disclosed
 And never quite concealed
 The Apparatus of the Dark
 To ignorance revealed. (1173)

The domestic images of "Fork," "Tables," "Cutlery," make the "awful" impact of "The Lightning" bearable. The spatial metaphor of "the sky," refers to the outer expanse of the inner "depth." The "inadvertent fingers" enhance our sense of mystery, and point out the unintentional nature of the dawning awareness. In this awareness which is comparable to "ignorance," or child-like wisdom as opposed to egocentric knowledge, the "mansions"--the mansions of mirage or wonder--fully reveal themselves. "Of our greatest acts we are ignorant," says Dickinson (L330). The mythic, half-disclosed, half-concealed, "Apparatus of the Dark" comes to light. Emily Dickinson refers to this very light as the light of the Spring, a season of rebirth and regeneration, a season that follows a period of long and dark winter:

A Light exists in Spring
 Not present on the Year
 At any other period -
 When March is scarcely here

A Color stands abroad
 On Solitary Fields
 That Science cannot overtake
 But Human Nature feels.

It waits upon the Lawn,
 It shows the furthest Tree
 Upon the furthest Slope you know
 It almost speaks to you.

Then as Horizons step
 Or Noons report away
 Without the Formula of sound
 It passes and we stay -

A quality of loss
Affecting our Content
As Trade had suddenly encroached
Upon a Sacrament. (812)

In the poem, the "light" of "Spring" is shown as feelingly grasped by "Human Nature." It illuminates the "furthest Tree" and "The furthest Slope" of the external as well as the internal landscape. It seems to communicate with us. But it "passes" as the "Noons report away." The tension of "It passes and we stay," and the "loss" and encroachment "Upon a Sacrament" is integral with the creative act. It is in this creative tension that the poet learns the secret of the "light," and learns to look at it as "a Sacrament," a permanent inner truth. In the creative act, passing away of the light and its waiting "upon the Lawn" are simultaneous acts. Nature seems to move in a sequential pattern of seasons, but in the human Imagination or creativity all seasons are simultaneous. "On our developed eyes/Noons blaze" eternally (63). In negation, however, the poet masters the art of perpetuating what normally seems to escape. It is by the feeling of "loss" that the poet proposes the presence of the "Light."

In this discussion of Absence as "Distance," "Beyond," and/or "Inwardness," I have been implying throughout that Dickinson does not evince any posture of "escape" from the world. Rather, like a true existentialist-Romanticist, she gazes upon the world so intensely, and encounters its mystery and paradoxes so passionately that the whole external world becomes a concrete metaphor of her life and art. Her poetry dramatizes Hopkins' notions of inscape and instress: inscape means an empathic confrontation with and a diving into the

abyss of reality as a source of true identity; instress implies a transmuting power, a "grace" or the creative energy of a god that unveils the interior of things, animate and inanimate, and an intuitive mode of perception.¹²

The "Absence" as "Withdrawal" embodies a special type of retreat from the world, a retreat in which the artist cultivates his own mode of encountering the world. This withdrawal is not a running away from reality, but a process by which the artist ripens to a deeper perception of reality. Dickinson's own "deliberate and conscious"¹³ seclusion and aesthetic privacy should be interpreted as creative devices to meet the world on her own terms. In the solitude of her Amherst room, she "inscapes" the vast horizons of human experience, "eighteen thousand years" of human "Woe" and "Bliss" (1168). The world becomes "MORE PRESENT" to her in her withdrawal from it. She guards her spiritual solitude and the "Absence" of the world with jealous care, because she apprehends:

The Soul's Superior instants
Occur - to Her - alone -
When friend - and Earth's occasion
Have infinite withdrawn -

Or She - Herself - ascended
To too remote a Height
For lower Recognition
Than Her Omnipotent -

This Mortal Abolition
Is seldom - but as fair
As apparition - subject
To Autocratic Air -

Eternity's disclosures
To favorites - a few -
Of the Colossal substance
Of Immortality

The revelation of "Immortality" and "Eternity" takes place beyond the realm of the ordinary human and earthly intercourse though not beyond the world itself. It occurs when the "Soul" is "alone." Its "autocracy" and "favoritism" are merely masks to suggest that the experience is not a commonplace happening. It can happen to anyone who chooses to be "alone," alone in the midst of company. Thoreau confirms that the experience of solitude does not necessarily exclude us from others; it can happen in spite of them:

I find it wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time. . . . I love to be alone. I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude. We are for the most part more lonely when we go abroad among men than when we stay in our chambers. A man thinking or working is always alone, let him be where he will. Solitude is not measured by the miles of space that intervene between a man and his fellows.¹⁴

Spiritual solitude or "aleness" is indeed conducive to creativity. It is far from being a condition of merely physical isolation, which can prove fatal. Dickinson extends the scope of creative solitude by adding to it a dimension of human relationship, as she sees it in her existential-aesthetic perspective and vision:

I would paint a portrait which would bring the tears, had I canvas for it, and the scene should be - solitude, and the figures - solitude - and the lights and shades, each a solitude. I could fill a Chamber with landscapes so lone, men should pause and weep there; then haste grateful home, for a loved one left. (L176)

Like Rilke, Dickinson belongs to solitude, and all her "strength is born from this detachment."¹⁵ But, in this aesthetic "detachment" the identity of the whole created world presses upon her mind with such a force that she finds no "Privacy" in Nature:

To my quick ear the Leaves - conferred -
The Bushes - they were Bells -
I could not find a Privacy
From Nature's sentinels -

In Cave if I presumed to hide
 The Walls - begun to tell -
 Creation seemed a mighty Crack -
 To make me visible - (891)

However, what seems to be only a centripetal movement of "the Leaves," "The Bushes," and "The Walls," impinging upon the "Privacy" of the poet from without, is also a centrifugal force of "my quick ear" which makes Nature resonant from within. The whole "Creation" attempts to make the poet "visible," creation being a reflection of the poet's mind as he sees her in his own image. This brings out the paradox of "Privacy": in the state of withdrawal, the poet becomes more indrawn, the poet retreats from the world, but the world remains a constant concern of the poet, and in this tension between the outer and the inner worlds, a new "world" is born from within, a world full of the depth of the seas and the expanse of the open skies. It is in this context alone that the drama of withdrawal in Dickinson's biography can be understood. Allen Tate is more than justified in saying: "All pity for Miss Dickinson's "starved life" is misdirected. Her life was one of the richest and deepest ever lived on this continent When she went upstairs and closed the door, she mastered life by rejecting it."¹⁶ The words "closed" and "rejecting" are not meant to be taken too literally. I have said it before that her withdrawal constitutes a mode of encounter with the world. This explains the paradox of art--the poet withdraws from his fellow men into the world of art, only to enter more deeply into dialogue with humanity. Let it be emphasized that it is from the spiritual abundance of this withdrawal that Dickinson writes to the world:

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 (441)

But the spiritual grandeur, or perhaps compassion, is not without a certain pathos. Dickinson is quite aware of the indifference of "the World" "That never wrote to [Her]." And yet, she implores her "Countrymen" to "Judge" her "tenderly." This imploring is, in a sense, ironical because she knows that the conflict between the poetic world and the mundane world is not easy to patch; and that the poet in "choosing" his (her) destiny chooses the "tragic" position of being neglected by the world that he (she) could have transformed. Dickinson finds an analogy of this "tragic" situation in the life of Jesus (John 15:16) and gladly shares the fate of Christ whom she regards as a "type" of the poet:

"They have not chosen me," he said,
 "But I have chosen them!"
 Brave - Broken hearted Statement -
 Uttered in Bethlehem!

I could not have told it,
 But since Jesus dared -
 Sovereign! Know a Daisy
 Thy dishonor shared! (85)

However, the "dishonor" of Jesus and the poet is paradoxical. The paradox of "tragedy" consists in the failure of the world in so far as it does not comprehend the poet. The poet does not fail because he, as he must, ever creates a new world, and creates himself, out of his creativity. He remains firm and "Brave," though "Broken hearted," in

the face of an enormous human apathy. But, the poet never really loses faith and hope in the world:

They might not need me - yet they might -
I'll let my Heart be just in sight -
A smile so small as mine might be
Precisely their necessity - (1391)

The "Absence" as "Deception" highlights the authenticity of the "Dream" or the spontaneous. Poetry proposes the world of imagined reality as opposed to the world of "lived reality," to use Ortega Y. Gasset's expression. This aesthetic proposing has been described as "semblance" or "appearance" by Schiller, as "illusion" by Nietzsche, as "otherness" by Langer and as "dream" by Jung.¹⁷ Like "semblance" or "illusion," "Deception" is highly paradoxical, in so far as it destroys as well as creates reality. Howsoever "strange" and "incompatible" a work of art might seem to our ordinary human perception, its chief aim, however, is to penetrate into life and alter our angle of perception to suit its own reality. Gasset observes that "far from going more or less clumsily toward reality, the artist is seen going against it. He is brazenly set on deforming reality, shattering its human aspect, dehumanizing it."¹⁸ But the paradox consists precisely in this: art humanizes by "dehumanizing," it creates its own self or "anti-self" as opposed to the egotistical self which functions within the narrow alleys of our fossilized existence. It is indeed true that "the poet aggrandizes the world by adding to reality, which is there by itself, the continents of his imagination."¹⁹ But these "continents of imagination," paradoxically, grow out of the tension between creativity and reality. The artist creates the

"illusion" or "semblance" in order to reconcile man to the terrors and sordidness of life, while at the same time prepares man to perceive life through its transparency, its mythopoeic reality. Langer is, therefore, right in noting: "To produce and sustain the essential illusion, set it off clearly from the surrounding world of actuality, and articulate its form to the point where it coincides unmistakably with forms of feeling and living, is the artist's task."²⁰ Emily Dickinson's poetry achieves the task of creating the "illusion" in which reality becomes "dream" and dream becomes "reality":

Within that little Hive
Such Hints of Honey lay
As made Reality a Dream
And Dreams, Reality -

(1607)

In this imaginative metamorphosis, the structure of reality (lived or actual) gains freedom from its repressive, restrictive, conscious-intellectual functions, its objective-abstract generalizations and its rational, spatio-temporal standards of morality. Reality, like the Dream, becomes metaphoric, and hence, spontaneous, irrational, subjective, psychic, non-definitive. The affirmation of "Dream" as "Reality" is within the power of the Imagination which enkindles the realm of the possible:²¹

The gleam of an heroic Act
Such strange illumination
The Possible's slow fuse is lit
By the Imagination

(1687)

Imagination is the fire which burns down the artificial constructs of our day to day, empirical reality, and creates in their stead symbolic forms through which we can perceive the dark, deep dimensions of our

individual souls, and, by analogy, of the entire human existence:

The largest Fire ever known
Occurs each Afternoon -
Discovered is without surprise
Proceeds without concern -
Consumes and no report to men
An Occidental Town,
Rebuilt another morning
To be burned down again (1114)

The Sun that shows on high, "each Afternoon," constitutes the "Fire" of the Imagination which repeatedly burns the "Occidental Town," a symbolic construct for the philosophy of empiricism. Imagination destroys the basis for any rational grasp of the mystery of life. It creates a parallel dream, parallel to the mystery of life--a "Deception" --inverted metaphor for poetic clarity--in which one realizes the vistas of one's primal reality, or mythopoeic truth which is above moral judgement and speculative thought:

One Blessing had I than the rest
So larger to my Eyes
That I stopped gauging - satisfied -
For this enchanted size -

It was the limit of my Dream -
The focus of my Prayer -
A perfect - paralyzing Bliss -
Contented as Despair -

I knew no more of Want - or Cold -
Phantasms both become
For this new Value in the Soul -
Supremest Earthly Sum -

The Heaven below the Heaven above -
Obscured with ruddier Blue -
Life's Latitudes leant over - full -
The Judgment perished - too -

Why Bliss so scantily disburse -
Why Paradise defer -
Why Floods be served to Us - in Bowls -
I speculate no more - (756)

In the above-cited structure of experience, the poet-dreamer records the features of the Dream-poem from within the "Dream." The "dream" reveals the measureless, "enchanted size" of the realm of the poet's perception. The paradoxes of "paralyzing Bliss" and "contented Despair" are harmonized in the "Dream-Prayer" of the poet for whom the experiences of "Want" and "Cold"--poverty and lack of warmth or affection--are merely "Phantasms." The "Dream" which creates "this new Value in the Soul," is the "Supremest Earthly Sum." This means to say that the "Dream" is realizable here and now on Earth--in the Heaven below--in the very fullness of Life. The Dream-Poet relationship, suggested by the poem, brings me to the problem of "Absence" as "Perception."

I said "Perception" reveals instant relationship between the perceiver and the perceived in the act of creation. I am not suggesting any easy transcendence of subject-object dichotomy in normal perception. Nor am I implying a reconciliation of the two within their empirical dimensions. In the creative process, the "perceived" emanates from the "perceiver"; the objectivity of the "perceived" remains infinitely bound to the subjectivity of the "perceiver." In poetics, since the "perceived" is rendered as a metaphor or a symbol, it is, strictly speaking, neither subject nor object, though it is understood as both simultaneously. This conjugation is always present at the root of poetic perception:²²

Whether my bark went down at sea-
Whether she met with gales-
Whether to isles enchanted
She bent her docile sails-

By what mystic mooring
 She is held today -
 This is the errand of the eye
 Out upon the Bay.

(52)

The "bark" in the poem is not a simple object: it is a persona of the poem. Although it has been presented as an objective symbol, it derives its meaning from the subjectivity of the poet. The "sea," the "gales," the "enchanted isles" and the "mystic mooring" which form the experience of the "bark," in its journey within existence, are both outside and inside the "eye" of the poet. Poetic perception clarifies the relationship between the poet and the world of objects (metaphors or symbols) which he creates in order to see his own Being--"This is the errand of the eye/Out upon the Bay" of Life. The images of "isles enchanted" and "mystic mooring" heighten the ambivalence of the experience, and the absent-present character of the boat-sea relationship. Poetic perception explores a vast variety of complex relationships, imagined and autonomous, and thereby proposes endless possibilities of existence in the aesthetic-existential mould:

They called me to the Window, for
 " 'T was Sunset" - Some one said -
 I only saw a Sapphire Farm -
 And just a Single Herd -

Of Opal Cattle - feeding far
 Upon so vain a Hill -
 As even while I looked - dissolved -
 Nor Cattle were - nor Soil -

But in their stead - a Sea - displayed -
 And Ships - of such a size
 As Crew of Mountains - could afford -
 And Decks - to seat the skies -

This - too - the Showman rubbed away -
 And when I looked again -
 Nor Farm - nor Opal Herd - was there -
 Nor Mediterranean -

(628)

The poem opens up in three stages not mutually exclusive, but simultaneous. The poet is invited to witness, as "Some one said," the scene of "Sunset," symbolizing the landscape of death. But through "the Window" of Perception, the creative I sees "a Sapphire Farm," and "a Single Herd Of Opal Cattle," "feeding" upon a distant and unsubstantial "Hill,"--all symbols of the landscape of life and motion. Soon, however, Perception dissolves the appearance of "Cattle" and the "Soil," and projects upon consciousness "a Sea," a symbol of both life and death, or life and death continuum, whose dimensions are not real but possible: the "Ships" having "Crew of Mountains," and "Decks" large enough "to seat the skies" suggest the limits of human desire and the magnitude of the "Sea," concrete and real only in the human Imagination. This is not all. The next stage or level of Perception is complicated by the fact that now there is "nothing" to see. The "Showman" has "rubbed away" the "Farm," the "Opal Herd," and the "Mediterranean." Perception goes beyond perception; there is no life, no death, no life-death flux. The whole vision seems Oriental in so far as it suggests a cyclic pattern of life and death, and also the final or ultimate freedom from that cycle. Apart from that, the role of Perception as both creator and destroyer comes to light. The metaphors of "Sunset," "Sapphire Farm," "Soil," "Sea," "Ships," "Skies," and "Showman" are also the several relations of the I of the Poem. The metaphors are human forms and they communicate as such.²³ The fundamental feature of these forms, however, is their presence in the creative imagination of the poet, and not in the real sphere of ordinary observation:

Like Men and Women Shadows walk
 Upon the Hills Today -
 With here and there a mighty Bow
 Or trailing Courtesy
 To Neighbors doubtless of their own
 Not quickened to perceive
 Minuter landscape as Ourselves
 And Boroughs where we live - (1105)

The "Shadows" are some type of supernatural beings, walking "Upon the Hills," and bowing in "Courtesy" to "Neighbors" who are neither "alive" nor "enkindled" to "perceive" the specific and narrower landscape of human beings and their habitations. The relationship between the "Shadows" and their "Neighbors" expresses a kind of anti-relation between "Ourselves" and the "Neighbors" who are, presumably, spirits of the dead. And still, a certain ambiguous relationship exists between "Ourselves" and the "Shadows" because of their likeness to our human forms. In the act of creative perception, the relationship between "Ourselves" and the "Shadows" or their "Neighbors" is authentic, though the poet renders it in an oblique manner, a manner of the metaphor. Dickinson achieves the effect of "immediacy" and "relation" with the "Invisible" in a large variety of metaphoric structures:

The Mountains stood in Haze -
 The Valleys stopped below
 And went or waited as they liked
 The River and the Sky.

At leisure was the Sun -
 His interests of Fire
 A little from remark withdrawn -
 The Twilight spoke the Spire,

So soft upon the scene
 The Act of evening fell
 We felt how neighborly a Thing
 Was the Invisible. (1278)

The hazy "Mountains," motionless "Valleys," and the "Sun" at leisure

indicate a state of temporary suspension of life. The "Twilight" of "evening" provides a soft hue to the tapering pyramid of existence, which is ever renewed in the "Fire" of the "Sun"; the "Act" of evening falls softly upon the "Scene," and life gets shrouded in the dark, soon to be revived by the "Sun" which is "withdrawn" from notice only for "A little" while. In the perception of the twilight scene, we discover close relationship between life and death, between the visible and the "Invisible." Once the "relationship" is perceived, the "Act of evening" becomes "soft"--death ceases to be a harsh reality, it becomes a "neighborly Thing."

The "Absence" as "Love" increases our capacity for self-annihilation and the ability to remain in uncertainties. This "ability" has been described by Keats as "Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."²⁴ In Love, we go out of ourselves to "find" ourselves. Our Identity unveils itself in the form of a process--a continual unfolding of the mystery of human existence. In this sense, the Negative Capability becomes the most positive capability imaginable, to use Lionel Trilling's expression.²⁵ The presence of Love is beyond the realm of discursive interpretation. It imposes its own pattern of paradoxical "Ignorance" upon the one who goes through the experience of Love:

We learned the Whole of Love -
 The Alphabet - the Words -
 A Chapter - then the mighty Book -
 Then - Revelation closed -

But in Each Other's eyes
 An Ignorance beheld -
 Diviner than the Childhood's -
 And each to each, a Child -

Attempted to expound
 What Neither - understood -
 Alas, that Wisdom is so large
 And Truth - so manifold! (568)

The apocalyptic perception of Love cannot be reduced to the forms of knowledge. The "Wisdom" and "Truth" of Love is so multi-dimensional that the human lovers find themselves at a loss to understand its size and mystery. Its perception is possible only when the lovers are "each to each, a Child," and when they behold in "Each Other's eyes" an "Ignorance" "Diviner than the Childhood's." The divine ignorance is the source of all perception, though "Divinity dwells under seal" (662). The "sealed" character of the divinity of lovers makes Love a human-divine "secret" which like "the Arc of a Lover's conjecture/ Eludes the finding out" (1484). The "revelation" occurs in the human Heart, which among other things, is the secret seat of Love, and which cannot vocalize its eloquent silence. "Eloquence is when the Heart/Has not a Voice to spare-," writes Dickinson (1268). The speechless, secret nature of Love makes it impossible to be rendered in terms of a prose statement. Poetic language alone can provide a structure of images, which matches the evanescent and ambivalent experience of Love. Emily Dickinson creates several poetic structures to express her feelings of Love, and to communicate her experience of Poetry. One of them may be noted here:

The Love a Life can show Below
 Is but a filament, I know,
 Of that diviner thing
 That faints upon the face of Noon -
 And smites the Tinder in the Sun -
 And hinders Gabriel's Wing -

'Tis this - in Music < hints and sways -
 And far abroad on Summer days -
 Distils uncertain pain -
 'Tis this enamors in the East -
 And tints the Transit in the West
 With harrowing Iodine -

'Tis this - invites - appalls - endows -
 Flits - glimmers - proves - dissolves -
 Returns - suggests - convicts - enchants -
 Then - flings in Paradise - (673)

In the opening lines, the contrast does not seem to be so much "between human and divine love," as Anderson states,²⁶ as it is between the Love that a human Life "embodies" and the Love that a human life can "show." Dickinson does not sound apologetic for "Below," because that is the sphere of her poetic creation. The problem seems to me to be that of expression. Love is essentially a divine "thing," and therefore inexpressible. When Love receives expression in the purely human context, it is reduced to the state of being a "filament" as compared to its subtle divine substance. This does not mean to say that the real or true human Love is less divine in any sense. Dickinson is fully aware of the divinity of Love, and its paradoxical nature. Love eludes all definitions. It strikes the fiery spark "in the Sun," and yet grows indistinct before "the face of Noon." It can be more efficient than the wings of the archangel Gabriel in reaching for "the vision/Of latitudes unknown" (78). It can be likened to Music in its "inmost essence of sensuousness," to use Kierkegaard's phrase.²⁷ Love moves in an oscillating pattern of psychic "hints." It "Distils uncertain pain," perhaps at the approach of an end of "Summer days." The East-West symbolism refers to dawn and dusk, rise and fall, life and death. Love "enamors" us towards life, and colours the movement

towards death with painful "Iodine," though it is also one of the modes of death. In the last four lines, Dickinson extends the limits of her tentative "'Tis this," and advances a long list of contradictory actions performed by Love, actions which aim to define Love which is undefinable. Love finally "Flings" her in "Paradise," the paradise of her mind (PF99) and art (657) in which she deals with the whole existence in the same ambivalent tone as she uses for Love itself. But ambivalence should not be taken for confusion. There is a certain clarity underlying this highly intricate structure of words and meanings. The paradoxical clarity demands of the reader a willing suspension of belief or preconceived notions. In Dickinsonian terms, then, the poem about Love is a poem about poetry, and it constitutes her poetic experience. We should try to apprehend the poem's meaning in the same way as it has been created. Jung is right in asserting that "we perceive when we are able to let the work of art act upon us as it acted upon the artist. To grasp its meaning, we must allow it to shape us as it once shaped him. Then we understand the nature of his experience."²⁸ In other words, we should, like the poet, first become "nothing," in order to become "everything."²⁹ Emily Dickinson achieves poetic impersonality which paradoxically, implies the creation of a "personality," in a variety of ways, entirely her own:

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!

(288)

The final direction of Dickinson's poetry is towards the realization of Identity or Self, Self which is not "Somebody." The poem dramatizes the loss of a public identity and the discovery of a personal identity at once. It is a difficult ideal to achieve but

Each - its difficult Ideal
Must achieve - Itself -
Through the solitary prowess
Of a Silent Life - (750)

The theme of self-annihilation and Self-discovery is presented more subtly in the following poem:

Which is the best - the Moon or the Crescent?
Neither - said the Moon -
That is best which is not - Achieve it -
You efface the Sheen.

Not of detention is Fruition -
Shudder to attain.
Transport's decomposition follows -
He is Prism born. (1315)

The symbolism of the "Moon" and the "Crescent" is quite complex. It refers, on one level, to "the periodic creation and recreation": the birth of the "Crescent" from the "new moon," its process of becoming the "full moon," its vanishing into the "dark," and its re-emergence from the "dark."³⁰ Birth and rebirth are also the fundamental problems of human existence.³¹ But the truly regenerated is beyond the cycle of birth-rebirth. He is no more born to the world of vegetation. Metaphorically speaking, man attains to this level only through the Imagination. Man becomes "which is not" through the creative act. In this sense, the poem also embodies the Romantic concepts of "life" as process and as the quest for "what is not." The imperative of the poem, conveyed through "Achieve it," is to become "nothing," to transcend the process of external growth, to efface the seeming

splendour of outward reality. In this lies our true "freedom."
 "Fruition" does not consist in being "confined" to the world, therefore,
 one should shudder to achieve the "fruition" which lies in "detention."
 (Ironically, one also "shudders" to attain true "freedom.") Worldly
 "Transport" decays because it is ego-centred and, hence, shows signs
 of "arrest." True Ecstasy is "Prism born"; one has to "find" it in
 the prismatic dome of life. But, it is by annihilating or transcending
 the outward forms of identity or personality, by going through the
 "Prism," that the poet can attain the real Self, or the condition of
 Love.

"Absence" as "Death" performs the dual function of nullifying
 and intensifying life. Death is generally considered as a mere
 negation of existence, though, paradoxically, it enhances the meaning
 of existence. Life derives its meaning from death, but death cannot
 exist without life, because "that which is only living/Can only die."³²
 The moment of death is integral with the act of living. Our perception
 of Life is dependent upon our perception of Death:

By a departing light
 We see acuter quite,
 Than by a wick that stays.
 There's something in the flight
 That clarifies the sight
 And decks the rays. (1714)

Emily Dickinson's poetry is one of the most rigorous attempts to probe
 the mystery of death. Dickinson views death through various angles
 and calls it by several names. But an aura of heavy ambivalence
 pervades over her wanderings in the landscape of Nothingness. Even
 when "the sight" is clarified "by a departing light," we are left with
 the nameless "something" which is the source of true illumination.

Nevertheless, the perception of "something" in the moment of death is vital to our sense of being:

I've seen a Dying Eye
Run round and round a Room -
In search of Something - as it seemed -
Then Cloudier become -
And then - obscure with Fog -
And then - be soldered down
Without disclosing what it be
'T were blessed to have seen - (547)

The triangular relationship of "I," "Dying Eye," and "Something" which "'T were blessed to have seen," is the chief concern of the poem. The images of "Cloudier," and "Fog" enhance the elusiveness of "Something," and the inevitable obscurity of death, but they do not conceal the blessedness of the "Dying Eye" in having "seen" that "Something." Dickinson likes to be teased by death, because death triggers her imaginative power. Though she defines it by such varied phrases as "the supple Suitor," "the recallless sea," "Costumeless Consciousness," and "Langour of the Life," her tone is far from being decisive.³³ She knows that "Behind the hill is sorcery/And everything unknown" (1603). Therefore, it is on this side of the Grave, on the margin of life and death, that Dickinson often explores the possibilities of perceiving "the Distance/Between Ourselves and the Dead!" (949). "Distance" is her polar image which means both remoteness and nearness. In terms of Time, the "distance" is the "past," but "It is the Past's supreme italic/Makes this Present mean -" (1498). Curiously enough, she can create the presence out of the absence of the dead:

I see thee clearer for the Grave
That took thy face between
No Mirror could illumine thee
Like that impassive stone -

I know thee better for the Act
 That made thee first unknown
 The stature of the empty nest
 Attests the Bird that's gone. (1666)

On the death of Higginson's daughter, Louisa, Dickinson writes: "The Face in evanescence lain/Is more distinct than ours -" (L630 and 1490), because "All we secure of Beauty is its Evanescences -" (L781). In another poem of more subtle meaning, she affirms the life-giving quality of death:

A death blow is a Life blow to Some
 Who till they died, did not alive become -
 Who had they lived, had died but when
 They died, Vitality begun. (816)

The meaning is double and paradoxical. To "Some" people, death makes the dead more "alive": it is only after the individual is dead and gone that he starts living in the minds of those who survive, in a vital manner. This is also the meaning of "The stature of the empty nest/Attests the Bird that's gone." On a psychological level, those who experience "Death," deep in their souls, start living in a far more meaningful way than they did before. "Vitality" begins only after we have known the depth of death within our own selves. This experience indicates heightened Consciousness which points towards one's identity:

This Consciousness that is aware
 Of Neighbors and the Sun
 Will be the one aware of Death
 And that itself alone

Is traversing the interval
 Experience between
 And most profound experiment
 Appointed unto Men -

How adequate unto itself
 Its properties shall be
 Itself unto itself and none
 Shall make discovery.

Adventure most unto itself
 The Soul condemned to be
 Attended by a single Hound
 Its own identity.

(822)

In its spiritual dimension, "Death" is a form of Awareness, near as the "Neighbor" and distant as the "Sun." It is a process, the "most profound experiment," a continual drama that "Men" are involved in, in order that they may "find" a core of their reality which none can discover for others. It is an inward movement, an "Adventure most unto itself," a struggle of the soul chased by "Its own identity." The human "Soul" is condemned to be itself through its journey into "Death" which spiritually perceived is the true Self. This implies the symbolic death of man's false selfhood, and a complete surrender of self-seeking, egoistical existence. This also implies a condition of Love in which man realizes his being through non-being. But, all this happens in and through despair, the despair of becoming one's Self.³⁴ Dickinson externalizes the experience of despair and death in "There's a certain Slant of light," one of her finest poems, which also captures the spirit of absence-presence in a perfect form:

There's a certain Slant of light,
 Winter Afternoons -
 That oppresses, like the Heft
 Of Cathedral Tunes -

Heavenly Hurt, it gives us -
 We can find no scar,
 But internal difference,
 Where the Meanings, are -

None may teach it - Any -
 'Tis the Seal Despair -
 An imperial affliction
 Sent us of the Air -

When it comes, the Landscape listens -
 Shadows - hold their breath -
 When it goes, 'tis like the Distance
 On the look of Death -

(258)

The mood created by the "Slant of light" on "Winter Afternoons" is that of physical oppressiveness and pain. The consciousness of life's mutability, and death of what we cherish, is heightened by the solemn, hymnal and funereal music of the "Cathedral" choir. With music, however, the oppression assumes a spiritual significance. The "Slant of light" becomes the "Heavenly Hurt"; it hurts but invisibly: "We can find no scar"; it operates on the psyche of the individual, which is the reservoir of "Meanings." "The Hurt" is absolute and continuous. No one can improve upon it from without: "None may teach it - Any." "It" can be best defined as "the Seal Despair" or as "An imperial affliction" which comes to us from "the Air," the realm of the celestial. That is why it cannot be shown empirically. It is creative of the "internal difference." Within the symbolic framework of "Heavenly Hurt," the "Seal Despair," and "imperial affliction," "When it comes," and "When it goes" of the concluding stanza seem ambiguous and paradoxical. "Despair" being a divine condition of existence, it is eternally present. It is by being in full despair that one can experience freedom from despair.³⁵ It should be obvious here that I am not concerning myself with the "surface" meaning of the "Slant of light," which "comes" and "goes." When "despair" becomes presence "the Landscape listens," the human consciousness gets attuned to the soul-burdening music of "Cathedral Tunes." The "Shadows," the felt images of the creative mind, "hold their breath." When "despair" reaches its own culmination, its ripeness, its self-transcendence, "'tis like the Distance/On the look of Death," a Vision in which one realizes the far dimension of Death. The "Distance" on the "look of Death" suggests several things

at once. Death becomes its own perceiving organ, the "Distance" is its fulfillment, in so far as it beckons man towards itself. The "Distance" is the pause or illusion between life and death, or death and life. It is the "distant look" of the Romantic consciousness in which the "Landscape" and the "Shadows" assume infinite proportions. Death becomes a phenomenon of life; our coming and going are simultaneous. Man lives, but lives in death, and by living in death lives in life. This clarifies the relationship between eternal light and eternal darkness. The "Winter" in the soul is also the Spring in the soul.³⁶ The "Winter under cultivation/Is as arable as Spring" (1707). It has been well put that "it is only in the realization of our existence as essentially and necessarily 'being toward death' that man can rise above the petty day-to-day life to become truly himself and truly free."³⁷ Thus, the "Slant of light" on "Winter Afternoons" is a symbolic structure representing both life and death. The religious aura of other images and symbols is a vehicle of the interior sensuousness or palpability. The dread and awe of "the Landscape listens," and the "Shadows - hold their breath," signify a perfectly spiritual moment in which Death reveals its true form. To read the poem for negative despair, depression and "desolation" is to read it incorrectly. The "significant change of meaning" referred to but not fully explained by Anderson consists in the words of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind": "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" Most critics, as far as I know, have missed this point.³⁸ Before we come to the conclusion (uncalled for) that death as pure negation is the finale of her poetic world, or that she proclaims the absurdity and futility of life, in one poem or the other, we should remember that

she says: "This World is not Conclusion (501)," and even "God cannot discontinue (annul) himself. This appalling trust is at times all that remains" (PF34 and L553). The odyssey of her mind is endless:

Such are the inlets of the mind -
His outlets - would you see
Ascend with me the eminence
Of immortality - (1421)

"Ascension has a muffled Route" (L945), a route of eternity through time, a route of deity through man--an ever present though ever hid possibility. The notion of "Absence" as Time and Deity deserves attention here.

In the ontological sense, past, present and future are irrelevant categories of time. Time is eternally present: "Forever - is composed of Nows" (624). Past and Future are subsumed in this eternal Present. Time is deity in that it creates, preserves and destroys, and ever creates the new. The riddle of time and deity can be solved only in the eternal presence, in the typology of Christ-Man relation.³⁹ Aesthetically, it implies that our being eternally present in the temporal moment reverses temporality into eternity. It is only through time that the artist transcends its finiteness. The creative imagination plunges into the reality of the "lived moment" and transforms it into its eternal significance, without ever really destroying the inner drama of the temporal reality. The Eye of the Imagination perceives the temporal and the eternal at once. In this sense, the "simultaneity" of vision cannot be called "non-dramatic."⁴⁰ Dickinson's perception of time is highly dramatic, because it constitutes her whole action, action in which Time and Eternity are the dramatic personae:

I heard, as if I had no Ear
 Until a Vital Word
 Came all the way from Life to me
 And then I knew I heard.

I saw, as if my Eye were on
 Another, till a Thing
 And now I know 'twas Light, because
 It fitted them, came in.

I dwelt, as if Myself were out,
 My Body but within
 Until a Might detected me
 And set my kernel in.

And Spirit turned unto the Dust
 "Old Friend, thou knowest me,"
 And Time went out to tell the News
 And met Eternity.

(1049)

The relationships between the "Vital Word" and "Life," "Eye" and "Light," "Body" and "kernel," "Myself" and "Might," "Spirit" and "Dust" lead up to the final relationship between "Time" and "Eternity." The "Ear," "Eye," "Body" are related to "Dust" in "Time," and to "Spirit" in "Eternity." "Time" and "Eternity" are two aspects of "Life," the realm of the senses. In "Life," "Time" goes out to meet "Eternity," "Eternity" absorbs "Time"; it does not annihilate the temporality of time. Time is a process: "Time does go on-" (1121). It is "Infinite," and is ever-present in the finite (1309). Its "Tomorrow" is "Of Alibi," a mere "hallucination" (1367). It "dissolves itself" (1774) in its ever-creative activity. Since "Eternity" is "obtained - in Time" (800), it also defines God-Man relationship. It defines the limitless boundaries of love and death. To her lover, a Christ figure, Dickinson says:

You constituted Time -
 I deemed Eternity
 A Revelation of Yourself -
 'T was therefore Deity

The Absolute - removed
 The Relative away -
 That I unto Himself adjust
 My slow idolatry -

(765)

The lover constitutes "Time" which is transformed into "Eternity" by the beloved--the lover-beloved position can be reversed. In "Eternity" the lover is truly and wholly revealed, and to perceive him/her is to apprehend "Deity." This means "Eternity - obtained - in Time -" (800). The "Absolute" nature of relationship or perception keeps the "Relative" out of sight, though the action starts in the "Relative" to achieve the "Absolute." In other words, the "Relative" forms the background of the "Absolute" to which the lover adjusts in his/her considered admiration and devotion. In deeming "Time" as "Eternity" or "Deity," the poet expresses her attitude towards "Time" itself: "The finite - furnished/ with the Infinite" (906). In a somewhat different posture, Dickinson contemplates upon the vast Circumference of Time:

Time feels so vast that were it not
 For an Eternity
 I fear me this Circumference
 Engross my Finitude -

To His exclusion, who prepare
 By Processes of Size
 For the Stupendous Vision
 Of His diameters -

(802)

Time flows out of Eternity. The Creator issues forth the Circumference of time from His own "diameters." The "Finitude" of man can be absorbed by the "Circumference" of temporal "Time." But the idea of "Eternity" which is integral with the temporality of time, prepares man "For the Stupendous Vision" of its own Circumferences. The "exclusion" of the Creator or Eternity from temporal time is paradoxical, because it is only by reference to "Time" that we can apprehend

the nature of Deity. Man must realize Eternity in the now and here of his world. This he can do by expanding the range of his perception.⁴¹ Blake asserts, time and again, in a variety of ways, that "if the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern."⁴²

The purpose of looking at the "Landscape of Absence," through its several modes and relationships, is not to exhaust the scope of interpenetrating themes in Dickinson's poetry. The chief aim has been to provide a guideline which will, I hope, illuminate the themes in relation to their several postures. Since the interrelated themes of Love, Death and Self--the highlights of Dickinson's aesthetics--are rooted in the all-inclusive theme of poetic Perception, I propose to deal with the problem of Perception and the creative process in Chapter III. In Chapters IV-VI, I plan to provide a detailed, not definitive, reading of the poems on the themes of Love, Death, and Self, the "Roses in life's diverse bouquet" (93) which impel Dickinson to create.

CHAPTER III

PERCEPTION: "THE BILLOWS OF CIRCUMFERENCE"

There grew
A power within me of enormous ken,
To see as a god sees, and take the depth
Of things as nimbly as the outward eye
Can size and shape pervade.

- Keats, The Fall of Hyperion

Poetic perception is the nucleus of creativity.¹ Creativity embodies the way of seeing, seeing which clarifies the relationship between the seer and the seen in the act of creation.² Thus, a poem which is a symbolic construct, carries within itself, explicitly or implicitly, a fourfold structure, defining the nature of correspondence between the poet and the realm of the existential reality, the poet and the poetic experience, the poet and the creative process, and the poet and the poem. The Romantic theory of poetic perception or aesthetics should not be considered adequate unless it deals with this fourfold structure of Imagination in which the poet is the central figure or the hero. It is from this point of view that I intend to explore Emily Dickinson's theory of perception, and show its uniqueness, in so far as it emerges from and is integral with the entire range of her poetic creation. However, the above-noted structure of relationships poses a difficulty: whereas the relationships have to be assumed as being discussed simultaneously, it will be highly trite and intolerably

repetitious if they are stated every time along with the rendition of individual poems or cluster of poems. In order to cope with this problem, I propose to discuss each angle of the fourfold structure separately but not exclusively, because the discussion of any one of the four will necessarily include the other three. The whole discussion, then, is being offered in four parts which are integral. The poet will, of course, remain central throughout.

I. THE POET AND THE EXISTENTIAL REALITY

Concerning the relationship between the poet and the realm of the existential reality, it has already been pointed out that the poet's eye or the poetic perception is essentially metamorphic (78-81 of Chapter II). The poetic seeing is apocalyptic in that it transmutes the ordinary, vegetative existence into a Vision. Seeing, in this sense, is creativity; to see is to create. "This means seeing into. It is an intimate seeing, a grasping and being grasped. It is a seeing shaped by love."³ This seeing may also be described as an involvement "at the interface" resulting into a "paradeigmatic experience."⁴ "Paradeigmatic experience," says Whalley, "is the responsive feeling of naked collision with reality; an intimate penetration into, or immersion in, reality. Not to be involved or immersed in reality is to be abstracted from reality; and abstraction is a feature of all experience which is not paradeigmatic."⁵ It should be emphasized here that the poetic reality is not the same as the reality of the ordinary man, though the latter is invariably the starting point of creativity. The poetic reality assembles in one place all the "free possibilities of being"

which the human existence in its chaotic state lacks. The aesthetic consciousness, in a way, repulses what ordinarily seem or appear "to be life's 'real' concerns." Commenting on this "dream-like" consciousness and its creative role, Fallico asserts:

In the perfect coalescence of feeling with image, the original aesthetic constructivity accomplishes perfectly what neither waking-state reality nor dream can accomplish separately - it lends wakeful reality to the dream, and dream-like liberating spontaneity to wakeful life. In this sense, the work of art implies that all reality is something that is made, or that the possibility of its free and unrestricted making and unmaking stands prior to any and all of its actual formations so that none can have ultimacy of being and meaning for the existent. The very presence of the presence which is art casts a veil of illusion over all the hard, fast, and pressing realities, even if only by comparison. Who in the presence of the artist's vision has not felt the realities of ordinary experience fade away like transient and distorted dream images?⁶

Poetic perception, then, consists in lending "wakeful reality to the dream, and dream-like liberating spontaneity to wakeful life." Emily Dickinson achieves the union of reality and dream in her poetic vision, and affirms that "the Days" can bring:

No numb alarm - lest Difference come -
 No Goblin - on the Bloom -
 No start in Apprehension's Ear,
 No Bankruptcy - no Doom -

But Certainties of Sun -
 Midsummer - in the Mind -
 A steadfast South - upon the Soul -
 Her Polar time - behind -

The Vision - pondered long -
 So plausible becomes
 That I esteem the fiction - real -
 The Real - fictitious seems -

How bountiful the Dream -
 What Plenty - it would be -
 Had all my Life but been Mistake
 Just rectified - in Thee

(646)

Dickinson's perception dramatizes the experience of perception: the

poem about perception tells us what there is to perceive. Perception, like the "Day" becomes the source of light, and we see "into the life of things," to use Wordsworth's phrase.⁷ We are no longer worried by the torpid fears and anxieties of existence, which project the "Difference" "Between the form of Life and Life" (1101). The image of the "Bloom" hounded by the "Goblin" captures fully the feeling that under "normal" circumstance, life is being chased by the demon into some form of absurdity. But it is not so in the aesthetic perception. There is no sudden, shocking movement of dissonant sounds in "Apprehension's Ear" which perceives harmony out of the din of voices. There is no "emptiness," there is no "Doom"--the death that condemns and destroys for ever. In aesthetic existence, there are only "Certainties of Sun," the forms of awareness. The human Consciousness is conscious of life's fullness, symbolized here by the "Midsummer": "It's like the Morning -/Best - when it's done -/And the Everlasting Clocks -/Chime - Noon!" (297). Spiritual awakening becomes a never-altering reality like the "steadfast South." And time's polarity ceases to intrude upon our ontological present. This "Vision" needs to be "pondered long," in order to be "plausible." The "Vision" which is, in a sense, created or fictive, becomes "real," and the outward flux of experiential reality assumes the form of "the Dream" which is another name for "the fiction" or "the Vision." The creative man finds this "Dream" "bountiful" and rectifies the "Mistake" of looking at "Life" and the "Plenty" of its creation through the vegetable eyes. Dickinson emphasizes the significance of "furnished" eyes in poetic perception. In her letter to Higginson, she writes:

I was thinking today - as I noticed, that the "Supernatural," was only the Natural, disclosed -

Not "Revelation" - 'tis - that waits,
But our unfurnished eyes - (L280)

It is with these "furnished" eyes or the "developed eyes" (63) that the poet can "confidently see" "Some Rainbow - coming from the Fair!/
Some Vision of the World Cashmere -" (64), the unseen far off landscape in India. The poet takes "no less than skies," and his "Basket holds - just - Firmaments -" (352). The light of poetic perception, however, does not provide an easy escape from the darkness of Existence; it simply lends man the courage or Vision to put up with Existence as such:

And so of larger - Darknesses -
Those Evenings of the Brain -
When not a Moon disclose a sign -
Or Star - come out - within -

The Bravest - grope a little -
And sometimes hit a Tree
Directly in the Forehead -
But as they learn to see -

Either the Darkness alters -
Or something in the sight
Adjusts itself to Midnight -
And Life steps almost straight. (419)

The Eyes grow "accustomed to the Dark"; they can pierce through existential "Wastes," "Blank - and steady Wilderness," and Infinites of Nought" (458). The perceiver can "measure every Grief" he meets, "With narrow, probing, Eyes -" (561). Star, Sun, Noon, Light, Lightning, and Thunder are Dickinson's favourite images of perception.⁸ It is in and through these images that she realizes her "Compound Vision" which encompasses man's finitude and his sense of eternity:

'Tis Compound Vision -
 Light - enabling Light -
 The Finite - furnished
 With the Infinite -
 Convex - and Concave Witness -
 Back - toward Time -
 And forward -
 Toward the God of Him - (906)

The perception of "Light" and "Lightning" reveals to Dickinson the fountain of spiritual existence which consummates man's experience of "Mortality" and "Immortality" (1234), and which lends meaning to man's encounter with the concrete realities of love and death. It also means the spark of her own creation, I mean her poetry, to which she so daringly dedicates herself. The "Light" which is "waylaying," and which strikes as powerfully as the "Lightning," and as furiously as "Thunder," lays the basis of her poetics:

The farthest Thunder that I heard
 Was nearer than the Sky
 And rumbles still, though torrid Noons
 Have lain their missiles by -
 The Lightning that preceded it
 Struck no one but myself -
 But I would not exchange the Bolt
 For all the rest of Life - . . .
 It founds the Homes and decks the Days
 And every clamor bright
 Is but the gleam concomitant
 Of that waylaying Light -
 The Thought is quiet as a Flake -
 A Crash without a Sound,
 How Life's reverberation
 Its Explanation found - (1581)

The poem renders a psychic reality in terms of the images borrowed from time and nature. The inner "thunder" continues to rumble when the "torrid Noons" have ceased their operation--the excessive heat and energy of the "torrid Noons" cause rain, lightning, storm, and thunder in the outer space. The poet internalizes "the Lightning," and does

not wish to exchange "the Bolt" "For all the rest of Life," because the luminosity of "the Bolt" or the flash of lightning comprehends all Life. In Dickinson's aesthetics, "the Bolt" is one of the innumerable "Bolts of Melody," (505) expressed as well as unexpressed, which constitute her poetic life. "Thunder," then, is the poetic reality which illuminates human life. Every other illumination of existence springs from the "waylaying Light" with which it is coexistent. The "waylaying Light" which is poetry, paradoxically, robs man of his ordinary eyesight. It turns man inwards, the realm of the intuition where the experience of thunder is analogous to the sensation of "The Thought" which moves as quietly "as a Flake" of snow or some ignited matter. The "Crash" occurs but "without a Sound": thunder enters the silent regions of human psyche in which are stored the answers to "Life's" reflections, though they can never be stated in non-metaphoric language. This poem clarifies, to my mind, the poet-poetic experience-poetic process-poetry relationship which makes aesthetic perception possible. It brings out and resolves the problem of subject-object polarity: the external world of thunder and lightning is subjectivized in terms of "The Thought" which in "its deepest recesses is a sensuous, formative process: spontaneous, not controlled by any extrinsic will or consciousness."⁹ The internal world of poetic vision is objectivized in terms of the images and metaphors which belong to Nature in its mythic dimension. It highlights, through tone and implication, the importance of poetic intuition which stresses man's ability to apprehend reality by direct spiritual insight. Dickinson poetizes the power of intuition and fixes it in these verses:

You'll know it - as you know 'tis Noon -
 By Glory -
 As you do the Sun -
 By Glory -
 As you will in Heaven -
 Know God the Father - and the Son.

By intuition, Mightiest Things
 Assert themselves - and not by terms -
 "I'm Midnight" - need the Midnight say -
 "I'm Sunrise" - Need the Majesty?

Omnipotence - had not a Tongue -
 His lisp - is Lightning - and the Sun -
 His Conversation - with the Sea -
 "How shall you know"?
 Consult your Eye! (420)

The poem is crowded with the images of perception. Intuition, however, is the central organ of perception; it is the "Eye" of distant Vision to which the "Mightiest Things" reveal "themselves." The God-Son or God-Man relationship is a reality for a man who can intuit, and not for a person whose sceptical eye is caught up in proximate seeing. To a man of intuition the Creator who is Silence par excellence speaks through the "Lightning" which is "His lisp." Through "the Sun," God converses "with the Sea" of life and death. The poet, in using the images of "Lightning" and "Sun" to define poetry and poetic experience, appropriates God-poet relationship. But the poet is not competing with God. He creates his own essentially "tongueless" experience in the symbolic forms which are as primordial as "Lightning" or the "Sun." The role of intuition in creativity brings us to the complex and paradoxical problem of poetic subjectivity versus poetic impersonality. The stress on the faculty of intuition or creative imagination in perception is a stress on the subjectivity of the poet.¹⁰ The objective reality as such seems to play a very little part in the poetic

creation. Rather, the objective reality or the external nature derives all its meaning from the inwardness or the Mind of the poet:

The Outer - from the Inner
Derives its Magnitude -
'Tis Duke, or Dwarf, according
As is the Central Mood -

The fine - unvarying Axis
That regulates the Wheel
Though Spokes - spin - more conspicuous
And fling a dust - the while. (451)

The "Wheel" of perception is regulated and moved by the "Axis" of the human psyche where the "Central Mood" is located in its ambivalent form, though the "Spokes"--the external points of contact with reality--seem "more conspicuous" by their spinning dance. The motion of the "Spokes" "fling a dust" in the eyes of the beholder, but it does not hold for long: the creative man plunges across the screen of dust, and moves freely back and forth, in and out, the objective realm and creates the world anew from the depths of his own spiritual life. This implies an existentialistic principle of individuation in which the "subjectivity" of the creator seems to be emphasized at the cost of the objective reality of the perceived phenomena. Dickinson's theory of perception does endorse the Romantic view of the creative mind as "projective" of its own inner truth upon the forms of life as against the view of the perceiving mind as a mere "reflector" of the external world.¹¹ But, in "projecting" the inner truth upon the outer world, the creative mind establishes a constant relationship between the knower and the known, in its symbolic form. The objective reality attains its fullest meaning in the Vision of the artist, in being subjectivized. Subjectivity, in this context, does not refer to a state

of ego; it refers, paradoxically, to a loss of ego, and an abundance of spirituality in which the artist has no personal axe to grind. It is in this dimension of awareness that a continuous conversion of the external into the internal, and of the internal into the external takes place. However, the emphasis on the inwardness or withinness of the poet is a part of the process of poetic perception.¹² Dickinson's "interior" is the metaphor for internalized space which expands into infinity in the Imagination. The "interior" is the locus where the Self and the Other, Being and non-being meet. In other words, the subject-object relation is fundamental to Dickinson's way of perception. In this relation, the subject flows into the object, and vice versa, and their interpenetration results into true perception in which the whole objective realm is appropriated by the subject, and is transformed "into a unity of subjective feeling," to use Whitehead's phrase.¹³ Dickinson achieves this perspective, in the following poem:

Perception of an object costs
Precise the Object's loss -
Perception in itself a Gain
Replying to its Price -

The Object Absolute - is nought -
Perception sets it fair
And then upbraids a Perfectness
That situates so far -*

(1071)

*variant reading:
that 'tis so Heavenly far -

"Perception" describes the confrontation between the perceiver and the perceived: the perceiver moves towards the "object" and enters it, so as to transform it according to his/her spiritual reality. In this process the "object" loses its objectivity, externality and opacity, and the "subject" loses its self-conscious subjectivity or ego. The

"Object's loss" does not, in any case, refer to the negation of the material existence; it simply posits the relative position of the objective reality, in so far as it derives its full meaning from the spirituality of the perceiver, and in so far as it is re-created within the perceiver. The "Object's loss" as mere "object," then, represents, metaphorically, perception's "Gain" which is the creativity of the poet. Since creativity or creation is a process and not the end product, the poet considers "The Object Absolute" as "nothing." The question is not so much that the Absolute Object is beyond the limits of human perception as it is an observation that poetry or the poet's perception does not concern itself with the metaphysical Absolute. Poetic perception only "sets" the "Absolute object" in its true perspective: the absoluteness of creativity is the creative process itself. Poetry, or perception "upbraids" the "Perfectness" which "situates so far," or which is situated beyond the creative realm itself. In this context, Albert J. Gelpi has rightly noted that Dickinson "is concerned not with the "Perfectness" of the ultimate reality "that 'tis so Heavenly far," nor with the object which is "nought" in itself, but with the poet's perception, which more than compensates for the sacrifice of the negligible phenomenal existence."¹⁴

In creative perception, the emphasis falls on how the perceiver creates from within himself, and how he transforms the external reality into a typology of his own inner experience. Perception provides a ground for the union of inner with the outer, though the inner always remains as its focus. It should be obvious here that in a theory of perception which brings into prominence the role of the creative perceiver, there

is no room for the Lockean view of mind as a mere passive recipient of sense data, a tabula rasa acted upon by external stimuli. The Romantic theory of perception grants to the human mind an active creative role in experience, and thereby repudiates the sensationalistic and mechanistic presuppositions of the theories of Locke and Hartley.¹⁵ Emily Dickinson affirms the primacy of the creative mind which apprehends simultaneously the reality of sensuous experience and its transparency, and which creates the experience anew by apprehending it through the region of a spiritual self-affirmation:

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!"

(526)

The experience of hearing the Oriole's song can be a commonplace. But the same experience can be solely or purely "divine," if the listener's "Ear" is attuned accordingly. The nature of perception is determined by "The fashion of the Ear" which derives its quality from "within." "Dun" or the spiritual darkness, "fair" or the visionary light, "Rune" or the mystery—all are, in a sense, inner qualities which condition the poet's perception of the "song." The "song" in itself plays, in a

special sense, a secondary part. I agree with Anderson's interpretation that "Her subject is not the singing but the hearing, 'To hear an Oriole sing.' It is perception that makes it a 'Tune,' gives it meaning, and this is wholly subjective. So the sceptical ornithologist is out on a limb when he insists that the tune is in the tree."¹⁶ I should, however, point out the double function of the poem: as the emphasis in the case of the Bird's song falls on the inner perception of the listener, the poem which is the poet's song demands of the reader to have that "within," in order to be able to apprehend its meaning. The reader should be able to creatively apprehend the Bird-Bard song in the aloneness of his/her being. Otherwise the irony and pathos of "the Bird/Who sings the same, unheard,/As unto Crowd -" will remain pervasive. This means that our response to poetry is dependent upon and is reflective of the quality of our inner life. The hearing in this poem is inclusive of seeing: the auditory images of "sing," "Ear" and "Tune" are merged with the visual images of "Dun," "fair," and "Tree." It is the interiority of Eye and Ear which shapes poetic perception, though, ontologically, interiority does not exclude exteriority. The Bird's song is integral with the process of inner hearing. "The Spirit is the Conscious Ear" (733). It is in this sense that the "Tune" which "is in the Tree -" is the "Tune" which is "In Thee!"¹⁷

Emily Dickinson's theory of perception, which is at once a theory of knowledge and a theory of poetic creation, shows marked resemblances with the ideas of several of the creative writers and thinkers of the past as well as with the poets and the phenomenologists

of today.¹⁸ It is not within the scope of the present study to offer a full length treatment of the Romantic theory of perception as enunciated in the writings of the Romantic tradition in poetry, as well as in philosophical thought. But a few examples which bring out the view of the perceiving mind as an imaginative act and as a creative power radiating the objective reality, may be cited here, in order to reinforce Dickinson's view of perception in the context of literary history. In his "Dejection: An Ode," Coleridge, like Plotinus and Schlegel, asserts the role of the poet's own spirit in creating a world of perceptions:

Though I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the west:
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed

To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the Earth -
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element! (43-58: Italics mine)

The "fountains of the passion and the life are within." The soul or the creative mind is what Coleridge calls the "shaping spirit of Imagination." Blake feels that "This World Is a World of Imagination & Vision," though "Every body does not see alike." He further observes: ". . . to the Eyes of the Man of Imagination, Nature is Imagination itself. As a man is, so he sees. As the Eye is formed, such are its Powers."¹⁹ In a note to "Immortality Ode," Wordsworth

records: "I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature."²⁰ Thoreau declares in Walden: "Wherever I sat, . . . the landscape radiated from me accordingly."²¹ The contours of the outward reality are determined by the poet's vision, for they are the external lineaments of his inner perception:

Packed in my mind lie all the clothes
Which outward nature wears,
And in its fashion's hourly change
It all things else repairs.²²

Emerson observes likewise in his essay on "Nature":

Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact. Every appearance in nature corresponds to some state of the mind, and that state of mind can only be described by presenting that natural appearance as its picture.²³

Rilke, in a letter to Clara Rilke (March 8, 1907), delineates the process which testifies that the external phenomena are the "means to the end of expressing indirectly something in his own inner life that he could hardly express in any other way."²⁴ The process is stated in these words:

Gazing is such a wonderful thing, about which we know little; in gazing we are turned completely outward, but just when we are so most, things seem to go on within us, which have been waiting longingly for the moment when they should be unobserved, and while they are happening in us, intactly and strangely anonymously, independently of our consciousness, their significance gradually grows in the object without, a convincing, powerful name, their only possible name, in which we joyfully and reverently recognize the happening within our soul, without being able to reach it, only quite gently, quite remotely comprehending it under the symbol of a thing that immediately before was quite strange to us and in the next moment is again estranged from us.²⁵

Wallace Stevens' poetry or poetics demonstrates fully the connection between the external and the internal reality; it seeks to relate the

creative mind and the objects of perception in a network of poetic metaphors. Like Penelope in "The World As Meditation," the poet "awakens the world in which [he] dwells." In "Credences of Summer," Stevens writes:

Let's see the very thing and nothing else.
Let's see it with the hottest fire of sight.
Burn everything not part of it to ash.

Trace the gold sun about the whitened sky
Without evasion by a single metaphor.
Look at it in its essential barrenness
And say this, this is the centre that I seek.

The "hottest fire of sight," a metaphor for the poetic Imagination, indicates the mind's ultimate dominance over the visual landscape. This is how the poet can "sing in face/Of the Object." The ambivalence of the subject-object relationship is a part of the paradoxical relation between the self and the outside world, as shown in "The Man with the Blue Guitar." Stevens believes that the poet must first experience the existential reality within his own mind or heart, in order to be able to tell about it. "The Snow Man," fully embodies this view:

One must have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;

And have been cold a long time
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter

Of the January sun; and not to think
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
In the sound of a few leaves,

Which is the sound of the land
Full of the same wind
That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

It should be clear from the above poem that the "subjectivity" of the poet, which is neither purely subjective nor strictly objective, renders all the metaphoric relations between the inside and the outside possible. In the process of actualizing these relations, as is shown in Stevens' poem, one becomes "the frost" "to behold the junipers shagged with ice." The "listener" merges with the "wind" and the "sound," in order "not to think/Of any misery in the sound of the wind," and the self is metamorphosed into "nothing himself" before it can "see" "Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is." In the structure of Stevens' perception, "a mind of winter" is one with "the hottest fire of sight": the opposites meet here as freely as they do in Dickinson's poetry.²⁶

Examples concerning the "primacy" of the perceiving mind in its creative experience of the world can be multiplied by quoting from several other poets, as well as from modern phenomenologists such as Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty.²⁷ But, for the sake of continuity I must resume my discussion of Emily Dickinson. The emphasis on the creative powers of the poetic mind in Dickinson's poetry should not be confused with Narcissism, for creativity is expansion, a search for fullness and not self-centredness. The poet's sense of solitude or loneliness does not betray any sign of neurosis. On the contrary, it shows "spiritual" awareness (1092). Loneliness is "The Maker of the soul," (777) and "Is richer than could be revealed/By mortal numeral" (1116). It is the "sumptuous solitude" (1495) which is the source of Dickinson's inner strength, her creative imagination, her poetic perceptions. The sense of being "alone" does not generate

in her any feeling of self-sufficient egocentrism; nor is it a mode representing one-way traffic from the external to the internal, from the known to the unknown. Rather, paradoxically, it is a creative condition of being in which personal destiny or the interior world constantly interpenetrates the outside world, showing the "I-Thou" relationship in a metamorphic process. Primordially, this condition or tendency may be discussed under the concept of "centroversion," to use Erich Neumann's term. Neumann clarifies the concept in these words:

Detachment from the uroboros, entry into the world, and the encounter with the universal principle of opposites are the essential tasks of human and individual development. The process of coming to terms with the objects of the outer and inner worlds, of adapting to the collective life of mankind both within and without, governs with varying degrees of intensity the life of every individual. For the extravert, the accent lies on the objects outside, people, things, and circumstances; for the introvert, it lies on the objects inside, the complexes and archetypes. Even the introvert's development, which relates mainly to the psychic background, is in this sense "bound to the object," despite the fact that the objects lie inside him and not outside, being psychic forces rather than social economic, or physical ones. But besides this trend of development there is another, equally legitimate, which is self-related or "centroverted," and which makes for the development of personality and for individual realization. This development may derive its contents from outside and inside equally, and is fed by introversion as much as by extraversion. Its center of gravity, however, lies not in objects and objective dealings, irrespective of whether the objects be external or internal, but in self-formation; that is to say, in the building up and filling out of a personality which, as the nucleus of all life's activities, uses the objects of the inner and outer worlds as building material for its own wholeness. This wholeness is an end in itself, autarchic; it is quite independent of any utility value it may have either for the collective outside or for the psychic powers inside.²⁸

It is through and in her "solitude" or the "polar privacy" (1695), that Emily Dickinson strives to achieve the "wholeness" which is inclusive of all the opposites, though she is not unaware of the experiential impingements thwarting the syncretic effort. She seeks

"wholeness" and writes:

Without this - there is nought -
 All other Riches be
 As is the Twitter of a Bird -
 Heard opposite the Sea -

I could not care - to gain
 A lesser than the Whole -
 For did not this include themself -
 As Seams - include the Ball? (655)

The creative voice of Dickinson's poetry is full-throated and not a low-toned chirp of a distant bird. Sea is the battlefield of her perception and creativity. Daring as she is, she does not intend "to gain/A lesser than the Whole." This speaks for her total commitment to her art. Her unique sense of creative fidelity makes her perceive in these demiurgic terms:

My Faith is larger than the Hills -
 So when the Hills decay -
 My Faith must take the Purple Wheel
 To show the Sun the way - (766)

Dickinson cannot "stint a faith/On which so vast depends." It is "The Experiment of Our Lord" (300). It is "Inherited with Life," and losing it means to lose one's Being (377). It relieves one from "trepidation" and "fear" of death (392), because it "adores" the "Dark" (7). It is the organ of perception: "What I see not, I better see -/Through Faith" (939). It is creative of the "presence" in the landscape of absence:

Faith - is the Pierless Bridge
 Supporting what We see
 Unto the Scene that We do not -
 Too slender for the eye

It bears the Soul as bold
 As it were rocked in Steel
 With Arms of Steel at either side -
 It joins - behind the Veil (915)

Faith involves resignation and "Negative Capability." But it also involves fulfillment and assertion. As an aesthetic category, faith means consecration to the terror of creation.²⁹ It is the poetic fidelity which prompts her to sing: "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" "The Service without Hope," and "How happy is the little Stone."³⁰ It is the endless search for Identity, the "haunted House" of art, that Dickinson aims to fix in her verses.³¹ She grapples with the process and mystery of human existence, and affirms the sovereignty of the poet's mind in these words:

The Brain - is wider than the Sky -
 For - put them side by side -
 The one the other will contain
 With ease - and You - beside -

The Brain is deeper than the sea -
 For - hold them - Blue to Blue -
 The one the other will absorb -
 As Sponges - Buckets - do -

The Brain is just the weight of God -
 For - Heft them - Pound for Pound -
 And They will differ - if they do -
 As Syllable from Sound - (632)

In Dickinson's poetic vocabulary, "The Brain" is synonymous with Mind, Heart, Intuition, Imagination, and Consciousness. "The Heart is the Capital of the Mind -" (1354), and "The Mind lives on the Heart" (1355). The poet's mind comprehends all the worlds from here to eternity. It is "wider than the Sky," a symbolic, domed structure containing the limits of human exteriority, and it is "deeper than the sea," the vast container of the mystery of life and death, the dimensions of human interiority. It is "an inland soul" which dips into "Eternity" (76). In its creative role, it appropriates the form of a God. "The Brain - is wider than the Sky" reminds one of Gerard Manley Hopkins' "No Worst,

There Is None," in which he writes: "O the mind, mind has mountains;
cliffs of fall/Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap/
May who ne'er hung there."³² Dickinson believes that the poet's mind,
in its creative exuberance, surpasses Nature, surpasses even the
historical significance of the cultures of the East and West:

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 Lingering - and the Stain - I mean -

When Orient have been outgrown -
And Occident - become Unknown -
His Name - remain - (307)

The poet's perceptions are permanent in a transient world. His poems
are "Roses of a steadfast summer" (163). They are the "continents of
summer," and the "firmaments of sun" (180). Dickinson calls her "Art"
"A Summer Day" (397) which "lasts a Solid Year" (569). In Nature,
Summer slips into Autumn as life slips into death (1346 and 1506), but
in the poetic imagination the "Summer would not cease" (1014). There-
fore, the poet can "repeat the Summer day," and stop the Sun from
going down by making "a picture of the sun" (188). The poetic Con-
sciousness "is a Zone" "whose Sun constructs perpetual Noon/Whose
perfect Seasons wait -" (1056). That is why Dickinson asserts:

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

But, looking back - the First so seems
To Comprehend the Whole -
The Others look a needless Show -
So I write - Poets - All - (569)

However, the poet's predicament is not unknown to Emily Dickinson. The poet's sense of pain and anguish at his awareness of alienation from the source of primal existence has been captured most successfully in these verses:

To learn the Transport by the Pain -
As Blind Men learn the sun!
To die of thirst - suspecting
That Brooks in Meadows run!

To stay the homesick - homesick feet
Upon a foreign shore -
Haunted by native lands, the while -
And blue - beloved air!

This is the Sovereign Anguish!
This - the signal woe!
These are the patient "Laureates"
Whose voices - trained - below -

Ascend in ceaseless Carol -
Inaudible, indeed,
To us - the duller scholars
Of the Mysterious Bard!

(167)

The poet masters the art of anguish and woe, in order to reach the state of internal bliss. He experiences "want" (731) so that he may be fulfilled. The primal reality is before time; the fact of our birth marks the separation from the "native lands" of primordial existence. The poet remains "haunted" by their memory, and feels "homesick." The land of our daily habitation becomes a "foreign shore" for him. To recover this "original" existence is the mythic errand of the "patient" bard on this earth. The "ceaseless Carol" of the poet is dedicated to this end. Emily Dickinson reproaches "the duller scholars" to whom the poet's song is "Inaudible." Dickinson compels her readers to have an identical degree of imaginative experience to share the creative vision of the poet. The readers must have a "quick" sensibility and

sensitive organs of perception:

Reportless Subjects, to the Quick
Continual addressed -
But foreign as the Dialect
Of Danes, unto the rest.

Reportless Measures, to the Ear
Susceptive - stimulus -
But like an Oriental Tale
To others, fabulous - (1048)

Dickinson uses the metaphors of Air and Wind to signify poetic Imagination. She calls the "Happy Air" as "Essential Host, in Life's faint, wailing Inn" (1060), and believes that "Wind" ushers "Liberty" (1137). The "Speech" of Wind is "like the Push/Of numerous Humming Birds at once/From a superior Bush," and

His Countenance - a Billow -
His Fingers, as He passed
Let go a music - as of tunes
Blown tremulous in Glass - (436)

She thinks that "the Root of the Wind is Water" because it sounds "so deep" (1302). It is through the Imagination that the poet can achieve a priestly status:

How mighty the Wind must feel Morns
Encamping on a thousand dawns
Espousing each and spurning all
Then soaring to his Temple Tall - (1418)

And, again, it is through the Imagination that the poet succeeds in wearing the garb of paradoxical humility, the "Barefoot-Rank" (L265), which is necessary for the "Barefoot Vision" (523),³³ the spiritual centre of Dickinson's poetic perception.

II. THE POET AND THE POETIC EXPERIENCE

At this point, I should endeavour to deal with the perplexing

problem of genesis of Dickinson's poetic or creative experience, which is linked with the larger problem of Perception. However, it should be admitted at the outset that there is no clear-cut, scientific method by which we can determine the causes and track down the intrinsic mystery of poetic experience which occurs in the Imagination. Herbert Read illuminates the problem in these words:

Some kind of immateriality is, of course, intrinsic to the poetic process. Poetry is consistent only in its shadowiness, its indeterminacy, its intangibility. In writing poetry we have a sense of the inexhaustible depth of our subjectivity; and out of that depth, flowing as spontaneously as water from a spring, comes this sensuous utterance in rhythmic verse. Of course, it is spiritual or psychic, as water is earthy. Spirituality is generated by it, as "a sudden flash of transcendental feeling," but not added to it.³⁴

Poets have always experienced difficulty in describing the precise sources of their creative experience, because behind every creation there is chaos, and chaos is never precise; it has myriad roots and branches. "Psychology" or "Psycho-analysis," has done very little to help the task of exploring the true nature of poetic experience from the point of view of literary criticism. Howsoever interesting the private findings of a psycho-analyst concerning the works of a Dostoevsky, a Keats, or a Shelley might be, it is highly embarrassing for a literary critic to accept the reductive premise of treating literature as an expression of the artist's libido, and the artist as a giant masturbator. Though creativity is a mental and psychic activity, it is against the canon of literary taste to try to trace it mainly from the instinctual, unconscious biography of the artist. I am far from being indifferent to the several dynamic uses of Psychology, in so far as it can inform us about the functions of the

human mind, particularly the mind of the creative artist. I only wish to sound cautious against excessive psychologism and clinical analysis of literary works, because Psychology is not yet fully equipped to translate for us the ambiguous sources of artistic creations. Frederick C. Crews has rightly observed that "even Gestalt psychology, which does promise enlightenment about the perception of artistic form, has told us virtually nothing about literature."³⁵ Rollo May believes that "most of our approaches to creativity in psychology have been strikingly inadequate."³⁶ Amy Lowell writes in "The Process of Making Poetry":

Sometimes the external stimulus which has produced a poem is known or can be traced. It may be a sight, a sound, a thought, or an emotion. Sometimes the consciousness has no record of the initial impulse, which has either been forgotten or springs from a deep, unrealized memory. But whatever it is, emotion, apprehended or hidden, is a part of it.³⁷

This is not an answer to our problem. Lowell's emphasis falls on the "deep, unrealized memory," or the "emotion, apprehended or hidden." Hence the difficulty. Brewster Ghiselin suggests that "the poem seems to issue from the dark of the mind without much awareness of how it comes."³⁸ The "dark of the mind" or the "illuminated soul" are beyond any rational analysis. Allen Tate distrusts genetic theories, and writes in his "Narcissus As Narcissus":

Poets, in their way, are practical men; they are interested in results. What is the poem, after it is written? That is the question. Not where it came from, or why. The Why and Where can never get beyond the guessing stage because, in the language of those who think it can, poetry cannot be brought to "laboratory conditions." The only real evidence that any critic may bring before his gaze is the finished poem.³⁹

Tate's advice is sound. True genesis of the poem is the poem itself. Creation is its own answer because it brings into being something "new" of which we are at best vaguely aware. Tate further argues:

. . . if the poem is a real creation, it is a kind of knowledge that we did not possess before. It is not knowledge "about" something else; the poem is the fullness of that knowledge. We know the particular poem, not what it says that we can restate. In a manner of speaking, the poem is its own knower, neither poet nor reader knowing anything that the poem says apart from the words of the poem.⁴⁰

Tate's view might be considered as a case for extreme aestheticism.

But it is not so. While it speaks for the autonomy of the created work, it does not debar the reader from encountering "the words of the poem" and sharing with them "the fullness of knowledge" that they embody. To experience "knowledge" is not to know it; it is to participate in the process of discovery. Poetry is not a fossil; it is a live plant. To read it is to share its movement, its drama, its metamorphosis. The poet and the reader are one in the process of "that knowledge," which the poem is. At any rate, the point I wish to make here is that in order to experience the experience of poetry, we should go to the poet and his creation, and become a part of his particular scheme of things. We should not merely ask of the poet, as Coleridge reminds us in his "Dejection: An Ode":

What this strong music in the soul may be!
What, and wherein it doth exist,
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making power. (lines 60-63)

Emily Dickinson's poetry is often about poetry itself: it embodies its own poetic theory; it is at once the creation and the creative experience. The dimensions of Dickinson's poetic experience are mythic, ontological, tragic and existential, to repeat the observation made in Chapter I of this study. The images and symbols such as Fire, Volcano, Lightning, Thunder, Bolt (Thunderbolt), Crash, Water, Well, Sea, Flood, Ecstasy, Agony, Love, Sacrament, Beauty, Truth, Pang,

Thorn, Affliction, Suffering, Despair, Life, Death, Immortality, Self, Soul, Being, God, Awe, Terror, Palsy, Abyss, Cave, Cocoon, Grass, Earth, Sky, Heat, Cold, Noon, Frost are some of the innumerable archetypes of her creative experience. Poem after poem, she "plays" with the "terror" and "awe" of creation. She tells Higginson: "My Business is Circumference" (L268), and writes:

Circumference thou Bride of Awe
Possessing thou shalt be
Possessed by every hallowed Knight
That dares to covet thee (1620)

In terms of the creative experience, here is the grand merger of "the themes of sexual, religious and aesthetic fulfillment in the union of the bride and the knight, Circumference and Awe," to use Gelpi's insight.⁴¹ "Terror" is the womb that crystallizes the experience of poetry; "thunder" and "lightning" are the accompaniments of its birth. "Awe" provides the mood and atmosphere. Describing the process of birth of the poetic character and its abiding nature, she writes:

It struck me - every Day -
The Lightning was as new
As if the Cloud that instant slit
And let the Fire through -

It burned Me - in the Night -
It Blistered to My Dream -
It sickened fresh upon my sight -
With every Morn that came -

I thought that Storm - was brief -
The Maddest - quickest by -
But Nature lost the Date of This -
And left it in the Sky - (362)

The "Storm" of "Lightning" and "Fire" blistering "Me" and "My Dream" seems to provide a clue to Dickinson's "terror - since September" (L261). The realization of this "Storm" within her, "every Day" or "every Morn"

constitutes, to my mind, the genesis of her poetry. No wonder she refers to the experience of poetry in terms of "Thunder" (1247 and 1581): even "the Minutest Bee/That rides - emits a Thunder" (591). "A Thunder storm combines the charms/Of Winter and of Hell" (1649). Joseph Campbell informs us that "the thunderbolt (Vajra) is one of the major symbols in Buddhist iconography, signifying the spiritual power of Buddhahood (indestructible enlightenment) which shatters the illusory realities of the world" ⁴² In Dickinson's expanded perception, "thunderbolt" plays the same part. In Dickinson's poetic world as well as in Hindu mythology, "thunder" is a spiritual metaphor having a cathartic significance. Dickinson experiences "Thunder" as a "Stop-sensation" on her "Soul" (293), and tells Higginson, in equally paradoxical vein, the way she experiences poetry:

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. Is there any other way. (L342a: Higginson's words in a letter to his wife)

The feeling of numbness, or the loss of consciousness of "body" are symptoms of wonder at the haunting aspects of Creation. The "terror" and mystery of Existence is identical (for Dickinson) with the "terror" of poetry which enacts that mystery. Nature and/or Existence haunt(s) Dickinson and she feels palsied at the mere contemplation of life's "Haunted House" (L459a). The only way to "relieve" herself of the burden of mystery is to "create" it in her own "words," and make the enactment of "Haunted House" possible in terms of poetry, the art to which she is consecrated. This is what she conveys to Higginson:

My dying Tutor told me that he would like to live till I had been a poet, but Death was much of Mob as I could master - then - And when far afterward - a sudden light on Orchards, or a new fashion in the wind troubled my attention - I felt a palsy, here - the Verses just relieve - (L265).

For Dickinson, poetic experience is the "wondrous sea" of "Eternity" (4),⁴³ which stays like "Grief" and "Hills" (89), and which is called "Being's Road," or "a Sealed Route" (615). Once obtained, there is no retreat possible. It is the "escapeless sea" (1264 and L390). It is "The Magic passive but extant" (1231). Its "awe" is pervasive and integral with the creative process. "I work to drive the awe away, yet awe impels the work," says Dickinson (L891).⁴⁴ Emily Dickinson literally feeds "on awe" (1486). The creative urge is that "Fire" which cannot be put out, and it is that "Flood" which cannot be folded (530). It is "a new Content -/That feels to her - like Sacrament" (535). It is "A Threadless Way" on which it is "lighter - to be Blind" (761), for the poet in this "blindness" can look "into himself, the circumference of a total imaginative vision," to use Northrop Frye's expression.⁴⁵ The "inward" direction of Dickinson's creative experience is the source of her poetic power. Poetry takes its birth in the silence of the poet's mind:

The reticent volcano keeps
His never slumbering plan -
Confided are his projects pink
To no precarious man. (1748)

But the silence of the poet's mind is volcanic from which erupts the fluid vision of his poetry in an unceasing manner. Dickinson poetizes the paradoxical and complex nature of the poet's mind in which the initial experience of poetry takes place:

On my volcano grows the Grass
A meditative spot -
An acre for a Bird to Choose
Would be the General thought -

How red the Fire rocks below -
How insecure the sod
Did I disclose
Would populate with awe my solitude. (1677)

"Grass" is a Whitmanesque metaphor for poetry. Before the "grass" grows, or before poetry comes into being, the Bird-Bard must meditate on the volcanic spot, and go through the experience of "red Fire," symbolic of the experience of love, suffering and sublimation. The poet must also experience, in his solitude, the uncertainty and the insecurity between the meditative conception and the creation of poetry, without ever fully disclosing its awful nature. It is this deliberate meditation on the volcano of existence which qualifies Dickinson's poetry to be classed as "the poetry of meditation," to use Louis L. Martz's phrase.⁴⁶ The Hindu term for meditation is Dhyâna, the instrument of Self-knowledge and liberation, Vision, and revelation. The poetry of meditation (Dhyâna-Kavayah) is what Sri Aurobindo calls Mantra, the culmination of poetic utterance, discovery and insight.⁴⁷ Emily Dickinson transcribes her meditative experience into poetry, and names it "the Scarlet way" which calls for the "straight renunciation" of the "World," which "Requires Energy - possibly Agony-" (527). The "Scarlet Experiment" (861) of her poetry reminds us of the spiritual courage of Hawthorne and Melville, in so far as they dared explore the almost inscrutable realm of human destiny and predicament, as against the moral conservatism and timidity of their Puritan heritage. With an eagle in her soul, Dickinson dives deep into the sea of human heart and explores the darkness of its abyss with "Peril as a Possession" (1678). She plunges into the deepest layers of human existence, and rises out of them simultaneously. The way down becomes the way up, "down into the concrete, up into the unlimited," as William F. Lynch puts it.⁴⁸ Emily Dickinson shows a rare capacity to stay with life's mystery and

ambiguity, to "find" herself by negating herself, and to create out of the "darkness" her poetic world of "light." She writes to Susan Gilbert Dickinson: "Moving on in the Dark like Loaded Boats at Night, though there is no Course, there is Boundlessness -" (L871), and "The first section of Darkness is the densest, Dear - After that, Light trembles in -" (L874). "Boundlessness" defines the range of her poetic perception, and "Dark" is the realm of her creative experience. Her poems are like the "Loaded Boats at Night," fully equipped to strike against the fury of the stormy seas. Like Melville's Ahab she merges with the river of experience without ever really trying to look back. It is through the "dark" that we can experience "light." It is ironic. But, then, irony is the mode of existence. Dickinson "finds" the road to her ultimate Identity, her destiny, her vocation, in the "dark" of her interior self. On the thematic significance of the word "dark,"

Northrop Frye informs us:

In Romanticism the main direction of the quest of identity tends increasingly to be downward and inward, toward a hidden basis or ground of identity between man and nature. It is in a hidden region, often described in images of underground caves and streams like those of Kubla Khan, that the final unity between man and his nature is most often achieved. The word "dark" is thematically very important in Romanticism, especially in Germany, and it usually refers to the seeping of an identity with nature into the hidden and inner parts of the mind.⁴⁹

It is the "dark" which impels "shapes to eyes at a distance, which for them have the whole area of life or of death" (L656): "Vastness - is but the Shadow of the Brain which casts it" (L735). The "dark" invades the whole being of the poet, and the forms of the poetic experience manifest themselves to him. He cannot describe them in prose. He gropes "at shapes," and clutches "at sounds" (430), and eventually, in

the process, the poetic utterance is born. Since the "experience" is "original," the utterance must also be original. In his "Psychology and Literature," Jung brilliantly summarizes for us the poet's search for appropriate images to match the weight of his vision:

It is . . . to be expected of the poet that he will resort to mythology in order to give his experience its most fitting expression. It would be a serious mistake to suppose that he works with materials received at second-hand. The primordial experience is the source of his creativeness; it cannot be fathomed, and therefore requires mythological imagery to give it form. In itself it offers no words or images, for it is a vision seen "as in a glass, darkly." It is merely a deep presentiment that strives to find expression. It is like a whirlwind that seizes everything within reach and, by carrying it aloft, assumes a visible shape. Since the particular expression can never exhaust the possibilities of the vision, but falls far short of it in richness of content, the poet must have at his disposal a huge store of materials if he is to communicate even a few of his intimations. What is more, he must resort to an imagery that is difficult to handle and full of contradictions in order to express the weird paradoxicality of his vision.⁵⁰

My own discussion of Emily Dickinson's creative experience in terms of the archetypes of her poetic vision shows the usefulness of Jung's position, as well as the validity of my treatment of Dickinson as a mythopoeic poet. Dickinson seems to me to be successful in clothing her poetic experience in images "full of contradictions." She writes in the language of paradox, and thereby gives her primordial experience "its most fitting expression." She can perhaps boast with the great Chinese poet, Lu Chi:

So acute is the mind in such instants
 of divine comprehension,
 What chaos is there that it cannot marshal
 in miraculous order?
 While winged thoughts, like quick breezes,
 soar from depths of heart,
 Eloquent words, like a gushing spring,
 flow between lips and teeth.
 No flower, no plant, or animal is too
 prodigal of splendour
 To be recreated under the writer's pen.⁵¹

III. THE POET AND THE CREATIVE PROCESS

The creative experience or the genesis of poetry is indissolubly linked with the problem of creative process. However, an independent discussion of the relation between the poet and the creative process is necessary here, so that we may have an insight into the character of the poet in the act of creation, in the actual coming of poetry into Being. The other purpose of this discussion will be to demonstrate explicitly or implicitly how the "making" of a poem involves a sacred use of language, I mean, how the images and metaphors are used as the means of intuition, or spiritual awareness. Dickinson has "Inconceivably Solemn!/Things so gay/Pierce - by the very Press/Of Imagery -" (582). Since Emily Dickinson's poetry is often about the making of poetry, I intend to show what I have been saying in her own words:

So from the mould
Scarlet and Gold
Many a Bulb will rise -
Hidden away, cunningly,
From sagacious eyes.

So from Cocoon
Many a Worm
Leap so Highland gay,
Peasants like me,
Peasants like Thee
Gaze perplexedly!

(66)

The poem is "made." The act of Creation has taken place. The poet has given birth to a poetic form from the "Scarlet" mould of his own being. "Many a Bulb," or many a Poem are just waiting to be born of the creative womb of the poet, though they are as yet "hidden" even from his own "sagacious" view. The poem is to the poet as the Worm is to

the Cocoon. As poem after poem emerges from its chrysalis, the "Peasants," the pastoral spectators of Dickinson's world of perception only "Gaze perplexedly," a most fitting posture for the audience of Creation. Poetry, like Creation itself, cannot be rationalized; no definite meaning can be deduced from it. Its symbolic structure is ambiguous, indeterminate, and multiple. The real gazer, therefore, cannot help but feel perplexed at its amorphous shape. The voice of the poet in the poem is that of both the Creator and the Creation. In terms of the poem's symbolism, the poet is both the "mould" and the "Bulb," the "Cocoon" and the "Worm." He is also the "Peasant," a man of uncorrupted sensibility. The poem's "symbolism is," thus, "the symbolic process dramatizing itself." The poem also shows that "a creative man is creativity itself; a man who acts is act."⁵² "Cocoon" is one of the favourite metaphors of Dickinson, which she uses here very effectively to convey the process of birth. Cocoon's secret which is creation itself perches "in ecstasy" and "Defies imprisonment" (129). But Cocoon symbolism also means the process of death and destruction. Cocoon is both at the beginning and at the end of creation. It is at once the womb and the tomb. "From Cocoon forth a Butterfly" (354) describes the purposeless wanderings of "a Butterfly," after the initial experience of birth from the Cocoon. The journey takes place in a land where life struggles with death, where the contenders move like phantoms without direction, as if in a "purposeless Circumference," and where finally everything--Sun, Men, Butterfly--is "Extinguished - in the Sea." In "He parts Himself - like Leaves" (517), the eternal strife between life and death is captured through the images of "Rose" and "Buttercup,"

"Day" and "Night," "World" and "Frost." The journey of the persona ends on a point of uncertainty which is terminated by a "Sepulchre," a coffin or a mansion, a tomb or "a Cocoon." These poems (354 and 517) show Dickinson's bafflement at the mystery of creation. The "Circumference" which is the "Bride of Awe" (1620), or the "Circumference" which is her "Business" (L268) becomes here the "purposeless Circumference" or a "Tropic Show" (354). In this way, however, the poems offer us a faithful description of the mood of ambivalence over the nature of Reality, the mood which is the core of perception and the creative process. If going back to "Sea" and/or the "Cocoon" means going back to the embryonic form, in order to be reborn, the womb-tomb symbolism has a functional value. It can be treated as Dickinson's aesthetic strategy to experience a birth-death continuum, a sort of immortality, an everlasting possibility of a "rebirth." Such a theme would necessarily involve doubt and perplexity, though the poet's job is to actualize the experience entailing these and much else besides:

My Cocoon tightens - Colors tease -
 I'm feeling for the Air -
 A dim capacity for Wings
 Demeans the Dress I wear -

A power of Butterfly must be -
 The Aptitude to fly
 Meadows of Majesty implies
 And easy Sweeps of Sky -

So I must baffle at the Hint
 And cipher at the Sign
 And make much blunder, if at last
 I take the clue divine -

(1099)

The poem is about perception. The poet concretizes the whole experience

of perception by "feeling" simultaneously the inside wall of the womb and "A dim capacity for Wings," the urge to be born. The tightening Cocoon symbolizes captivity as well as freedom because, "The Life that tied too tight escapes" (1535). Although the act of birth seems to imply the demeaning of the chrysalis, it is necessary to alienate oneself from the embryo, so that the experience of the "Butterfly" state should be possible. "Butterfly" symbolizes the will to be "free." Butterfly state itself does not mean ultimate freedom; it is a stage in the process of "freedom" which is, paradoxically, contained in the captivity of the Cocoon. In the Butterfly state, man is in the larger womb which is this world. In order to be "free" from the chrysalis called world, and in order to "take the clue divine," one has to free oneself from the encircling walls of this great womb. Bafflement, guessing, blundering are natural to the process of "discovery" which is our true "freedom," our "rebirth." The symbolic process of "My Cocoon tightens - Colors tease," seems to me to be analogous to the experience contained in the words of Hermann Hesse: "The bird fights its way out of the egg. The egg is the world. Who would be born must first destroy a world. The bird flies to God. That God's name is Abraxas."⁵³ By analogy, the poetic experience or the genesis of poetry must become the poem, and the poem must break the limits of its linear language and assume a symbolic form, the body of perfect freedom.

Emily Dickinson describes the creative process through several other symbolisms. When she writes: "Mountains drip with Sunset," "the Fire ebbs like Billows," "Dusk crawls on the Village," and "Dome of Abyss is Bowing/Into Solitude," she is arresting the "Visions" in the

language of poetry. In such moments, she feels, as if "Paralyzed, with Gold."⁵⁴ The creative process brings back the creative experience with a sense of real vitality, the paradoxical paralysis of "Gold." In "Dare you see a Soul at the White Heat?" (365), Dickinson describes the poet as a "Blacksmith," the poetic experience as "the vivid Ore," and the creative process as passing of the "Ores" through "the Forge." The "Ore" becomes the "Designated Light" which is poetry. It is self-evident that the creative process involves great effort; the poet-blacksmith gives shape to his "Ore" with "Hammer" and the "Anvil." The power of poetry can be gained by "Strategy" (359), by "clutching" at and "diving" into the roots of experience (427). The poet weaves the fabric of his poetry as the Spider who "plies from Nought to Nought -/In unsubstantial Trade," and "Supplants our Tapestries with His -/In half the period -" (605). The "Spider" sews "at Night/Without a Light/ Upon an Arc of White" (1138). Dickinson considers "The Spider" as the "Neglected Son of Genius" (1275), an "Artist" who weaves his net from within. In regarding the Spider as a metaphor for inwardness, she makes him a Christ-figure that "Assiduously" creeps in the silence of one's mind (1167). This Spider is the builder of "The fairest Home" of her poetry (1423).

It is clear from the above-noted symbolisms that the relation between the poet and the poetic creation cannot be stated directly; it requires a vast range of images and metaphors to clothe its naked mystery. Emily Dickinson describes it in these verses:

This is a Blossom of the Brain -
A small - italic Seed
Lodged by Design or Happening
The Spirit fructified -

Shy as the Wind of his Chambers
 Swift as a Freshet's Tongue
 So of the Flower of the Soul
 Its process is unknown. (945)

The mystery of the poetic creation is "unknown" to the human poet. It is the "Flower of the Soul," or a "Blossom of the Brain" which "is wider than the Sky," and "deeper than the sea -" (632). In its nascent stage, it is the "italic Seed," "fructified" by "The Spirit" into a blooming "Flower." The poet does not concern himself as much with the problem of how the "Seed" got there as he does with the fact of its discovery. Emily Dickinson clutches at the "discovery" in a mood of religious fervour because she is aware that if and

When it is lost, that Day shall be
 The Funeral of God,
 Upon his Breast, a closing Soul
 The Flower of our Lord. (945)

The poetic creation is, then, "The Flower of our Lord," and the poet is its Creator-custodian, as well as its instrument on earth. Poetry comes into being for us when the poet exerts his sinews. Dickinson describes this striving in terms of the flower-perfume metaphor:

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 - (675)

Wringing is an existential act; it implies self-discipline through pain and suffering. It is only through suffering that man can realize the "Essential Oils," of Existence. Suffering is the existential imperative. Essence and Existence are integral in the creative process,

as the perfume and flower are in Nature. "The Attar" is the expression of "the Rose," as the poetic creation is the expression of the poet. But this expression occurs when the flower-poet goes through the experience of psychic as well as physical pressures. The "gift of Screws" is the secret of artistic fulfillment. It refers to the artist's capacity to undergo pain in order to create. It also refers to craftsmanship and discipline which are necessary ingredients in the making of an artist. The rose-petals must be seasoned in the process of becoming the Attar. The last four lines beginning with "The General Rose decay" reveal Dickinson's strategy of making the Attar and/or the poetic creation appear to be of permanent character as against the transiency of "The General Rose," the existence which is not "particularized" in the mould of aesthetic experience. The job of the poet is to save the things of this world from decaying. The only way to do so is to extract the Attar from them, and breathe immortality into them, by preserving their essence in the edifice of poetry. The poet Emily Dickinson achieves the goal and enacts the experience in this form:

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 -

(448)

In the creative process, the poet arrests the flux of our perishable existence. He creates "Pictures" of immortality, and when these rich visions are disclosed to us in the form of images and metaphors, our daily world fades into "ceaselsss Poverty." It is in these images of permanence that we experience the "amazing sense," or the "Attar so immense" of his art. The world of familiarity or "ordinary Meanings" stands transformed before our very "sight." In this transformation or the distillation of our experiential reality, the poet achieves the ontological status of being "Exterior - to Time," like the "artist in the city of Kouroo."⁵⁵ The word "Attar," derived from the Persian atar-gal, essence of roses, which has been used here as a metaphor for poetry, carries an aura of meaning for Dickinson. Charles R. Anderson explores the depth meanings of Attar and its association with India which makes it "Attar so immense." The Attar is

. . . one of the most costly ingredients of perfume, described in her Webster in terms of its exotic origin: "A highly fragrant concrete obtained in India from the petals of roses." India was a loaded word for her, typifying opulence in awesome degree, and this is certainly included in her meaning here. To a young friend getting married she sent her congratulations "that the shortest route to India has been supremely found," and in a poem on her own moment of love she defines it in the concluding line as "My drop of India." These refer to the ecstasy of love, but since she frequently equates love with poetry, it becomes clear that for her India, brought into this poem by "Attar from the Rose," is symbolic of the heaven-on-earth that includes them both.⁵⁶

That the poetic creation or the creative process impells the poet to use language in a sacred way, in order to dramatize the mystery of existence, as actualized by him in the Imagination, should be clear

from the foregoing discussion. Dickinson's use of the words Attar, Cocoon, Butterfly, Spider, Blacksmith, Fire, Ore, Light, Grief, Sea, Flood, Volcano, Grass, Gaze, Circumference, Air, Rose, Screws, to mention only a few of them from the vast fund of her poetic vocabulary, demonstrates a highly metaphoric-metamorphic character of poetic language which alone can "express" the primordial experience of the poet. This does not mean to say that the poet is completely free from the intrinsic tension involved in the making of a poetic medium.⁵⁷ The poet is perfectly aware that "A Word made Flesh is seldom" (1651), or the "Morning's finest syllable" looks "Presumptuous" by the "Evening" (1266). Moved by the "Force" of her emotional experience, Dickinson writes: "If I could tell how glad I was/I should not be so glad -" (1668), for the expressed "words" "Are paltry melody/But those the silent feel/Are beautiful" (1750). The "silent" words are the hardest to come by:

Your thoughts don't have words every day
 They come a single time
 Like signal esoteric sips
 Of the communion Wine
 Which while you taste so native seems
 So easy so to be
 You cannot comprehend its price
 Nor its infrequency (1452)

The manuscript of "Your thoughts don't have words every day," like the manuscripts of hundreds of Dickinson's poems, fully supports the point of view contained in the poem. There are words and words everywhere, but it is a strenuous job, dictated alike by intuition and skill, to select the precise word for the poetic transcription of the experience. The variant words for some particular word, image or metaphor, as shown in Dickinson Manuscripts, should clarify the point involved here. But

Emily Dickinson shows rare sensitivity for the interior of the words, their divine power, their energizing role. "A Word is inundation, when it comes from the Sea," says Dickinson (L965). She writes of the interior structure of words or the poetic language in these verses:

A Man may make a Remark -
In itself - a quiet thing
That may furnish the Fuse unto a Spark
In dormant nature - lain -

Let us deport - with skill -
Let us discourse - with care -
Powder exists in Charcoal -
Before it exists in Fire. (952)

In terms of the language, then, the poem becomes the epiphany of the poetic creation. "In itself - a quiet thing," the silent-speaking symbol, poetry carries within it the necessary "Fuse" to cause the "Spark" of intuitive enlightenment. The Charcoal-Fire symbolism reinforces the Fuse-Spark energy which is at the core of poetic perception.

Using the language as she does, Emily Dickinson evolves her aesthetics of ambiguity from the still-flowing "Brook" of the human heart (136), and the "Amber hands" of the "Moon" (429), from the pathos of the "Butterflies" and the ecstasy of the "Flowers" (137), from "the secret/Of the Crocus" (22) and the Power of the "Cloud" (293). The poetic creation, thus, presents to her the world of endless possibilities. What she cannot create is "Unknown to possibility" (361). Dickinson emphasizes the "Dimensions of Possibility" (1208), and tells us:

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 (657)

The "Windows" in this "fairer House" of "Possibility" are in themselves the wide open "Doors" of poetic Perception. The "Chambers as the Cedars" enhance the supernatural quality of the "House" of poetry. The ordinary human "Eye" cannot pierce through its "haunted" structure whose outer limits extend up to "the Sky," the symbol of man's ultimate sense of freedom. But the poet can "gather Paradise" here because he knows the art of "spreading" his "narrow Hands" "wide". By this art the poet learns to dwell in his haunted House of poetry. Hands symbolize man's mental life. The "narrow Hands" indicate an unregenerated state. Man is in the everlasting necessity of "widening" his "narrow Hands." Only then can he "gather Paradise" in the now and here of Existence.⁵⁸

IV. THE POET AND THE POEM

To poetic creation or poetry, everything is possible, coupled though it might be with paradox, irony, tension, ambivalence, and mystery. What matters here is intensity and not logic. Intensity of utterance can be shown through and in the relationship between the poet and the poem, I mean, what the poet becomes through the poem or poetry, how the poet shapes and is shaped by his art, how the poet assumes various symbolic forms to dramatize his experience of Reality, and

finally how the poet performs his social obligation towards the rest of mankind. Emily Dickinson declares that poetry is "that Keyless Rhyme," that perfect music of a Mozart, which "No one could play . . . the second time" (503). Poetry comes to the poet with a sense of finality in an otherwise impermanent world. In a sense it fixes him. The poet constantly strives to keep it. Whatever else might be mortal, poetry abides. By way of metaphor, it salvages mankind from the curse of mortality: "a Page/Of prancing Poetry" can "take us Lands away," it is "the Chariot/That bears the Human soul" (1263 and 1400). It fulfills the poet: in consecrating himself to poetry, the poet consecrates himself to himself because it is the call of his destiny. It is through poetry that the poet becomes himself. Poetry is the poet's power. He can sing "I taste a liquor never brewed . . . Inebriate of Air - am I -/And Debauchee of Dew -" (214). For the poet, "Much Madness is divinest Sense" (435). He creates, "Although Annihilation pile/Whole Chaoses on Him" (806). He outstrips "Time with but a Bout," and outstrips "Stars and Sun" (865). In his creativity, the poet is like "The Lord" "in the Zones of Paradise" (871). "His Labor is a Chant -/His Idleness a Tune -" (916). His "Mind" is "A too minute Area" (936). His "Voice" "stands for Floods," and his "Face" "makes the Morning mean" (1189). He is one of the "imperial few" to whom "is due" "The Auroral light" (1577). His courage to be is unique: "Arrows" and "Venoms" of existence do not "rankle" "his Heart" (1629). Poetry is "His remedy for care" (1723). He learns "to like the Fire/By playing Glaciers -" (689). He builds "the infinite Relations" "On High" where "Affliction" is "but a Speculation" (1040). He knows that

The hallowing of Pain
 Like hallowing of Heaven,
 Obtains at a corporeal cost -
 The Summit is not given

To Him who strives severe
 At middle of the Hill -
 But He who has achieved the Top -
 All - is the price of All - (772)

This is what the poet becomes through the poem. In the very heart of the creative process, the poet arrives at the vision of divine Pain. Corporeality of existence has to be sacrificed in order that one should be born to the realm of holy Pain. This is the "Summit" of human experience. But this cannot be possible unless one is prepared to lose "All." "All-is the price of All" conveys the paradoxical wisdom of the poet. We should lose all in order to find all is the message of the poem, conveyed creatively and not didactically. The word "All" also defines the limits of our existential commitment to transmute the daily experience of "pain" into a holy one which is rare, though possible. The poet gives "All" to his poetic creation, and thereby becomes immortal like the Creation itself. Poetry confers upon him the status of permanence. The poet enters the arena of "a steadfast land,/Where no Autumn lifts her pencil -/And no Reapers stand!" (163). His "swamps are pink with June," a metaphor for constant heat and life (22). In the poetic sense, he becomes permanent like the "Hosts" of feelings and emotions, a "Recordless Company," which comes to the mind but is "never gone" (298). The poet stays in an "immortal Place/ Though Pyramids decay" (946). Dickinson also asserts:

Say - last I said - was This -
 That when the Hills - come down -
 And hold no higher than the Plain -
 My Bond - have just begun -

And when the Heavens - disband -
 And Deity conclude -
 Then - look for me (400)

The poet Emily Dickinson is claiming here that her art will survive "the Hills" and "the Heavens." Undoubtedly, this shows her consciousness of being a great poet. She is confident of the "continuity" of her "Voice":

I shall keep singing!
 Birds will pass me
 On their way to Yellower Climes - (250)

Even when the human poet is dead and gone, his creation which is an infinite process continues to "Disseminate" his "Circumference" of "Light" (883) in the Heart of humanity. Dickinson boldly says:

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 Beetles - know. (290)

Poetry is Earth-bound, as conveyed here in the image "Menagerie," but it is no less splendid for that, because both poetry and the Earth represent "Competeless Show," Dickinson's metaphor for the grandeur of creative process and the infinite "play" of Existence. Poetry is "Her deathless Syllable" (1183). The poems are, then, Dickinson's "Splendors," fit enough to survive the seeming or real transitoriness of man.⁵⁹ Emily Dickinson's Earth expands from here to eternity, it is the place where she gathers her "Paradise" (657). It (Earth) is the centre of her "Circumference" which is her "Business" (L268). In her Imagination, the Earth reverses her "Hemispheres" and takes her "out upon Circumference" (378). "Circumference" is Dickinson's metaphor for "Resurrection" (515). "Circumference" which is the

Earth's outer limit, offers her a simultaneous experience of life and death or life in death:

She staked her Feathers - Gained an Arc -
 Debated - Rose again -
 This time - beyond the estimate
 Of Envy, or of Men -

And now, among Circumference -
 Her steady Boat be seen -
 At home - among the Billows - As
 The Bough where she was born - (798)

The image of "Feathers" stands for the Imagination, "Arc" stands for the curve of Circumference which is beyond the reach of Men in the present poem. The persona of the poem is "At home - among the Billows" of "Circumference." This time, the "Circumference" becomes the sea of life and death on which the poet's job is to keep his "Boat" steady. Thus, the Earth provides her with the imaginative powers of the expansive consciousness. "A Coffin" can "contain/A Citizen of Paradise" (943), writes Dickinson. The restricted size of the "Grave" expands, in the mould of her Imagination, into a "Circumference without Relief-/ Or Estimate - or End -" (943). For Dickinson, "Ages coil within/The minute Circumference/Of a single Brain" (967). The poet "carries a Circumference" in his mind, and that is his "secret," his mystery (1663). He becomes the "Saint" through the poem:⁶⁰

No matter where the Saints abide,
 They make their Circuit fair
 Behold how great a Firmament
 Accompanies a Star. (1541)

The word "Saint" describes fully the "type" of a poet. It is full of varied meanings. It is highly paradoxical. Saint is the one who experiences holiness on earth. He is the Yogin who passes through

the pathos, irony, comedy, and tragedy of Existence. He is humorous, he is serious; he laughs, he weeps. He is poor, he is rich. He is body, he is soul. He is silence, he is sound. Love and Death are his pastime, because he comprehends the "Play" of Life. He can play any role at will; he can enter any form of creation. He suffers, he is above suffering. He is process, he is Completion.

I will not say that Emily Dickinson, the empirical person, is a Saint. But I will insist that Emily Dickinson the poet, who becomes what she becomes through her art, is certainly a paradigm of such a "type." Her art is a process of this "possibility." The poet Emily Dickinson passes through, and lives with all the contradictions of life. In her several poetic roles, she becomes the Bee, the Butterfly, the Rose, the Spider, the Lark, the Bird, the Magician, the Caterpillar, the Moon, the Beloved, the Lover, to mention only a few. The poet becomes the Bee "that brew -/A Honey's Weight/The Summer multiply -" (676), and "A Bird" that knows the secret of "The Skies" (191). The poet is "The Robin" "That speechless from her Nest/Submit that Home - and Certainty/And Sanctity are best" (828). He is "The Black Berry" who "wears a Thorn in his side -" (554). He is "The butterfly" who "obtains/But little sympathy" for his sense of freedom (1685).⁶¹ He is the "Blue-Bird" whose "conscientious Voice will soar unmoved/Above ostensible Vicissitude" (1395).⁶² The poet is the "Caterpillar" who is "Intent upon its own career" (1448). He is the "Moon" whose "Bonnet is the Firmament -/The Universe - Her Shoe -/The Stars - the Trinkets at Her Belt -/Her Dimities - of Blue -" (737). He is the "Carpenter" who builds "Temples" (488). The poetic "forms" of the

poet can be multiplied infinitely, because whatever he touches, he becomes that. Since the "forms" are hermaphroditic, the interplay and/or the shifting use of the masculine and feminine pronouns "he" and "she," "him" and "her" should not be considered as a grammatical flaw in this passage, or elsewhere in Dickinson's poetry. The symbolic purpose of these "forms" is to show that the poet is above personality, though, paradoxically, he has to realize a "personality" through his art. Through the various "forms," by moving in and out of them, the poet experiences true "freedom." He challenges the existential anxiety and fear by assuming the forms of "Bees" and the "Flowers" because the Bees and Flowers are "unafraid" (869).⁶³ Dickinson launches her drama of "freedom" from the "Systems," and calls it her "Revolution" generated by the "Winds of Will" (1082). The poet creates these "forms," and is created by them. Once in "possession" of these "forms," the poet becomes "the mere incarnation, or mouth-piece, or medium"⁶⁴ of their power. The poet realizes himself through his art, and the art realizes itself through the poet. The paradoxical conception of "art" realizing its own destiny through the artist is explained by C. G. Jung in these words:

Art is a kind of innate drive that seizes a human being and makes him its instrument. The artist is not a person endowed with free will who seeks his own ends, but one who allows art to realize its purposes through him. As a human being he may have moods and a will and personal aims, but as an artist he is "man" in a higher sense - he is "collective man" - one who carries and shapes the unconscious, psychic life of mankind. To perform this difficult office it is sometimes necessary for him to sacrifice happiness and everything that makes life worth living for the ordinary human being.⁶⁵

Emily Dickinson does not seek any personal aggrandizement through her art. She does not care for any superfluous fame as a writer

of poetry. "A Phoebe makes a little print/Upon the Floors of Fame," says Dickinson (1009). "Fame is a fickle food/Upon a shifting plate" (1659). "Glory is that bright tragic thing" which ends "In oblivion -" (1660). "Fame is a bee./It has a song -/It has a sting -/Ah, too, it has a wing" (1763). "Fame has no Arms" to lift anyone "Above Oblivion's Tide" (1531). "Fame is the tint that Scholars leave/Upon their Setting Names -" (866):

Fame is the one that does not stay -
 Its occupant must die
 Or out of sight of estimate
 Ascend incessantly - (1475)

But, all this does not mean that Dickinson is averse to "Fame." The point is that she does not wish to be considered as writing simply for the sake of some cheap glory. She has a kind of "Fame" in mind, which comes from within, and which comes only when one has fulfilled one's Self, one's Destiny, one's Vocation. She calls it the "Fame of Myself":

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 - (713)

The real "Fame" does not come by seeking; it comes in proportion to our realization of Ourselves. Dickinson states her methodology of arriving at the condition of Fame, in these verses:

To earn it by disdaining it
 Is Fame's consummate Fee -
 He loves what spurns him -
 Look behind - He is pursuing thee.

So let us gather - every Day -
 The Aggregate of
 Life's Bouquet
 Be Honor and not shame - (1427)

Emily Dickinson's poetic career is full of rigours which sometime look eccentric. She imposes on herself severe discipline, in order to serve the Muses. She writes and writes intensely, but she does not care to publish. She thinks "Publication - is the Auction/Of the Mind of Man -" (709). She writes to Higginson:

I smile when you suggest that I delay "to publish" - that being foreign to my thought as Firmament to Fin - 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).

It is Dickinson's "Barefoot - Rank" which has puzzled and intrigued her readers and critics for over half a century now. It is the "Rank" of a person who stands before Existence as reverently as one does before a Temple. I hope the religious connotations of "Barefoot - Rank" are clear to her perceptive readers, at least. Dickinson goes through Life as one goes through a shrine, and tries to assimilate in her own Being the mystery of human existence by raising more questions than one can ever hope to receive the answers to. Northrop Frye is right in saying that:

One feels something Oriental in her manner of existence: the seclusion, the need for a "preceptor," the use of brief poems as a form of social communication, would have seemed normal enough in the high cultures of the Far East, however unusual in her own.⁶⁶

I think, it is Dickinson's "Oriental manner," as suggested by Frye, that colours the world of her perceptions. However, there is no need to make her look like an Indian or a Chinese poet. In the context of this study, the "Oriental manner" should mean a certain way of life in which one apprehends the paradoxical or duplicate nature of Reality, not by any passive acceptance but by active participation in

the process of Creation in which there are contradictions, ironies, tensions, but all presented in the larger Unity of the "tree" of Life. The poet Emily Dickinson makes her own gigantic effort to "understand" Reality or Truth, as it can be known only through the creative process. One way of knowing Truth, as seen through the creative Eye of the Imagination, is to "die" for and "in sight of" "Beauty," the realm of aesthetics (1654). "Beauty" and "Truth" meet in the womb-tomb of existence (449). For Dickinson, as for Keats, "Truth" and "Beauty" are One in the aesthetic vision. The realm of "Beauty" is the realm of the Imagination and spontaneity, and "Estranged from Beauty - none can be -/For Beauty is Infinity" (1474). Dickinson insists that man must "discover" the fountain of his primordial spontaneity from within himself, for Truth is internal. Imagination, Beauty, Truth, Spontaneity - all are abstract words and are concretized within the human being. Within the Imagination every "form" of feeling or life is concrete and thus actualized. But this cannot be demonstrated empirically. When Dickinson talks about "Truth," she uses such expressions as "The Truth never flaunted a Sign -" (1207), "A Wisdom, without Face, or Name" (1104), "But Truth, outlasts the Sun -" (1455), "The Truth - is stirless -" (780), "And Truth - so manifold" (568), "Truth is good Health - and Safety, and the Sky" (1453), and

Truth - is as old as God -
His Twin identity
And will endure as long as He
A Co-Eternity -

And perish on the Day
Himself is borne away
From Mansion of the Universe
A lifeless Deity.

(836)

"Universe" is the creation of God. Creation is God's "identity." "Truth" being the "Twin identity" of God, it is integral with Creation itself: "A Co-Eternity." As long as there is Creation, there is Truth. Similarly, for the poet, "Truth" is his creation. The poet becomes his own God. This is as far as one can talk about "Truth" in terms of the poetic process. Poetry is creativity and not speculative philosophy. The only way it can speak is the way of "indirection." Art can tell the "truth" but obliquely. Hence Dickinson's advice:

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 -

(1129)

"The Truth's superb surprise" is dazzling. We are as yet "infirm" to behold its vision. We should not be impatient with it. We should learn it gradually and through the metamorphic process of some "explanation kind." The "Success" of poetic communication depends upon the circuitous (symbolic) manner of utterance. "Circuit" is Dickinson's synonym for "Circumference" which means Circle, the uroboric symbol for perfection, the round container of all opposites, the maternal womb where the masculine and feminine meet. The poetic utterance which contains Truth in it is the Mandala of human Consciousness, the Dawn of all Knowledge.⁶⁷

The culmination of poetic perception is symbolized by the "Dawn" which shows the beginning of Creation after the night of chaos. Poetic perception is "rebirth," in which all deaths and births are

syncretized. The function of the poet is to show us that "Dawn" which means the light of awareness. Thoreau adequately writes at the end of Walden:

The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us. Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star.⁶⁸

Emily Dickinson "awakens" us through her favourite metaphors of Sunrise, Day, Dawn, Morn, Morning, Noon, Aurora, and Apocalypse. In the creative sense "the break of Day" (13) is the blossoming of Consciousness. It is the "different dawn" when one finds "what one waked for" (87). The "Day" comes after "mist" in which "Some lose their way" (113). "Morning" stands for "Just revelation - to the Beloved" (300). "Two Dawns upon a single Morn,/Make Life a sudden price" (1610), says Dickinson.⁶⁹

The poet sacrifices "all" in order to awaken the mankind from its slumber of ignorance. This he does through and in the creative form of his art. The poet Dickinson makes her purpose clear in these verses:

If I could bribe them by a Rose
I'd bring them every flower that grows
From Amherst to Cashmere!
I would not stop for night, or storm -
Or frost, or death, or anyone -
My business were so dear!

(179)

The poet stops the human "Heart from breaking" (919), but, paradoxically, instils such "pain" as cannot be healed by "Herb of all the plain" (177). He teaches us the art of suffering, so that we may go beyond suffering. Without his insights, we will remain "Strangers, in a foreign World" (1096). From his "Pang," the poet creates "the Art of Peace" (544). He chooses "Maturity" "By Blossoms gradual process,"

and when ripe, he gives "away his Life/To Us" (567). He lends "an Ample Sinew/Unto a Nameless Man/Whose Homely Benediction/No other - stopped to earn" (767). His "Service" is "without Hope" of any "Reward" (779). He plans to "Advocate the Azure/To the lower Eyes" to meet the "obligation" of "Paradise" (1348). His only "price" is "That one should comprehend the worth" of "His Mind" which is like the "Fabrics of the East" (1446). But how the poet achieves his mission is conveyed by Dickinson in one of the finest leaps of her Imagination, the chief instrument of poetic Perception:

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 - (315)

The whole "movement" has been described very sensuously. To start with, the poet gropes at the human Soul, as if taking the initial steps of his journey to the Heart of Man. He shapes our fragile "Nature" by hammering it slowly, almost inaudibly, so that in the process we should be ready to bear the "burden" of his "full Music" as delicately as one does "the Ethereal Blow." "He stuns," but "by degrees," so that it should not cause any sudden breathing problem. Our "Breath" remains smooth and unhampered, and our "Brain" remains calm and "Cool." And then, once the poet has achieved this harmonious relationship with us,

he "Deals - One - imperial - Thunderbolt," Dickinson's symbolic instrument of "Light," the source of enlightenment and vision. In this moment, we become the instruments of the poet's destiny, though the poet "scalps" our "naked Soul." The whole process seems sexual: the poet is the masculine power trying to enter the feminine Soul. The Soul remains passive, in the paradoxical sense. The last two lines of the poem convey the ultimate truth of poetic perception: "When Winds," symbolizing the human Imagination, "take Forests," indicating here the bewildering nature of Reality, "in their Paws," in their gripping power, "The Universe - is still." The Process achieves stasis, Motion goes into Motionlessness, Sound becomes Silence--all merge into each other, and in a subtle sense, the Process continues: the consummation of sex is not its termination but a projection of fulfillment that grows beyond itself into the Womb which is our Home.

In the process of Perception, the poet becomes the "Other," he becomes us, his readers and critics. The reader must also become the poet, appropriate his role, and enact his vision. This is the way of literary criticism and not sentimentalism. The artist goes out of himself to create his perceptions. Similarly, the reader must also go out of himself to perceive the perceptions and re-create them, in order to make the enactment possible. But this is not easy; one must first "suffer" in order to reach the depths of a "broken heart" (1704). The literary critic should look for the poetic "sincerity" (1671) of the work, which is central to the poetic perception and poetic creation. Emily Dickinson demands of her readers and critics to "Step lightly" on her "Breast" which "These Emerald Seams enclose" (1183). She asks

her "countrymen" to "Judge" her "tenderly" (441), as one judges Life:

Surgeons must be very careful
When they take the knife!
Underneath their fine incisions
Stirs the Culprit - Life!

(108)

A perceptive reader of Emily Dickinson's poetry cannot help but remain in awe and wonder of the bewildering variety of her moods and postures through which she enacts the perplexing drama of her perceptions. Even after having said so much, I do not think that I have fully revealed the nature of that "perplexity" which she finds in her "baffled fingers" while bending "Low" at her "problem" of poetic creation (69). However, I have tried my own way; others must continue the task. It is in this spirit of inquiry that I propose to explore further in her several postures of Love, Death and Self, in the next three chapters of this study.

CHAPTER IV

LOVE: THE GARMENT OF FIRE

With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears.

Though Earth and moon were gone
And suns and universes ceased to be
And thou wert left alone
Every Existence would exist in thee

There is not room for Death
Nor atom that his might could render void:
Since thou art Being and Breath,
And what thou art may never be destroyed.

- Emily Brontë, "No Coward Soul Is Mine"

I should begin by saying that poetry of Perception is the poetry of Love, not only in the sense in which the poet creates his work as a "service" of Love (635), but also in the sense that both Perception and Love mean creativity: to love is to create. Love is that Action which Dickinson calls "redemption" (L726). It is a deed which cannot be theorized, for it springs from the Inwardness of the lover. It is the experience in which the finite and the infinite, the temporal and the eternal meet. It is a constant striving, a process of becoming what is Being. It is not a system, but a way of life which continually unfolds the myriad dimensions of human existence. Like poetry, it is ambivalent, and hence without result, without finality. It is a secret,

silent, lifelong pursuit of truth. Its mode of communication is not direct, because it resides in the spirit and aspires to God-relationship. The essential content of LOVE, its spiritual centre cannot be the subject of objective dialogue.¹ These attributes do not exhaust the inexhaustible character of Love, though they seem to describe its most crucial dimension--the God-Man dimension--through which the finite man apprehends his ultimate destiny, and apprehends it by persistent striving.

Emily Dickinson's aesthetics of Love which is central to her creative experience, is a poetic directive for man to realize his own destiny, and realize it through and in the "Prism" of Existence: the "Prism" symbolizes a constant movement, an endless "play" of "Hues" which are symbolic forms of human emotions, feelings and complex experiences (1602). As several colours are integrated in the "Prism," several moods and postures are syncretized in the structure of Love. In this sense, Love is Energy; it is Imagination to which alone all "forms" are possible. It is inclusive of the contradictory postures of self-surrender and self-assertion, search for Self and a search for the "Other," living in death and dying into life. It generates the opposing moods of woe and happiness, pain and pleasure, forgetting and remembering, bondage and freedom. It is sensuous, it is spiritual. It is absence, it is presence. It is fleeting, it is abiding. It is speech, it is silence. It is ignorance, it is wisdom. It is water, it is fire. It is dark, it is light. In its human form divine, it is male, it is female.

The above framework of reference is fundamental to our

understanding of the involute theme of Love in Dickinson's poetry, as it is necessary to our appreciation of the tradition in which eroticism merges with asceticism; where Eros is reconciled with Agape. The following pages will demonstrate this point of view.

Dickinson believes in "The Might of Human love" (1648), though she writes to Higginson: "Love is it's own rescue, for we, at our supremest, are but it's trembling Emblems" (L522). Ontologically speaking, Love demands total commitment, total energy, which few can offer:

Sometimes with the Heart
Seldom with the Soul
Scarcer once with the Might
Few - love at all.

In this posture, Dickinson considers "Might" as the chief source of Love: "Might" is inclusive of the "Heart" and the "Soul." Love is, then, the Power of a god, his compassion, which can "warm/The bosoms where the frost has lain/Ages beneath the mould" (132). "That love is life -/And life hath Immortality" (549). The long road of love passes "through pain" and "many a turn - and thorn -" (344). But "To wait Eternity - is short -/If Love reward the end" (781). Love imposes its own dangers and perils on existence. But "In insecurity to lie/Is Joy's insuring quality" (1434). Love is the inward bliss; each individual is uniquely aware of its value. Its loss can make a person utterly "alone," because it cannot be bought, "'tis not sold" (840). Its "presence" cannot be proved; it is "Tenderness" which "decreases as we prove" (860). "That Love is all there is,/Is all we know of Love" (1765), says Dickinson. "Love - is that later Thing than Death -/More previous - than Life -" (924):

Love - is anterior to Life -
 Posterior - to Death -
 Initial of Creation, and
 The Exponent of Earth -

(917)

Man can resolve within himself the contradictions of "Life and Death," the paradox of "The Foot upon the Earth" and "The Foot upon the Grave," if he is even "faintly" "Assisted of Love" (960). Love, even while keeping man tied to Earth, takes him "Beyond earth's trafficking frontier" (1435). It is highly paradoxical: it is "The Boon of all alive," but "To lack of it is Woe -/To own of it is Wound -" (1438). It is a "solemn nameless need," and "The only Food that grows" (1555). Dickinson considers "A face devoid of love or grace" as "A hateful, hard, successful face" (1711)--the word "successful" seems to have been used here sarcastically, implying the "end" of any possibility of growth.

The above-noted, widely scattered observations are enough to show Dickinson's deep understanding of the emotion of Human love. It is fairly obvious that Dickinson has an intensely "passionate" nature which impels her to shape her Vision of Love with more than religious enthusiasm. Love epitomizes her whole existence, for it is in Love that she experiences "death" and realizes her true Self. She is capable of giving abundantly in Love, because it is by giving that she receives. She writes to Susan Gilbert Dickinson:

. . . I think of love, and you, and my heart grows full and warm, and my breath stands still. The sun does 'nt shine at all, but I can feel a sunshine stealing into my soul and making it all summer, and every thorn, a rose. And I pray that such summer's sun shine on my Absent One, and cause her bird to sing! (L88)²

In a mood of perfect consecration, she writes to Otis P. Lord:

My lovely Salem smiles at me. I seek his Face so often -. . . .
 I confess that I love him - I rejoice that I love him - I thank the
 maker of Heaven and Earth - that gave him me to love - the exultation
 floods me. I cannot find my channel - the Creek turns Sea - at thought
 of thee -. . . .
 Incarcerate me in yourself - rosy penalty - threading with you this
 lovely maze, which is not Life or Death - though it has the intangi-
 bleness of one, and the flush of the other - waking for your sake
 on Day made magical with you before I went (L559).

However, it should be clearly understood that Dickinson's aesthetics
 of Love cannot be interpreted in terms of her personal relationship
 with any particular individual. She is known for the intensity of her
 feelings, and expression. She writes equally intensely to her brother
 Austin, her cousins Louise and Frances Norcross, her friends Dr. and
 Mrs. J. G. Holland, and several others. In a sense, she projects upon
 the recipients of her letters and poems, her inner drama of Love which
 is coeval with Poetry (1247). She writes to Dr. and Mrs. J. G. Holland:
 "My business is to love My business is to sing: (L269). Love
 is the mythic urge in man to realize his true Identity. The poet
 Emily Dickinson realizes her Identity and realizes it constantly,
 through her art. To love is to go back to the source of Creation:
 "Till it has loved - no man or woman can become itself - Of our first
 Creation we are unconscious," says Dickinson (L575). It is in this
 spiritual and primordial sense that Dickinson explores within herself
 the endless possibilities of Love, and concretizes her inner explora-
 tions in the form of her poems and letters. She writes to all those
 who are instrumental in the realization of her own Being. In this
 connection, Millicent Todd Bingham has aptly observed:

The Greeks imagined that the miracle of vision resided not in the eye

alone, but in the eye plus the object looked at; in other words, that certain rays emanate from the eye and, when they strike an object, it is seen. So it was with Emily Dickinson's genius. When she encountered a person who could precipitate an expression of her thought, could cause her feeling to crystallize in words, the release was for her a gift so royal that she could but adore the giver. Those who cherish the legend of a lifelong renunciation because of a broken heart in youth may prefer not to entertain the thought that her fidelity was not confined to one person. Faithful indeed she was; but faithful above all to her own integrity, to that power within her which, no matter how slight the stimulus, and it might be no more than an exchange of glances, could create a poem. To those persons who cling to the legend it can be said only that against a cherished belief, mere truth is a feeble antagonist. Be that as it may, and when all is said, explanations do not explain. Mystery remains, but it is the mystery of genius.³

Literary critics should resist the temptation of tracing "love affairs" in Dickinson's poetry which is primarily about Love. The poetic theme of Love has, strictly speaking, nothing to do with "love affairs" which "are more or less accidental episodes that happen between men and women," to use Gasset's expression.⁴ "Loving" as contrasted with "love affairs," "is perennial vivification, creation and intentional preservation of what is loved."⁵ The poet Emily Dickinson dramatizes only such a "process," her endless search for Love, in a variety of poses. That she is not interested in the earthly love for its own sake can be easily shown through interpretation of her poems. She is constantly striving to reach the condition of that Love "of which this (our) living world is but the shade" (PF41), and thereby, she is ever transmuting the reality of our existence.

Since the ultimate nature of Dickinson's quest of Love is psychic, it is difficult to treat her sex symbolism as a celebration of purely amatory urges of man. She might agree with sex being a

symbolic force that makes for rebirth and regeneration, but there is no trace in her poetry of merely phallic or physical love between man and woman. She does not glorify sex, as one finds in the novels of D. H. Lawrence. She has no sex vision of Whitman's "CHILDREN OF ADAM" and "CALAMUS" poems. In short, she has her own way of exploring the mythology of Love and she explores it in the plumbless abyss of her Heart. In the process of this inward journey, she experiences all forms of contradictory emotions, and by passing through a number of levels or phases of suffering and moral pathos, she appropriates and enacts the essential truth of Love. The levels or dimensions suggested here are integral and simultaneous; they are not mutually exclusive areas of human endeavour and commitment. Aesthetically, they represent three different but overlapping levels of Possibility, which may be described as External-Temporal Possibility, Internal-Immanent Possibility and Internal-Eternal Possibility—paradoxically, the former two levels of Possibility eventually converge to the last dimension of Possibility.

In the External-Temporal Possibility of Love, Emily Dickinson craves others to be "sure" and certain in their love of her (156), and herself oscillates between remembering and forgetting the "warmth" and "light" of love (47). She thinks of the reluctant partings with the objects of love (1614), and goes through the moral pathos and "pain" of having been forgotten (1683). In this state, she is "Love stricken" and heart broken (1368), and the strength of her own Love does not alleviate the despair caused by the loss of "The Loved" (882). She is conscious of the scars and tears of love (877), and still in sheer agony she pleads, " 'Just Once' Sweet Deity" (1076). She does not know

what to do "when the Summer troubles" or "when the Rose is ripe" (956). The whole experience summarizes man's craving for the intense but temporal moments of life, and consequently his sense of immediacy, transient enjoyment, and moral pathos. But, howsoever transitory this level of love or longing may be, it has its own function to perform. Man's sense of suffering and pain, howsoever transient, takes roots here and finally fructifies into what Unamuno calls the "tragic sense of life."⁶ It is through this tragic sense that man transcends human conditions, becomes greater and even more sorrowful. He realizes the fleeting and "indiscreet" nature of "Love" at this dimension (1771 and 1695) which I have called the External-Temporal Possibility. The pain of this Possibility persists, and ultimately compels man to be himself: man alone is burdened with the ontological responsibility to become himself, to become free.⁷ Freedom is the essence of Love; freedom is spontaneity and creativity. Though, paradoxically enough, the way of love is also the way of bondage, or to put it this way, the way of freedom lies through the way of bondage. Emily Dickinson shows perfect awareness of the Pain which is coexistent with Love:

You left me - Sire - two Legacies -
 A Legacy of Love
 A Heavenly Father would suffice
 Had He the offer of -

You left me Boundaries of Pain -
 Capacious as the Sea -
 Between Eternity and Time -
 Your Consciousness - and Me - (644)

The "lover" in the poem is no ordinary person. He is some divine personage who can bestow upon his beloved the gifts of "Love" and "Boundaries of Pain," which, if offered to God, would satisfy Him:

infinite love and infinite suffering are the prerequisites in man's relation to God. In this state, man's Consciousness of Himself and the divine lover, symbolic of God-Man relationship, expands from the limits of "Time" to the limitless "Eternity." It becomes as "Capacious as the Sea," the symbolic seat of life and death. This state belongs to Internal-Eternal Possibility which is a continual process. The one necessary step towards the appropriation of this Possibility is the consummation of Love between man and man, or between man and woman. Dickinson uses the spiritual love between man and woman or between man and man (the Internal-Immanent Possibility of Love) as a typology of God-Man relation, as our road to God lies through His Creation, to use Buber's insight.⁸ She poetizes this experience with rare candour and sincerity, while going through several symbolic postures and moods.

In the state of Internal-Immanent Possibility, Dickinson's poetry is deeply pervaded with sex symbolism of all sorts. But, as already pointed out, there is nothing of the sex for sex's sake in her vision of Love. Sex is the symbolic energy which impels man to go out of himself in order to fully discover himself. It is the source of longing as well as union; its secret, spiritual centre is the paradigm of man's fulfillment. Its mystery can never be told:

So bashful when I spied her!
 So pretty - so ashamed!
 So hidden in her leaflets
 Lest anybody find -

So breathless till I passed her -
 So helpless when I turned
 And bore her struggling, blushing,
 Her simple haunts beyond!

For whom I robbed the Dingle -
 For whom betrayed the Dell -
 Many, will doubtless ask me,
 But I shall never tell!

What seems, in our mundane terms, to be a perfect setting for rape and its aftermath, is the poetic drama of man's fulfillment presented in the poem in terms of its sexual symbolism. The reality which is both inside and outside man himself, is like the shy, beautiful, naked beloved whom the lover must possess, as the persona of the poem does. The "breathless," "helpless" beloved finally surrenders to the power of the lover, though she struggles and blushes in the process. Once she is possessed by the lover, her thoughts travel "beyond" the limits of normal perception. The sexual experience in itself is not the end of the human psyche, it is the means to the end. The end cannot be vocalized, it can be felt, or at best expressed metaphorically. "The incidents of love/Are more than its Events -" (1248), writes Dickinson. In the final stanza the beloved becomes "the Dingle" or "the Dell," symbolic of the valley of fertility and regeneration which man has to rob and cheat out of his vegetative existence. It is Dickinson's "whole Experiment of Green" (1333). "Robbed" and "betrayed" are images of Violence and power, effectively used to indicate that man requires spiritual energy in order to be in possession of his regenerated self which is his true identity, the source of God-Man relationship in time. For Dickinson, Love is "The peace - the flight - the Amethyst" of life (106): as flowers derive their colours from the Sun, man derives his "quality" from the fountain of Love. In Love, there is no "Repose," it is like "Tugging at the Forge" (109). It is the "Lightning" and the "Sunrise" which compel man to see: in this sense Love is Perception (480). It is that "Water" which if "denied to drink" would mean "condemned lip" (490). It is that "page" in a "letter" which the

lover-beloved cannot write, and which is ever silent and sealed in the Human heart (494). It has "but the power to kill,/Without - the power to die" (754). It comes "From Eminence remote" (1128). Its initial experience is "Alien, though adjoining/As a Foreign Race" (1219). "'Tis Glory's far sufficiency/That makes our trying poor" (1229). It grows like a hurricane" within the Human heart which is its "congenial ground" (1745). All these varied expressions show the depth and immensity of Dickinson's experience of Love.

Dickinson shows great insight into the mystery of the Human heart by playing the persona of the beloved-lover who is prepared to sacrifice all, in order to behold just the face of the loved object:

What would I give to see his face?
 I'd give - I'd give my life - of course -
 But that is not enough!
 Stop just a minute - let me think!
 I'd give my biggest Bobolink!
 That makes two - Him - and Life!
 You know who "June" is -
 I'd give her -
 Roses a day from Zanzibar -
 And Lily tubes - like Wells -
 Bees - by the furlong -
 Straits of Blue
 Navies of Butterflies - sailed thro' -
 And dappled Cowslip Dells - (247)

The Ecstasy and "Bliss" of beholding the "face" of the beloved is so complete in the lover that all sense of "life" and its prized possessions is obliterated in "just a minute." In another poem, the beloved is willing to pay all her "Diamonds," "Rubies," and "Topaz" for "just a single smile" of the lover (223). The lovers in Dickinson's poetry "feed upon each other's faces" (296). They even transcend "the mountain" of time, the "Pile of Years" by visualizing each other's faces (1507). In the poetic realm, looking at each other creates a psychic awareness

or Consciousness of the Human form divine, and it is precisely the lover-beloved's spiritual luxury:

The Luxury to apprehend
The Luxury 'twould be
To look at Thee a single time
An Epicure of Me

In whatsoever Presence makes
Till for a further Food
I scarcely recollect to starve
So first am I supplied -

The Luxury to meditate
The Luxury it was
To banquet on thy Countenance
A Sumptuousness bestows (815)

"Not in this World to see his face -/Sounds long" (418) to Dickinson.

In Dickinson's iconography, the "face" acquires a deep and meditative significance.⁹ The "face" of the beloved haunts and attracts her like the mystery of the East:

I'm sure 'tis India - all Day -
To those who look on You -
Without a stint - without a blame,
Might I - but be the Jew - (299)

It is "Sufficient Royalty" to appropriate the "face" of the "lover" or the "Master." "I look on all this world contains -/Just his face - nothing more" (663). The poet Dickinson plans to go out of Time with just that "face":

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 - (336)

She feels that the "future" life would be dull and uninteresting if she fails to "find" the "face" of her lover in her Redeemer:

The "Life that is to be," to me,
A Residence too plain
Unless in my Redeemer's Face
I recognize your own - (1260)

In a sense, she visualizes the "lover" as the "Redeemer," the rescuer of human "freedom." The subtle emotive nuances with which Dickinson describes the "face" of the human-divine lover remind me of one of the finest descriptions of the "face" of the beloved: it is Rilke's description of Merline's face, which I reproduce below:

That moment when you looked at me "like a girl." Your face all at once lost all expression, every kind, it abdicated, it rid itself of everything, of all complaisance, all amiability, all its habitual charm, it became quite dark, quite empty for the thousandth part of a second - and in that new space, which was a moment of creation, there was born, there arose that new light, oh, a light that neither man nor Angel will ever be allowed to describe, that only a child could conceive in the morning air of its most innocent summer day I saw that. From that moment, as far as life is concerned, I can die. Seeing your face transfigured by love, and all filled with that youthfulness, that virginity that had been preserved in you for the sake of dazzling me one day, - I realized that the sum of splendors exceeds by far the number of all the horrors and all the sufferings I have ever undergone Meditating on this the other day, a line recurred to me that I wrote long ago to Night, apostrophizing it:

You Darkness made of Light -

That is what your adorable face was like, surprised by a new radiation in the midst of its obscure transition: in the midst of its inmost seriousness, which was Youth, the splendour of all lives arose, - of all lives¹⁰

Face is surely the index of the soul. At any rate, internalization of the "face" of the lover-beloved is one of the many ways in which Dickinson realizes the fullness of Love. In the process of love, the poet Dickinson also undergoes the emotional experience in which one desires to minimize the distance between the lover and the beloved, and imagines the possibilities of merger of souls and not merely bodies. She believes that when human beings love with the spiritual love, "Distance" abates (1155). Physical love or the conjugal love without spiritual involvement generates separation and not fusion. "The Rose did caper on her cheek" (208) arrests the flux of both the physical and spiritual loves. In the physical love (External-Temporal Possibility)

the lovers are like "two troubled Clocks," whereas, in the spiritual love (Internal-Immanent Possibility), the lovers are no longer troubled, the "Clocks" "Softly" tick "into one." It is in the spiritual sense, the sense in which there is "rebirth," that she beckons her "lover," and sings:

Spring comes on the World -
 I sight the Aprils -
 Hueless to me until thou come
 As, till the Bee
 Blossoms stand negative,
 Touched to Conditions
 By a Hum. (1042)

Without the "lover," the "World" seems "Hueless," and the "Blossoms stand negative" even in the heart of the Spring. As the Flowers need the vitalizing song of "the Bee" in order to come to their true form and expression, the "beloved" needs the "presence" of the "lover" to feel life about her. The "lover" is the beloved's true source of regeneration and awakening. The "lover" is the "beloved's emanation: when "I" and "Thou" meet and form a Unity of sharing, the lover-beloved experience leads us to the primordial Wholeness of Being.¹¹ The posture of realization of Love or Self through the instrumentality of "relation" with the "Other" which is not non-self but more than self, in a paradoxical way, is characteristic of several of Dickinson's poems to be evaluated in this chapter. It is the I-Thou relationship, the core of human-divine merger, which characterizes the mood of the following poem:

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

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

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

(249)

The erotic symbolism of "Wild Nights" and "Our luxury" does not indicate a mere sex-urge. In symbology, Night stands for the feminine principle, the source of all creation. Night also stands for the darkness which precedes light; it is the matrix of fertility. The meeting of "I" with "thee" marks the ritual of creativity. In the consummation of this relation, the dangers of existence do not enter. Not that the perils of life cease to exist, they only cease to worry the lover-beloved. The "Winds" cannot strike "a Heart in port." The ship of Love moves on towards its destination without the aid of "the Compass" or "the Chart." It is like "Rowing in Eden," our primordial home, "the Sea" of all loves. Therefore the wish: "Might I but moor - Tonight -/In Thee!" Mooring "In Thee" is the culmination of Love, in the sense of Internal-Immanent Possibility. In this mood the lovers sing to each other:

Ours be the tossing - wild though the sea -
 Rather than a Mooring - unshared by thee.
 Ours be the Cargo - unladen - here -
 Rather than the "spicy isles -"
 And thou - not there -

(368)

Emily Dickinson's "Eden" is here and now, howsoever "slowly" it might "Come" to her (211). In love of "thee," she transcends all Time by experiencing it in the dynamism of the present moment:

Forever might be short, I thought to show -
 And so I pieced it, with a flower, now. (434)

"If you were coming in the Fall" (511) dramatizes Dickinson's power to while away the years, even "Centuries," in the presence of a possibility of her ultimate union with the "lover." She can even throw her life away, as one does the peel of fruit, or as the tree surrenders its bark, or as the snake leaves its skin, if she is "certain" of her final merger with the "lover":

If certain, when this life was out -
That yours and mine, should be
I'd toss it yonder, like a Rind,
And take Eternity - (511)

The throwing away of life is paradoxical, because by losing the peel, the bark, and the skin, the fruit, the tree, and the snake do not lose their Identity; rather, they achieve it. By losing life in love, one finds "Eternity." The process of love is both self-destroying and self-fulfilling. Keats' lines in Endymion can sum up this experience for us:

. . . there are
Richer entanglements, enthrallments far
More self-destroying, leading, by degrees,
To the chief intensity: the crown of these
Is made of love (l. 797-801)

Emily Dickinson's voice of longing which sounds through the expressions such as "I'm expecting you," "be with me" (1035), "Would you - instead of Me" (1094), "Not to see what we love, is very terrible" (L262), "I tend my flowers for thee -/Bright Absentee" (339), "Tie the Strings to my Life, My Lord" (279), and so on, should not be confused with the voice of earthly despair over the want of a lover only. Dickinson's voice is deep and subtle. Its music vibrates the endless variations on the theme of human-divine love. Dickinson sings the "Love terrene," "Love Marine," and "Love celestial" (1637) simultaneously.

Each love imposes its own type of Will upon the person who experiences it. But suffering and self-surrender are common to all forms of love, though they differ in degree and intensity in the varying levels of its Possibility. In the External-Temporal Possibility, suffering and self-surrender of the lovers is without any serious commitment and spiritual involvement; in the Internal-Immanent Possibility, suffering and self-surrender become a moral and spiritual necessity; and in the Internal-Eternal Possibility, suffering and self-surrender assume the form of a psychic force which shapes human lives according to its own inscrutable purpose. The suffering and the negation of self in the last two categories of Possibility are highly paradoxical: the "Woe" becomes the source of "Exultation" (1642), and the self-annihilation means Self-assertion. Dickinson's posture of suffering and self-negation belongs to the paradoxical realm, and shares the ambivalence of the categories just mentioned. In this posture, she is willing to give her "lover" "The Whole of" herself, the "last Delight" that she owns, and "Dwell timidly" with "him," though "he" may "Sift her, from Brow to Barefoot" "Before the Fire's Eyes" (275). She promises to remain "Obedient to the least command" that "his" eye might "impose" on her (429). She kneels before her lover whom she calls Teneriffe, the volcanic mountain, in a state of perfect resignation and stillness (666): she is constant and firm in her love, although the "Mountain" retreats to a little rest after the volcanic eruption. She is "a Dedicated sort" (273): she does not seem to mind the withdrawal of her "imperial" lover who once puts "the Belt" around her life, because for her it constitutes the "folding up" of her "Lifetime." She almost

pleads with the "lover," so that he might accept her, while she is aware that her love flows towards the lover in spite of his acceptance:

My River runs to thee -
 Blue Sea! Wilt welcome me?
 My River waits reply -
 Oh Sea - look graciously -
 I'll fetch thee Brooks
 From spotted nooks -
Say - Sea - Take Me! (162)

Water symbolism indicates constant flow and restlessness. Love, like Water, is the prime source of existence; it is the existence. Existence flows regardless of any cause outside itself. Therefore, "My River waits reply" is paradoxical. It can be a pose, or perhaps a sense of discipline, of the beloved-lover who does not want to look as if she-he is intruding upon the freedom of the "lover." But, then, there is no essential difference between the freedom of the River and the freedom of the Sea: Sea, River, Brook are all different names of the same being:

The Sea said "Come" to the Brook -
 The Brook said "Let me grow" -
 The Sea said "Then you will be a Sea -
 I want a Brook - Come now"! (1210)

The River and Sea are parts of the same process. The pleading of the River: "Oh Sea - look graciously" shows paradoxical humility. "Say - Sea - Take Me!" reveals the beloved's sense of surrender not to anything outside herself but to her own larger Identity. This paradox is fully revealed in the following poem:

In lands I never saw - they say
 Immortal Alps look down -
 Whose Bonnets touch the firmament -
 Whose Sandals touch the town -
 Meek at whose everlasting feet
 A Myriad Daisy play -
 Which, Sir, are you and which am I
 Upon an August day? (124)

In the "lands" of Imagination, the "Immortal Alps look down" with infinite love on "A Myriad Daisy," the persona of the beloved, who is meekly playing at their "everlasting feet." But, in the process of this love-play, both "the Alps" and the "Myriad Daisy" lose their separate identities. "Upon an August day," the day symbolizing the religious experience of lover-beloved union, it is hard to know whose bonnet touches "the firmament" and who plays at whose "everlasting feet." In the paradoxical state of self-negation, Dickinson also experiences the loss of the power of speech, which renders the lover-beloved relation silent, and hence beyond the realm of the worldly dialogue:

I taught my Heart a hundred times
Precisely what to say -
Provoking Lover, when you came
Its Treatise flew away (1449)

However, the Silence of the lovers is louder than the nearest noise; it speaks with great clarity, it is "the Teller's eye -" (619). It is the symptom of man's "Affection" (1681), it is "Infinity" (1251), it is "the awful sea" (506), it is Love's only mode of communication:

We talked with each other about each other
Though neither of us spoke -
We were listening to the seconds' Races
And the Hoofs of the Clock -
Pausing in Front of our Palsied Faces
Time compassion took -
Arks of Reprieve he offered to us -
Ararats - we took - (1473)

The meeting in which the lovers communicate "with each other about each other" through Silence is hallowed by the "Pausing" of ever-moving Time, the God of Creation and Destruction. Time takes compassion on the "Palsied Faces" of the lovers and offers them "Arks of Reprieve,"

meaning here "respite" from the continuous movement of Time. The "respite" here means a state of awareness in which the ever-creating, ever-destroying Time is properly perceived. The paradox implies that the lovers, in the depths of their own Silence, listen "to the seconds' Races," and thereby appropriate the mystery of ever-flowing Creation. The lovers accept the offer of Time, as Noah (Genesis 8.4) accepts the "Ararat" after the Biblical "Deluge" in which the "World" was "swept" away, in order to be re-created. In "The Winters are so short" (403), Dickinson intently remarks: "But Ararat's a Legend - now -/And no one credits Noah." Noah on the Ararat mountains, after the "Deluge" abates, symbolizes the continuing process, a continual end and beginning of creation.¹² The point I wish to make here is that when Time takes "compassion" on the Silent lovers, they perceive the mystery of Creation, or at least, the nature of the endless "process," and once they apprehend it, they earn "respite," they are no longer baffled by the phantasm of reality, they perceive reality itself. The poet, like the lovers, listens "to the seconds' Races," grapples with the illusion in order to know its true nature. Love, in this sense, is the whole Perception, and the act of Loving takes man back to the roots of Mythology. It is this Love which Paul Tillich designates as "a seeing love, a knowing love, a love that looks through into the depth of the Heart of God, and into the depth of our hearts."¹³

Emily Dickinson dramatizes the centrifugal movement of the human psyche through her art, and makes it possible for the perceptive readers to share with her the mythology of love. Dickinson's search for the "Other"--"He," "His," "Him," "You," "Thee," "Thou"--constitutes her initiation into Eros which is also Agape.¹⁴ She describes her

feeling for "You" in terms of her most opulent image, "East India" (202). She considers herself to be the "Brain of His Brain -/Blood of His Blood/Two lives - One Being - now" (246). The "lover" dawns upon her Consciousness as "Sunrise" which follows the "Night" of chaos (347): "I saw the sunrise on the Alps since I saw you" (L321). "My Heart ran so to thee/It would not wait for me" (1237). "He" is more than Life: "More Life - went out - when He went" (422). "His" presence gives her the feeling of being doubly alive:

How good - to be alive!
 How infinite - to be
 Alive - two-fold - The Birth I had -
 And this - besides, in - Thee! (470)

"For thee to bloom, I'll skip the tomb/And row my blossoms o'er!" (31), says Dickinson. The constancy of her love is comparable with the "Hills" and the "Sun," and her "passion" is like the unsatiable urge of the flowers for the "Dew":

Alter! When the Hills do -
 Falter! When the Sun
 Question if His Glory
 Be the Perfect One -

 Surfeit! When the Daffodil
 Doth of the Dew -
 Even as Herself - Sir -
 I will - of You - (729)

She becomes completely egoless in her love, and negates herself to the point where all polarities of existence seem resolved, or where the opposites are equally true. She tells her "lover":

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 - . . .

 So say - if Queen it be -
 Or Page - please Thee - [No stanza break]

I'm that - or nought -
 Or other thing - if other thing there be -
 With just this Stipulus -
 I suit Thee - (738)

To be in the company of the "lover" is to experience the "Grace" which can transform the beloved into the "fairest of the Earth," and for which "The Waiting" is worth:

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 - (968)

In the lover-beloved relation, physical distance does not enter: the real distance is of "The Will" and "not of Mile or Main" (863). The lovers constitute One identity which no distance can mar:

Nor separate, Herself and Me
 By Distances become -
 A single Bloom we constitute
 Departed, or at Home - (1037)

"The Realm of you" is the whole existence for Dickinson. She does not visualize any "Life" or "Death" beyond its vast space. There are no "Earths to come" or the "Action new," excepting those which can be realized within its own orbit (1398). This means to say that the "lover" comprehends all. The "Paradise" remains "fictitious/Until the Realm of you" (1260). To "own" this "Realm" or the "lover" is to experience "warmth as near as if the Sun/Were shining in your Hand," and without this there is "Affliction" (1568):

Perceiving thee is evidence
 That we are of the sky
 Partaking thee a guaranty
 Of immortality (1643)

Emily Dickinson cannot afford to lose the "Other" because without "him" "Emptiness/Is the prevailing Freight" (834). It is her "Mansion of Identity" (1689), in whose company she can survey "Infinity" and be

"face to face with Nature," and "face to face with God" (643). In one of her moments of scepticism and doubt in which Dickinson imagines to have been denied the privilege of being with her "lover," the human divine figure, she experiences helplessness, pathos, and the anxiety of remaining "in Everlasting Night." She grudgingly contemplates the rest of the world having an access to "Him":

I envy Seas, whereon He rides -
 I envy Spokes of Wheels
 Of Chariots, that Him convey -
 I envy Crooked Hills

That gaze upon His journey -
 How easy All can see
 What is forbidden utterly
 As Heaven - unto me!

(498)

But soon she realizes, as she almost invariably does, that the reality of her "lover" does not exist beyond herself. The "Other" is a part of one's self which exists outside one's self only in the paradoxical sense. Like God, the creation is both within and without the Self. The Fusion with something "outside" the Self is the symbolic drama which actually takes place inside the Self. However, the "Other" or the "Beyond" establishes the perspective through which man can realize the God-man relation. Without the "Other," the Self would have no meaning for humanity, though the pure subjectivity of the created being can be understood in terms of its own dynamism. (A discussion on pure Subjectivity will be offered in my chapter on Self.) Dickinson expresses the syncretistic structure of her Heart in which the "Other" or "Thee" is inevitably bound with herself, in these verses:

Empty my Heart, of Thee -
 Its single Artery -
 Begin, and leave Thee out -
 Simply Extinction's Date -

Much Billow hath the Sea -
 One Baltic - They -
 Subtract Thyself, in play,
 And not enough of me
 Is left - to put away -
 "Myself" meant Thee -

Erase the Root - no Tree -
 Thee - then - no me -
 The Heavens stripped -
 Eternity's vast pocket, picked - (587)

The "lover" is so inextricably fused in the very being of Dickinson that she describes him as the "single Artery" of her Heart, which, if left out, would mean her Extinction. The subtraction of "Thyself" from "Myself" is an impossibility. It is like the Billows in the Sea. As the "Tree" cannot exist without "the Root," the Self cannot exist without the "Other" which is its true Identity. "Neither would be a Queen/Without the Other" (458). "Where You were not -/That self - were Hell to Me," says Dickinson (640). The intensity with which Dickinson writes: " 'Myself' meant Thee" reminds me of Catherine's memorable words in Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights. Cathy describes her love for Heathcliff in these terms:

My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning; my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods. Time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees - my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath - a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I am Heathcliff - he's always, always in my mind - not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself - but, as my own being - so, don't talk of our separation again - it is impracticable; and -15

In ultimate terms, Dickinson, like Cathy, cannot make any distinction between herself and "Him," or I and Thee. To separate them would be like having the "Heavens stripped" or "Eternity's vast pocket, picked."

In another poem, she describes the mutuality of relationship in these authentic words:

But since We hold a Mutual Disc -
And front a Mutual Day -
Which is the Despot, neither knows -
Nor Whose - the Tyranny - (909)

"Disc" and "Day" are images of death and life; rather, death and rebirth. "Despot" and "Tyranny" are status symbols, indicating here the violent nature of the relationship. The images are consistent with the idea of self-assertion. For the opposite notion of self-negation, Dickinson compares herself to "a timid Pebble," and "Thee" to a "bolder Sea" (966). As death is integral with life, and self-assertion is one with self-negation, "thee" is a part of "Me." "Thee" cannot forget the Self:

To be forgot by thee
Surpasses Memory
Of other minds (1560)

The "I-Thou" drama of the Internal-Immanent Possibility of Love does not conclude here. Dickinson solemnizes the "relation" by wearing the symbolic garb of a "bride," by becoming the mythic "Wife," and by taking upon herself the "Crucifix" of God. This Possibility, however, can be realized only in the Human Imagination. Our mundane existence is too shallow to contain it. What life, in its External-Temporal Possibility, cannot offer, the Imagination bestows, and the artist can concretize the experience in the form of his art. This does not mean to say that Imagination or Art bypasses life in its temporality; rather, art is the way of experiencing the moral pathos, the fear and trembling of our everyday existence; the Imagination does not leave out anything, it contains all. In this sense, the great works of

Imagination are always deeply and truly Existential. Dickinson faces the predicament of her temporal situation boldly, and finally resolves the anxiety of bewildering contradictions of life in and through her art. The "marriage" which cannot become real in her ordinary life is actualized in the medium of her art. Dickinson the person is hesitant and suspicious about the I-Thou relationship, but Dickinson the poet shows infinite fidelity to its cause. The poetic fidelity or the poetic understanding of the I-Thou relationship does not mean the lack of human perspective; rather, it arises from a full awareness of the human context. As a very young person, almost ten years before she discusses herself as a poet, she writes to Susan Gilbert:

You and I have been strangely silent upon this subject, Susie, we have often touched upon it, and as quickly fled away, as children shut their eyes when the sun is too bright for them. I have always hoped to know if you had no dear fancy, illuminating all your life, no one of whom you murmured in the faithful ear of night - and at whose side in fancy, you walked the livelong day; and when you come home, Susie, we must speak of these things. How dull our lives must seem to the bride, and the plighted maiden, whose days are fed with gold, and who gathers pearls every evening; but to the wife, Susie, sometimes the wife forgotten, our lives perhaps seem dearer than all others in the world; you have seen flowers at morning, satisfied with the dew, and those same sweet flowers at noon with their heads bowed in anguish before the mighty sun; think you these thirsty blossoms will now need naught but - dew? No, they will cry for sunlight, and pine for the burning noon, tho' it scorches them, scathes them; they have got through with peace - they know that the man of noon, is mightier than the morning and their life is henceforth to him. Oh, Susie, it is dangerous, and it is all too dear, these simple trusting spirits, and the spirits mightier, which we cannot resist! It does so rend me, Susie, the thought of it when it comes, that I tremble lest at sometime, I, too, am yielded up. (L93)

The letter is revealingly frank. It portrays the paradoxical states of virginity and wedlock; it shows the longing to be "scathed" and ravished by the "mighty" "man of noon," and the fear of being "yielded up."¹⁶ We all know that in our experiential state there is no room for any resolution of the contradictory levels of emotion. Dickinson

knows it only too well. In the temporal state, she cannot be both married and remain virgin. Therefore, she does not choose to be "the plighted maiden." The "finitude" that a marriage can impose upon man and/or woman is the "danger" she is afraid of, though she is fearless towards the dangers of "infinity." Her "Choice" is soul-scathing and not merely body-scorching. The only way, then, to experience the heat of the "sunlight" and the peace of "the dew" simultaneously, is the way of the Imagination. Dickinson achieves the status of the Virgin-bride through the Aesthetics of Marriage, in which she can both possess and be possessed at once; in resolving the paradox, she becomes the paradox, and, thus, she enacts her part.

In her aesthetic vision, the true bridal ceremony is a mark of Baptism, an initiation into purity which confers equal "meekness" and "Pride" on the recipient (473). The ceremony takes place "Before the Judgment Seat of God" where the "Fleshless Lovers" meet, and are "Born - infinner - now" (625): the "Second Coming" or the "rebirth" becomes a "fact" in the "now" of the Imagination which is a continual process:

Dominion lasts until obtained -
Possession just as long -
But these - endowing as they flit
Eternally belong.

How everlasting are the Lips
Known only to the Dew -
These are the Brides of permanence
Supplanting me and you. (1257)

Worldly marriage which is an end-product of a certain institutional arrangement, which takes place and is forgotten, cannot interest these "Brides of permanence" whose "Dominion" is never "obtained." Their prize "Eternally" belongs to them because it comes and goes continually.

As the "Lips" of the Sun never tire of "the Dew," the "lovers" never grow weary of these "Brides." Their love is renewed with each morn.

Dickinson passes through the "pain" of "the Girl's life," and becomes "Wife" or "Woman" in the very special sense. She becomes "Two" in order to cross the "deep" of "Love" (453). She calls this change a "soft Eclipse," a state in which she can be oblivious of the ways of the Earth. She expresses her "new" status with authenticity: "I'm 'Wife'! Stop there!" (199). "Eclipse" symbolizes dark which is made of light. In another poem she describes the experience in terms of the images of "Daybreak," "Sunrise," "East," and "Victory," Her lover is now the "Savior" whose "face" she believes to have seen "before" (461). The religious overtones are integral with this aesthetic experience. When called upon to be the "Wife" of the human-divine lover, she renounces every other pleasure of her life:

She rose to His Requirement - dropt
The Playthings of Her Life
To take the honorable Work
Of Woman, and of Wife -

If ought She missed in Her new Day,
Of Amplitude, or Awe -
Or first Prospective - Or the Gold
In using, wear away,

It lay unmentioned - as the Sea
Develop Pearl, and Weed,
But only to Himself - be known
The fathoms they abide -

(732)

Dickinson, or the persona, undertakes the "honorable Work" of "Wifehood" with utter sense of dedication. She readily sacrifices the "Playthings of Her Life." And in "Her new Day," she does not miss anything of abiding character. She loses her finiteness in the "Amplitude" of her primordial Vision, symbolized here by the "first Prospective." The

"new Day," the dawn of Dickinson's perception, is also the source of her "Awe" and "Terror." The "Gold" symbolizes emanation or ascension through fire. Dickinson does not mention this "new Day" to anyone. She becomes more inward like the Sea where the "Pearl" and the "Weed" grow side by side. The mystery and the depths of the Sea abide, and they are known only to the "Lover" whom Dickinson appropriates in the poem. Sea is the symbol of creation and destruction; it is both water and fire. The "Fire ebbs like Billows" (291) in Dickinson's *Imagination*. The Pearl-Weed symbolism is parallel to the symbolism of the Sea in so far as the Pearl means the wanted and the Weed means the unwanted; both mean life and death. In terms of its symbolisms, then, the "Work" of "Wife" touches its ultimate dimension, the dimension of life and death. Dickinson describes the metamorphosis involved in this Love, in these verses:

The World - stands - solemner - to me -
 Since I was wed - to Him -
 A modesty befits the soul
 That bears another's - name -
 A doubt - if it be fair - indeed -
 To wear that perfect - pearl -
 The Man - upon the Woman - binds -
 To clasp her soul - for all -
 A prayer, that it more angel - prove -
 A whiter Gift - within -
 To that munificence, that chose -
 So unadorned - a Queen -
 A Gratitude - that such be true -
 It had esteemed the Dream -
 Too beautiful - for Shape to prove -
 Or posture - to redeem! (493)

The "marriage" with "Him" transforms Dickinson's World-view. By analogy, everything in the "World" seems sacred. The carrying of the name of the "lover" as a sign of one's Identity expresses the humility of the beloved's soul. It is through this humility, the process of

self-effacement, that the beloved can "wear that perfect - pearl," the symbol of creation, which "The Man - upon the Woman - binds." The whole picture of "binding" seems erotic, but it is that Eros which clasps the "soul." The love act becomes a kind of "prayer," an angelic act of creativity. This is what Dickinson calls "A whiter Gift - within," the gift of revelation, symbolic of the illumination of Daylight. That is why she says: "A solemn thing - it was - I said -/A woman - white - to be -" (271). She regards this "Gift" as a splendidly generous act of the Lover before whom she perpetually humbles herself by calling herself "unadorned." There is no limit to her Gratitude for the Lover who has fulfilled her "Dream" which is "Too beautiful - for Shape to prove -/Or posture - to redeem!" However, her sense of humility and gratitude is paradoxical. She is proud but fully aware of the spiritual implications of her role as a divine beloved:

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?

(1072)

The "whiter Gift - within" entitles Dickinson to be a divine personage. She is the "Wife," but without any outward "Sign." The whole experience of being the divine beloved is summed up in the words "Acute Degree," signifying a sense of intense involvement and suffering,

legitimate enough in the Internal-Immanent Possibility, as well as the Internal-Eternal Possibility of Love. She becomes the "Empress of Calvary," symbolizing the agony of the Crucifixion and the paradox of redemption. Her "Royalty" is without the "Crown." She is "Betrothed," but without the happy "swoon" of a "plighted maiden." The total lack of the outward symbols of her status makes it perfectly clear that the process being described is spiritual. Holding "Garnet to Garnet - /Gold - to Gold" symbolizes the psychic drama of going through the "Forge"--both Garnet and Gold symbolize passion and fire, in this case not the consuming fire but the consummating "fire." God creates "Women" in order to perpetuate the feminine principle of creativity on earth. But it is by going through the "fire" of the spirit that one can realize the "Tri Victory" of being "Born - Bridalled - Shrouded -" at once. It is through the "fire" that Dickinson perceives the mystery of birth, love, and death. Her "marriage" is far more daring and abiding than the customary marriages in which women call their social lovers by the label "My Husband." Dickinson asks if "this" is "the way" of fulfillment. Can man or woman achieve redemption within the confines of social institutions? The answer to this question is fully stated in terms of the metaphors of her poetry.

Dickinson's art is the art of "suffering." She apprehends the mystery of human-divine Love through the symbol of the Cross. "Each" must bind "the Other's Crucifix," and realize the "new Marriage" "through Calvaries of Love" (322). With "such a Crucifical sign," she enters her "new" Jerusalem, and captures the love experience in all its primordial sensuousness:

He touched me, so I live to know
 That such a day, permitted so,
 I groped upon his breast -
 It was a boundless place to me
 And silenced, as the awful sea
 Puts minor streams to rest

(506)

In her Love-Vision, "silence" and "death" are integral with the totality of the experience. The pattern of "death" is that of the "Tapestries of Paradise" which are made "So notelessly" (278). "I cannot live with You" (640) captures fully the paradox of Death: the death of the "lover" and his consequent resurrection which Dickinson calls "That New Grace." "I cannot live with You" and "I could not die - with You" stage the continually unfolding drama of living in death and dying into life. There is no "end" in sight, and Dickinson prefers it that way. Superficially the situation might mean as indicating the impossibility of attainment or the lack of fulfillment, or some other type of doom or failure in love, but in reality it is the very nature of the "process" to remain "incomplete" and thereby enhance its everlasting possibility. Dickinson tells her "lover":

So We must meet apart -
 You there - I - here -
 With just the Door ajar
 That Oceans are - and Prayer -
 And that White Sustenance -
 Despair -

(640)

As long as the "Door" of Perception remains "ajar," the "We" will continue to contain the "You" and the "I," the "here" and the "there." As the "Oceans" subsume the distance between life and death, the "Prayer" which is the true act of Love, will keep the "lovers" "together" though physically "apart." In this state of being, "Despair" which is the "White Sustenance" and not some earthly anguish over the

loss of a beloved or a lover, is the divine condition: "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22), because "we are appointed to afflictions" (I Thessalonians. 3:3). This "Despair," or this "Love" constitutes Dickinson's Internal-Eternal Possibility of Love. This is the "Grace so unavoidable -/To fail - is Infidel" (387). The mere thought of its departing "Afflicts" her "with a Double loss": " 'Tis lost - And lost to me -" (472). It is also the "Guilt" which is perennial: to be "Guilty" in Love is to internalize Love as an endless possibility, because its roots are eternal:

Such Guilt - to love Thee - most!
 Doom it beyond the Rest -
 Forgive it - last -
 'T was base as Jesus - most! (394)

The "Guilt" and the "mystery" of Love cannot be apprehended by everyone, though it is "possible" to anyone. It is the "secret" which God calls "Eternity":

Love - thou art Veiled -
 A few - behold thee -
 Smile - and alter - and prattle - and die -
 Bliss - were an Oddity - without thee -
 Nicknamed by God -
 Eternity - (453)

"Eternity" is continuity; therefore, love's "dying" does not mean the end. Love "smiles" again and again, and "smiles" in the "Circumference" which is Dickinson's "business." Love is Dickinson's "Diadem" which is continually being "fitted" to the "Dome" of her poetry:

'Tis little I - could care for Pearls -
 Who own the ample sea -
 Or Brooches - when the Emperor -
 With Rubies - pelteth me -

 Or Gold - who am the Prince of Mines -
 Or Diamonds - when have I
 A Diadem to fit a Dome -
 Continual upon me - (466)

The images and the metaphors of "Pearls," "the ample sea," "Diamonds," "Diadem," and "Dome" adequately describe Dickinson's poetic strategy of realizing the interpenetrating relations between love and death, death and self, self and poetry, and so on.

The spiritual eroticism or the sexless Eros of her poetry is the basis of her awareness of God-Man's Agape. Poetry dramatizes for Dickinson all the possibilities of love and suffering. The poet must love his Art-God as Abraham loved God. The "Tyranny" of God-Art is paradoxical; it is the test of love. If the poet is willing to sacrifice his dearest earthly possession for the sake of his vocation, as Abraham is willing to sacrifice Isaac (1317), his destiny becomes an "actualized" possibility. Suffering in the eternal sense is the prerequisite for the "Coronation" of Love or Poetry, which surpasses all other Crowns (356). Even God who "is a distant - stately Lover," loves us "as He states us - by His Son," a paradigm of suffering and sacrifice (357). The death of Jesus on the Cross is the supreme example of God's Agape. As Anders Nygren writes, "Apart from the Cross we should never have known God's love and learnt its depths of meaning" ¹⁷ God's love for man, then, should be understood as a typology of man's own love for his fellow-men through whom alone can he reach God, and love Him in concreto. The typology of Jesus on the Cross would serve man, thus, with a pattern of his own suffering and consecration, his love and death. Dickinson's poetry portrays this typology in a variety of ways. She emphasizes the role of man's suffering in his search for the primordial "Land" which is the true source of the mystery of love, death and self:

Far from Love the Heavenly Father
 Leads the Chosen Child,
 Oftener through Realm of Briar
 Than the Meadow mild.

Oftener by the Claw of Dragon
 Than the Hand of Friend
 Guides the Little One predestined
 To the Native Land.

(1021)

"Far from Love the Heavenly Father/Leads the Chosen Child" presents a contrast with the God of the New Testament, who according to Pauline theology is all-embracing Love. The Calvinistic tones are too obvious to be overlooked. But poetry is not theology or religion in the commonly accepted sense of the words. Ontologically, the "Realm of Briar" and the "Claw of Dragon" are essential to the realization of the "Native Land," symbolizing man's primordial Consciousness, the fountain of his being. By contrast, the Love of the "Heavenly Father," the "Meadow mild," and the "Hand of Friend" can prove as impediments on the journey towards the "predestined," inner spring. The paradox that a life of hardships achieves its fulfillment more easily than a life of comforts is brought out very well. The purpose is not to show any want of Love in the "Heavenly Father." The idea is that God prescribes the way of "thorns" on which alone can one find "roses." It is by passing through the "Claw of Dragon," symbolizing here "fire" and chastity, that one can be truly born. In Dickinson's poetry, God himself is paradoxical. He is both "attached" and "detached": He is near, He is far; He is compassion, He is Indifference; He is jealous, He is generous. In His "Compassion"

The Himmaleh was known to stoop
 Unto the Daisy low -
 Transported with Compassion
 That such a Doll should grow

[No stanza break]

Where Tent by Tent - Her Universe
Hung out its Flags of Snow -

(481)

The "Himmaleh" is the Indian mountain range called Himalayas or Himalayan passes. Himalaya literally means the home of Snow (Him = Snow and alaya = home). It is the abode of Shiva, an embodiment of eternal dissolution and recreation of all life, and from whose locks the sacred river Ganga flows.¹⁸ Dickinson's use of the word "Himmaleh" brings out most of its mythic connotations. In this poem, "Himmaleh" is pure "Compassion" which means creativity. But "Her Universe" carries the "Flags of Snow" which symbolize death and destruction. When "Himmaleh" shows compassion to the "low" Daisy and lets it "grow" in the heart of death, it is fulfilling the creative-destructive-recreative role of Shiva himself. It is interesting that Dickinson calls "Himmaleh's" expanse "Her Universe," recognizing the fundamental nature of Creation as feminine. Shiva himself is known as Ardhanari, half male, half female, symbolizing the androgynous body of the World. When God's "compassion" takes the form of "indifference," "you cannot see" Him, though "His House - is but a Step -" from yours, and when yours is "in Heaven" (487). In this sense, he is both far and near. God loves man's infinite suffering and endeavour, and He rewards those who live in death:

Victory comes late -
And is held low to freezing lips -
Too rapt with frost
To take it -
How sweet it would have tasted -
Just a Drop -
Was God so economical?
His Table's spread too high for Us -
Unless We dine on tiptoe -
Crumbs - fit such little mouths -
Cherries - suit Robins -

[No stanza break]

The Eagle's Golden Breakfast strangles - Them -
 God keep His Oath to Sparrows -
 Who of little Love - know how to starve - (690)

God's love comes, though late, to those whose "lips" are "freezing" in death, presented here in the metaphor of "frost." The poet surmises the sweetness of the "Drop" of Love and almost regrets the inability of the dying persons to taste it then. The question involved here is not so much about the revival of the dying as it is of the proximity of love and death. Death has been shown very vividly and feelingly: the lips are freezing, they are not frozen as yet. It is an experience of death-in-life. The last seven lines are attempting to answer the question, "Was God so economical?" In Dickinson's vision, God's "Table's spread too high for Us." We should "dine on tiptoe," signifying that we should undergo every extremity to taste even a few "Crumbs." Passion begets passion: the scarlet-Cherries suit the red-breasted Robins; "The Eagle's Golden Breakfast" is too much for their little mouths. The entire symbolism implies that man should have intensity and insight to match the "light" of God. The image of food on the dining table indicates energy, as food stands for creativity and fertility. Robins, Eagles, and Sparrows are Dickinson's symbols of Imagination and visionary flights, as all birds pertain to the Air, symbol of the creative processes of life. Man, like Sparrows, should know "how to starve" of "little Love." If man craves God's love as he craves food and breath, he will get it, and get it by starving for it. In its ontological dimension the poem seems to resolve the paradox of God's love for man and man's love for God. The poem suggests a two-way traffic: God's love flows, but man must exert

and struggle for it on his "tiptoe." In a highly religious sense, God alone or man alone are meaningless entities: one without the other sounds absurd. Nicolai Berdyaev has beautifully summed up the relationship between God and Man, or between Man and God:

All the complexity of religious life, the meeting and communion of God and man, is linked with the fact that there are two movements, and not one: from God toward man, and from man toward God. If religious life was based upon only the one movement from God toward man, only upon the will of God, and only upon revelation by God, it would be quite simple, the attainment of the purposes of life in the world would be easy, it would be easy to realize the Kingdom of God. Then there would be no world tragedy. But the birth of man in God, man's answer to God, cannot concern God alone; it is man's affair, a matter of man's freedom. By the nature of God as infinite love, by God's purpose in creation, the Kingdom of God cannot be realized without man, without man's participation in creation. Autocracy in heaven is quite as unjust as on earth. The Kingdom of God is the kingdom of Divine-humanity, in it God is finally born in man and man in God, and this is accomplished in the Spirit [Freedom, 11, pp. 16-17].¹⁹

The poet, of all the created beings, fully participates in the creation of God. He participates not only by watching God's creation, or by being a part of it, but by enacting it in his own medium, by being perpetually haunted by it. He suffers for himself, and vicariously suffers for us all. By becoming the paradigm of Christ, the God-Man, he experiences love and death simultaneously. He loves abundantly, and loves even when there is no response:

So well that I can live without -
 I love thee - then How well is that?
 As well as Jesus?
 Prove it me
 That He - loved Men -
 As I - love thee -

(456)

In this posture, Dickinson belongs in the Internal-Eternal Possibility of Love. This is a completely self-effacing Love, in which the poet loves without the object of love, in a selfless manner, as Jesus "loved Men." This love is far above the realm in which the Bride "slips away"

from the marriage bed (518); in which the Housewife performs her "gentle Task" of seeing if the "Blinds" are fast, and getting "closer to the fire" (589); in which the Wife is "Keeping house," and her "little cottage" is no short of a "grave" beyond which she hopes for "everlasting life" with her lover-husband (1743); and in which Marriage means the "contract of a Life," and love is just the "Sweet Debt of Life - Each Night to owe" but "Insolvent - every Noon" (580). This love means man's ultimate destiny which involves his "death." It is necessary to die, to be dead to the world's worldliness, in order to be able to love like a god. In order that we should possess the sensibility of "holier love," we must first pass through the ordeal of the "wheel of fire."²⁰

Emily Dickinson's aesthetics of Love is also the aesthetics of Death. Fire and Water, Life and Death are infinitely fused in her Vision. She expresses this cohesive insight with a subtle sense of pathos and dignity: "All this and more, though is there more? More than Love and Death? Then tell me it's name!"²¹ Death haunts Dickinson in many paradoxical ways. In the paradigm of God-Man, the Jesus Christ, she sees death as a necessary correlative to Love. In daily life, she visualizes death as an intruding instrument which intensifies life and increases our appreciation of what is mortal. She writes to Mrs. Mack: "A friend is a solemnity and after the great intrusion of Death, each one that remains has a spectral pricelessness besides the mortal worth" (L940). She writes to Higginson: "Perhaps Death - gave me awe for friends - striking sharp and early for I held them since - in a brittle love - of more alarm, than peace" (L280). Death augments her love for the dead a "Hundred fold" (482). Death

and sacrifice are surely at the heart of Love. But Love creates as he destroys. The great Daemon is the ever-dying, ever-reviving god. The relationship between love and death, creation and destruction, can be easily discerned in the symbology of the sex act.²² In the context of Love, then, Death means a point of view, an awareness, a perspective in which the "lover" transcends the limitations of mortality, and not mortality itself. He tastes of the infiniteness of being while living in the finiteness of non-being. Love confers a sense of "Immortality" upon the lovers:

Unable are the Loved to die
For Love is Immortality,
Nay, it is Deity -

Unable they that love - to die
For Love reforms Vitality
Into Divinity. (809 and L305)

The "prize" of Love is "Vast" even "in its fading ratio/To our penurious eyes" (88). The "Grave" comes slowly to the "Lover," and the delay caused by love "Outvisions Paradise" (577). Fading in Love is to Fade "unto Divinity" (682). In the "Dying eye" of the lover-beloved, there are only "Two Armies, Love and Certainty/And Love and the Reverse" (831). But, whatever that might entail, the lovers must "bend as low as Death," because "Christ - stooped until He touched the Grave" (833):

Till Death - is narrow Loving -
The scantest Heart extant
Will hold you till your privilege
Of Finiteness - be spent - (907)

Dying is the prerequisite towards a Life of Love. The experience of dying, "The dying multifold - without/The Respite to be dead" (1013) enhances our perception of Love. Dickinson says:

No Service hast Thou, I would not achieve it -
 To die - or live -
 The first - Sweet, proved I, ere I saw thee -
 For Life - be Love - (961)

Self-abnegation should be so complete in the "Service" of Love that living and/or dying should cease to matter. Love, then, becomes Life and Life becomes Love. Death dies into Life. The "Steadfast Heart" of Love can bear itself "through the Tomb" (1597):

Love is like Life - merely longer
 Love is like Death, during the Grave
 Love is the Fellow of the Resurrection
 Scooping up the Dust and chanting "Live"! (491)

To achieve that condition of Love in which Death ceases to hurt, as it does in our limited perception, one has to brave the storms and surges of existence. Man must fathom the heart of darkness and say to himself: "I will love," "While Oceans - and the North must be -/On every side of mine" (631). Dickinson shows rare strength of character when she writes:

Affliction would not be appeased -
 The Darkness braced as firm
 As all my stratagem had been
 The Midnight to confirm -

No Drug for Consciousness - can be -
 Alternative to die
 Is Nature's only Pharmacy
 For Being's Malady - (786)

By bracing the "Darkness" and confirming the "Midnight," one can experience the genesis of "light" and the "Dawn." Darkness contains "light," and the "Midnight" is the time between night and morning, or death and life. This experience is the source of Consciousness, which no "Drug" can provide. Dickinson seems to be addressing the drug-addicts of today. The psychedelic drugs like Marijuana and LSD can never provide cure "For Being's Malady."²³ There is no "Alternative"

to man's death; he must meet it in the abyss of his own Being by the stairway of Love. Dickinson is ever ready to meet the dangers of existence. Her life is like "a Loaded Gun -" (754). She dares: "Amputate my freckled Bosom!/Make me bearded like a man," and she wears the " 'Thorns' till Sunset" and then puts her "Diadem" on (1737). This is how she knows that after the "midnight frosts" there is always the "morning sun" (205). She is not deterred by Death; rather, she "plays" and loves it as one loves the "Wound" which serves as a reminder of itself and the "Withdrawn Delight" of Love:

Rehearsal to Ourselves
Of a Withdrawn Delight -
Affords a Bliss like Murder -
Omnipotent - Acute -

We will not drop the Dirk -
Because We love the Wound
The Dirk Commemorate - Itself
Remind Us that we died.

(379)

Death in this poem does not end the "Delight" of Love. Paradoxically, it perpetuates the "Delight" by way of the "Wound." The mere "Rehearsal," in this case, a "re-play" of the scene to Ourselves, in which the "Delight" was "Withdrawn," "Affords a Bliss like Murder." It affords "Bliss" because this "Murder" or killing is not ordinary. It is "Omnipotent" and "Acute," it is infinitely powerful and intense. It celebrates itself eternally in the Human memory. "We will not drop the Dirk -/Because We love the Wound" establishes a posture of authentic living: life which is not conscious of its death cannot love itself. We cannot afford to "drop the Dirk," because without death there is no life. Death is the intensity of awareness. Lovers prove it:

They summoned Us to die -
 With sweet alacrity
 We stood upon our stapled feet -
 Condemned - but just - to see -

Permission to recant -
 Permission to forget -
 We turned our backs upon the Sun
 For perjury of that -

Not Either - noticed Death -
 Of Paradise - aware -
 Each other's Face - was all the Disc
 Each other's setting - saw - (474)

In Love, Death becomes the organ of Perception. Even when the lovers are "Condemned" to die, they show cheerfulness on their faces, and do nothing but see. They turn their "backs upon the Sun," symbolic of Life, and do not agree to "recant" for its sake, for they understand the falsehood of existence without love. They do not even notice "Death" when it comes. They are lost in "Each other's Face" and are "aware" of the "Paradise" of Love. They see "Each other's setting" in their hearts only, represented here by their "faces." Death becomes the instrument of Love. When Life fails to convince the "Lover" of the beloved's love, Death proves helpful. Dickinson dies as a proof of her Love, though Death cannot diminish the power of her sight with which she sees her lover till the end:

The River reaches to My Breast -
 Still - still - My Hands above
 Proclaim with their remaining Might -
 Dost recognize the Love?

The River reaches to my Mouth -
 Remember - when the Sea
 Swept by my searching eyes - the last -
 Themselves were quick - with Thee! (537)

The "River" and "Sea" of Death are also the "River" and "Sea" of Life. When the "River" overflows with death, Love makes the "eyes," the doors

of perception, "quick." The "Hands," which are indicators of man's spiritual life, also remain above death. Death does not interfere with Love which is Imagination. Love's "Magnitude" requires the "Services of Snow," symbolizing death (914). "The Test of Love - is Death -/Our Lord - 'so loved' - it saith -" (573). "So give me back to Death -/The Death I never feared," demands Dickinson (1632). For Dickinson, Death means death-in-life or life-in-death:

. . .
In my own Grave I breathe
And estimate its size -
Its size is all that Hell can guess -
And all that Heaven was - (1632)

The image of breathing in one's own "Grave" signifies man's unconscious or psychic desire to go back to the primordial womb which subsumes both "Heaven" and "Hell," the ultimate dimensions of man's experience. From this perspective, "Death" and "Darkness" are viewed as "Life" and "Light." One who attains the possibility of this experience, sees "better - in the Dark":

I see thee better - in the Dark -
I do not need a Light -
The Love of Thee - a Prism be -
Excelling Violet -

I see thee better for the Years
That hunch themselves between -
The Miner's Lamp - sufficient be -
To nullify the Mine -

And in the Grave - I see Thee best -
Its little Panels be
Aglow - All ruddy - with the Light
I held so high, for Thee -

What need of Day -
To Those whose Dark - hath so - surpassing Sun -
It deem it be - Continually -
At the Meridian? (611)

In the deep "Dark" of the psyche, Love is the "Prism," a structure of "lights" which excels even Violet, the symbol of the unattainable Passion. Love throws Time into relief and the "Years" gain in perspective. They shine as the "Miner's Lamp" which nullifies the darkness of the cave, or which liberates man from the ignorance of his closed mind. Love's Grave is all "Aglow." Its walls are red with life. Love's "Dark" is that "Sun" which surpasses even the light of "Day," and it shines "Continually -/At the Meridian," symbolizing the zenith of one's Consciousness which in itself is the splendid circle of light. When "Death" and "Dark" become "Life" and "Light," there is nothing more to experience, excepting that one has to continue experiencing them, and continue in the perfect Silence of the Heart which is the source of man's being and freedom. Dickinson dives deep into the Silence and writes: "The time was scarce profaned, by speech -/The symbol of a word/Was needless, as at Sacrament," and "Each was to each The Sealed Church" (322). In her love, there is "no answer of the Tongue/But answer of the Eyes -" (1053). She considers that

"Speech" - is a prank of Parliament -
 "Tears" - a trick of the nerve -
 But the Heart with the heaviest freight on -
 Doesn't - always - move - (688)

She believes that man's real wars are fought within his Heart:

To fight aloud, is very brave -
 But gallanter, I know
 Who charge within the bosom
 The Cavalry of Woe - (126)

For Dickinson, the Courage-to-die is the Courage-to-be. Love, Death, and Silence are the spires on which she builds her Being, her Self, her Freedom. Even the "little Toil of Love" is "large enough"

for her being (478). Her whole existence is a process of fulfillment and not some cheap satiety. For her, "cooler than the Water" is "The Thoughtfulness of Thirst" (818). She learns from "Time," by "the lower Way," the way of suffering and deep feeling, "That Life like This - is stopless -/Be Judgment - what it may -" (463). Love teaches her the art of Freedom, though she seems to be in bondage.

She tells her lover:

Where Thou art - that - is Home -
Cashmere - or Calvary - the same -
Degree - or Shame -
I scarce esteem Location's Name -
So I may Come -

What Thou dost - is Delight -
Bondage as Play - be sweet -
Imprisonment - Content -
And Sentence - Sacrament -
Just We two - meet -

(725)

The poem, like Love, is free. It does not need explaining. "Love reckons by itself - alone . . . Itself is all the like it has -" (826).

Love, Poetry and Being are free in their own bondage; they cannot be bound by anything outside themselves. Dickinson sings:

Bind me - I still can sing -
Banish - my mandolin
Strikes true within -

Slay - and my Soul shall rise
Chanting to Paradise -
Still thine.

(1005)

Love transforms the poet, and the poet changes into endless forms. He becomes what he sees: the Flower, the Bee, and the Spider, and ushers in true Liberty:

I said "But just to be a Bee"
Upon a Raft of Air
And row in Nowhere all Day long
And anchor "off the Bar"

What Liberty! So Captives deem
Who tight in Dungeons are.

(661)

The "Raft of Air," symbolic of both water and Air which are the sources of creativity and Imagination, takes the Bee-poet in the sea of "Nowhere." The poet-Bee's boat rows there "all Day long." The abstraction of "Nowhere" contains within itself the concretion of Now and here, the roots of poetic creation. The boat of poetry or Love anchors "off the Bar," signifying its unbounded character. The poet, then, is a free being, moving in the vision of "Day" without any "Bar." This movement constitutes true "Liberty" which the "Captives" of the "Dungeons" can only think about. Dungeons symbolize the caverns of the human mind which is tied down to earth's earthliness. The poet also lives in the now and here of Time and Space, but, paradoxically, he is beyond spatio-temporal reality. At will, he can go from now and here to "Nowhere," and vice versa. The poet's freedom lies in his captivity, in the captivity of the womb-tomb, the source of love, life and death, or death, life and love:

This Chasm, Sweet, upon my life
I mention it to you,
When Sunrise through a fissure drop
The Day must follow too.

If we demur, its gaping sides
Disclose as 'twere a Tomb
Ourself am lying straight wherein
The Favorite of Doom.

When it has just contained a Life
Then, Darling, it will close
And yet so bolder every Day
So turbulent it grows

I'm tempted half to stitch it up
With a remaining Breath
I should not miss in yielding, though
To Him, it would be Death -

And so I bear it big about
 My Burial - before
 A Life quite ready to depart
 Can harass me no more -

(858)

The poem is extremely rich in meaning. It seems to be the culmination of the drama of Love, Death, Silence, Being and Freedom, not only of the poet but of the entire humanity. Its symbolism is complex. But, it is interesting to note that the whole process has been described, as it should be, in terms of the feminine-erotic imagery. The sexual connotations are only too obvious. However, I shall try to present it in the context of its many nuances of thought and feeling. The "Chasm" is the female vaginal tract. It is also the "depth" of the human psyche. "Sunrise through a fissure drop" indicates the entry of the male energy or sperm through the mouth of the vagina into the womb. It also indicates the dawn of Consciousness or vision through the cleavage in the brain. "The Day must follow" suggests the inevitable conception and birth of a child, as well as high noon or the fruition of the human spirit. The womb, thus, becomes the matrix of our Consciousness. But, as soon as we "demur" or raise questions, the "gaping sides" of the womb start forming the structure of a "Tomb." The human Consciousness looks like a death-pit with all its Dionysian horrors. As the sex act means the merger or death of the separate identities into "Ourself am," the Consciousness is the integrating force which annihilates distinctions and polarities. In this sense, it is the "Favorite of Doom." Both womb and Consciousness, once they are pregnant with Life, "close" to the external pressures. But, inside them, Life grows "turbulent" and "bolder" "every Day." Consciousness blossoms like the child in the womb and strikes the walls of man's

whole being, as the child does the walls of the womb. "I'm tempted half to stitch it up/With a remaining Breath" seems to suggest that the female persona is tempted to "stitch up" the whole experience and let it grow into a full organism inside her, with all her "remaining Breath," or every bit of her energy. But the female figure feels "half" tempted to do so. Why? Because, total commitment to the growing organism inside her would involve the denial of the sex act to the "lover." "To Him, it would be Death" has double significance. If she does not yield to the "lover," it means his Death. The "lover" will have no access to the "beloved," the source of his creativity. But if she yields to the "lover," "it would be Death" of "Him" who is inside her, the internalized "lover." The human Consciousness suggests a similar pattern. If the Consciousness does not yield to the external world, it will be the death of all externality. But if the Consciousness yields to the world outside, it will be the death of all that Consciousness has internalized. As the "lover" lives and dies simultaneously in the process of being taken in, the world also dies and lives in the process of being internalized by the Consciousness. In the process, both the "beloved" and the "Consciousness" die to the world. In this dimension of awareness, then, the "beloved" carries her "big" destiny without fear and trembling. No other death can "harass" her any more. She has already died once in her commitment to create. She is carrying her "Burial" within herself. The womb which is tomb becomes the source of both captivity and freedom. The secret of human-divine love, then, belongs with the growth of Consciousness. Love and Death, womb and tomb are, thus, the everlasting dimensions

of man's freedom and his quest of Being:

Circumference be full -
The long restricted Grave
Assert her Vital Privilege -
The Dust - connect - and live -

(515)

CHAPTER V

DEATH: THE COSMIC DANCE

Fare forward.

O voyagers, O seamen,
You who come to port, and you whose bodies
Will suffer the trial and judgement of the sea
Or whatever event, this is your real destination.
So Krishna, as when he admonished Arjuna
On the field of battle.

Not fare well,
But fare forward, voyagers.

- T. S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages"

In the preceding chapters, I have shown that Emily Dickinson encounters the ontological problem of "Death" by way of "facing" Life most "Deliberately."¹ Life in itself is the "awful stranger Consciousness" (1323) into which Dickinson penetrates and discovers her creative destiny and vocation. Death is an integral part of that Life, and it has to be realized in every moment. Crucifixion is a continual event taking place "in the Being's Centre" (553). Death enhances the meaning of Existence (1714), though it is not the latter's only meaning. Death is inevitably woven in the schema of Creation in which alone can one experience its true significance. In Nature, the symbols of "Death" are interfused with the symbols of "Life": Spring and Winter, Summer and Autumn, Sunrise and Sunset, Dawn and Dusk, Morn and Night, Light and Dark, Green and White are man's "Eyes," the Doors of Perception, through which he can visualize the continuity of Existence and say:

"This World is not Conclusion" (501). A creative apprehension of Life is man's only way to recognize the true dimensions of his "mortality," and to realize eternity in the very "now" of his being which is a constant becoming. In the creative Vision, man is in a perpetual state of creation, a "being reborn." Creativity means "freedom" from the sense of temporality, and a recognition of life as a continuous process in which "death" ceases to be "absolute" and "final." In creative Immortality, "Winter" "is as arable as Spring" (1707), there is "No Goblin - on the Bloom -" (646), and "Summer - lasts a Solid Year -" (569). Creativity is man's challenge to the notion of "death" as a painful absurdity; rather, "death" assumes the form of "Love" which is another name for Perception or Creativity. "Till Death - is narrow Loving" (907). In Love, one perceives "better - in the Dark" (611). The "silence" and "terror" of "death" finally merge with the "Awe" of Life, as realized in the Human Spirit and Imagination. Death affirms Life, and Life affirms Death. A creative unity of Life and Death is the "goal" that man should aspire to, because in it alone are contained the limits of Possibility. This position can be summed up in the words of Rilke:

To grant one without the other is . . . a limitation which in the end shuts out all that is infinite. Death is the side of life, averted from us, unshone upon by us: we must try to achieve the greatest consciousness of our existence which is at home in both unbounded realms, inexhaustibly nourished from both The true figure of life extends through both spheres, the blood of the mightiest circulation flows through both: there is neither a here nor a beyond, but the great unity in which the beings that surpass us, the "angels," are at home.²

But the vision of life-death continuity is highly paradoxical and, thus, ambiguous. It is beyond the limits of man's judgement and

practical reason. Creative Immortality, by its very nature, is irrational, even anti-rational, and subjective, though it is governed by its own internal logic. It is man's most stupendous attempt to rescue himself from the human condition of impermanence and transiency. It is a symbolic representation of man's "longing not to die," which constitutes for Miguel de Unamuno "the tragic sense of life."³ The ontological problem of man's Immortality in Time cannot be the subject of "scientific" thought; only the metaphoric language can assimilate its contradictions.

In order that man should be able to transcend the "anxiety" of "dying," it is necessary for him to be creatively haunted by "death," his own "death." Recognition of "death" as an Existential reality is the prerequisite that man must fulfill before entering the Dawn in which the East and West meet. I have already pointed out that "death" haunts Dickinson in many paradoxical ways. Before she realizes "death" as a primordial metaphor for "survival," before she understands tomb as womb, and before she makes it an integral ingredient of her Aesthetics of Continuity, Dickinson undergoes the excruciating experience of "death" as eternal "silence" and "darkness," as the "Unknown" mystery and "oblivion" from which there is no "return." Through the images of "Beetle at the Candle" and a "Fife's Fame," she contemplates "Life" and "Death" as proclaimed by mere "Accident" (706). She visualizes "death" as the "crowning" (98) experience of Life, which happens to everyone, irrespective of "Color - Caste - Denomination" (970). She regards "The overtakelessness of those/Who have accomplished Death" as more "Majestic" than "The majesties of Earth" (1691). But

the notion of absolute power of "death" to kill or destroy, and to put an end to the "Process" of Existence seems to appal her. The ruthlessness of "death," its cold, frosty look on "life" distresses her "Like Time's insidious wrinkle/On a beloved Face" (1236). Describing the utter darkness of the "Heart" of "death," Dickinson writes:

His Heart was darker than the starless night
For that there is a morn
But in this black Receptacle
Can be no Bode of Dawn (1378)

On the vicious purpose and finality of "death," she writes:

Within thy Grave!
Oh no, but on some other flight -
Thou only camest to mankind
To rend it with Good night - (1552)

Dickinson feels the intrusion of death's "darkness" upon life's "day" in terms of the most touching pathos and despair. The irony of life's beginning and its end seethes in every word of her existential cry: "Oh Life, begun in fluent Blood/And consummated dull!/Achievement contemplating thee -/Feels transitive and cool" (1130). "The Frost of Death" lies only too heavily on the "Pane" of her consciousness (1136). "Death," "like the insect," menaces "the tree" of her "life" (1716). This does not mean to say that she gives up the fight for survival: she resists with all her spiritual strength the nullifying attempts of "the White Exploit -" (922). Paradoxically, the cry which is uttered in recognition of one's mortality and temporality is the cry which sounds beyond the realm of the mortal. An intense awareness of our human condition liberates us from its pang. There is no refuge from "death." The only way to be "free" of its gnawing burden is to experience it in the illuminating abyss of one's

own Heart. Dickinson's poetry embodies this strategy. Her descriptions of personal as well as impersonal "death," the dramatization of "death" as a "release" from the experiential pathos and agony, the realization of "death" as a source of intensity, passion and awareness --all indicate a daring attempt towards the "mastery" of "death." By this creative strategy, Dickinson shows her "willingness" to die, the secret of her Courage to be; she finds "death" as one finds the "lover" or "friend" or "God," and affirms "life" right in the Heart of "death." Through various symbolisms, particularly "Sunrise" and "Sunset," "Boat" and "Sea," she enacts the drama of "life" and "death" or "death" and "life." In her vision of God's playful duplicity, she discovers the complex meaning of the Creator-Creation paradox. In the endless continuum of creation and destruction, life and death, Heaven and Hell, Dickinson comes upon the metaphors of poetic Resurrection, Immortality and continuity, and, thus, celebrates the poetic mythology of "the eternal return."

The purpose of this Chapter is to dwell upon the findings and observations contained in the foregoing paragraph, and show via the interpretation of her poetry the several postures or the many integral phases through which Emily Dickinson experiences the totality of "death," or the unity of life-and-death. In this perplexing and soul-searching task, I should begin from the simple though painful hypothesis that human life is mortal, and "death," from the viewpoint of the living, is utter silence, darkness, and oblivion, from which no "return" is ever possible. It is true that man has no empirical means to verify the truth or the falsehood of the hypothesis, but he can

never rest in the paradox of "death" as Terminus and his inner craving for a journey beyond. Dickinson enacts the underlying restlessness and the discomfiture of man caught in the polarity of his situation, doomed by "science" to only ask "why" and "wherefore,"⁴ and ask till "Death's finger/Claps," his "murmuring lip" (56). Death's silence is complete because it makes "no syllable"; it "only shows his Marble Disc -/ Sublimer sort - than Speech -" (310). Death's "Silence," its "stiff - stare -" seems to be the place where God "has hid his rare life/From our gross eyes" (338). In one poem, the reality of Silence becomes more edged than the painful fact of "death":

Death's Waylaying not the sharpest
Of the thefts of Time -
There Marauds a sorer Robber,
Silence - is his name -
No Assault, nor any Menace
Doth betoken him.
But from Life's consummate Cluster -
He supplants the Balm. (1296)

The contrast between "Death" and "Silence" seems purposeful and deliberate. We know that "Death" in itself is "Silence." But the point of contrast is that Death's robbing is less painful than its ensuing Silence. Silence is a "sorer Robber." It is like "Suspense" which "is Hostiler than Death -" (705). Death assaults man, and it poses a constant threat to his existence. Silence shows no such outward signs of violence, and yet it plunders man's peace which prevails over his "Life's consummate Cluster," connoting the forces which mean life's fulfillment. Silence horrifies man because it deepens the mystery of "death." It is Silence which makes "death" final and irrevocable. The dying persona of "Because that you are going" (1260) is going "And never coming back" "Because that Death is

final,/However first it be." Dickinson writes with undertoned uneasiness, "The Things that never can come back, are several -/Childhood - some forms of Hope - the Dead -" (1515 and L733). Sometimes

We never know we go when we are going -
We jest and shut the Door -
Fate - following - behind us bolts it -
And we accost no more - (1523 and L691)

We go from the Earth "as quiet as the Dew," but "Not like the Dew," do we "return/At the Accustomed hour" (149). Once we "leave," we are never, never seen again "Upon the mortal side" (150). "In dying - 'tis as if Our Souls/Absconded - suddenly -" (645). There is no hope to revive us from "A long - long Sleep - a famous - Sleep -/That makes no show for Morn -/By stretch of Limb - or stir of Lid -" (654). We simply "disappear" into the "Regions wild" (1149), where "The quiet nonchalance of death -/No Daybreak - can bestir -" (194). When one perceives that one is dying, and dying without any hope of "returning" to life, the agony and anxiety take the forms of questions which are never answered, or perhaps, which are never asked:

Still own thee - still thou art
What surgeons call alive -
Though slipping - slipping I perceive
To thy reportless Grave -

Which question shall I clutch -
What answer wrest from thee
Before thou dost exude away
In the recallless sea? (1633)

The persona of the poem, represented through "thee," "thou," and "thy" is integral with the perceiving "I" who contemplates the experience of dying by instalments, who in the very moment of being "alive" feels "slipping," "slipping" to the "reportless Grave." Death here is curiously woven into the fabric of "life." Even though the "reportless

Grave" seems to be "outside" man, the sensation of "slipping" is perfectly "inside" him.⁵ But this does not help man to know the precise "questions" that he should "clutch" at, at the time of death. His sense of being oozed out to "the recallless sea" is too overwhelming to spare him for any "answer" that he would otherwise like to extract from the "moment" and "experience" of death. He seems to have been thwarted in his effort to grapple with the mystery of death. After death, his body personifies the epitaph:

Sweet hours have perished here;
This is a mighty room;
Within its precincts hopes have played, -
Now shadows in the tomb. (1767)

Death "nails the eyes" of man (561). He cannot see the path of his journey from the moment of death onwards. He can only cry:

Dying! Dying in the night!
Won't somebody bring the light
So I can see which way to go
Into the everlasting snow? (158)

Once he is lost in the darkness of "the night," or when his body becomes a part of "the everlasting snow," oblivion overtakes him. In due course of time, he is utterly forgotten:

After a hundred years
Nobody knows the Place
Agony that enacted there
Motionless as Peace (1147)

The "Peace" of oblivion is indeed very ironic. The "enactment" of "Agony" which is the greatest event of life because it indicates man's tragic vision, passes into "Motionless" state. Memory, desire, love--all fail to fill the gap between the "dead" and the "living":

Ambition cannot find him.
Affection doesn't know
How many leagues of nowhere
Lie between them now. (68)

The oblivion of "death" enhances the mystery of the "Unknown."
 Howsoever much the human mind might try to unlock the secret of
 "death," it is ultimately bound to recoil from its abyss:

Dust is the only Secret -
 Death, the only One
 You cannot find out all about
 In his "native town." (153)

Death is "the Tomb,/Who tells no secret" (408). Its manner is very
 obscure: the "Agile Kernel" of life goes out without showing any sign
 of "Contusion." What remains is only death's own "Asterisk" (1135).
 Even when we think that the "Miracle of Death" is "easy," and the dead
 go to "places perfecter," any true knowledge about the realm of "death"
 remains "Beyond our faint Conjecture -/Our dizzy Estimate -" (499).
 In "I watched the Moon around the House" (629), Dickinson seems to
 employ the "Moon" as the persona of "Death," and tells us that it has
 "finer Gravitations -/Than bind Philosopher." Though it shines and
 remains "engrossed" with the "Sky," the human "Eyes" cannot have
 "The privilege to scrutinize" its "inside"; it vaults out of human
 "Gaze." The images of "Sky," "Silver," and "Blue" are appropriate to
 convey the notion that "death" could be "light" and vast expanse. But
 the problem is the lack of human grasp of it. "Life - is what we
 make it -/Death - we do not know -" (698). Human knowledge fails
 before the mystery of "death":

How the Waters closed above Him
 We shall never know -
 How He stretched His Anguish to us
 That - is covered too - (923)

None who saw it ever [redacted] it" (1110). No one has ever returned from
 the abode of "death" to tell us his "experience" of it. We can only

surmise with a big "perhaps": "Went to Heaven perhaps at Death/And perhaps he didn't" (1201). The "Strangeness" of the "Frost" can never be "traced." It is beyond analysis; a "Labor vaster than myself/I find it to infer" (1202). We can never guess the secret of the "gallant sea"; we can only find that the "little boat" is "lost" (107). In "death," adieu is written large on our faces, but

Adieu for whence
The sage cannot conjecture
The bravest die
As ignorant of their resumption
As you or I - (1497)

We can only "slowly ford the Mystery/Which," the dead "hast leaped across" (1564). But we can never understand the "Mystery" as something concerning our conscious experience. The realm of the "dead" is "Further than Guess can gallop/Further than Riddle ride -/Oh for a Disc to the Distance/Between Ourselves and the Dead!" (949). The contrast between life's closeness and death's remoteness is also brought out in the following verses:

Today or this noon
She dwelt so close
I almost touched her -
Tonight she lies
Past neighborhood
And bough and steeple,
Now past surmise. (1702)

Dickinson feels that all human conjecturing about the state of man after death is of no avail. It is a "stubborn" and "Sublime" "Theme" which no "Supposition" or "oblique Belief" can explore successfully. As "the Dust" can never become the "Face," (or as we say that the dead can never become alive) or as the "Drums" can never reach the ears of "the Tomb," man's attempts to grapple with the secret of the "Grave,"

the "Grate inviolate" (1385), are bound to fail:

Some we see no more, Tenements of Wonder
Occupy to us though perhaps to them
Simpler are the Days than the Supposition
Their removing Manners
Leave us to presume

That oblique Belief which we call Conjecture
Grapples with a Theme stubborn as Sublime
Able as the Dust to equip its feature
Adequate as Drums
To enlist the Tomb. (1221)

Death is surely beyond human grasp and knowledge. But Dickinson is far from suggesting that we should "stop" talking about "death," even if our talk and conjectures are doomed to failure, the failure is human, it is ours, as "death" is ours. We cannot leave "death" out of the discourse of "life."⁶ We may regard it as a "Witchcraft" (1708), or call it by the name of "esoteric belt" (1717), but we must continue our exploration and dialogue about it. Dickinson considers "death" as a "Foe" whom she has never seen (1549), but she does not wish to be "forgotten" by it. She draws "Portentous inference" from its "secrecy," as she does from the secrecy of "Leaves" and "Women" (987). She likes it better than "Suspense" even when sometimes "Suspense is neighborly" (1285):

Fraud of Distance - Fraud of Danger,
Fraud of Death - to bear -
It is Bounty - to Suspense's
Vague Calamity - (971)

However, these postures do not minimize her sense of "Awe" and "Tragedy" at the spectacle of human death, death which is indicated by "the closing sun" (1419), or by the vanishing "Dew" (1437). An acute sense of human predicament dawns upon her when she visualizes the "sun" having gone to the West:

But when the Earth began to jar
 And Houses vanished with a roar
 And Human Nature hid
 We comprehended by the Awe
 As those that Dissolution saw
 The Poppy in the Cloud

(1419)

An equally intense and painful awareness of life's "triviality"
 overwhelms her when she sees the "Dew" having disappeared:

A Dew sufficed itself -
 And satisfied a Leaf
 And felt "how vast a destiny" -
 "How trivial is Life!"

The Sun went out to work -
 The Day went out to play
 And not again that Dew be seen
 By Physiognomy

Whether by Day Abducted
 Or emptied by the Sun
 Into the Sea in passing
 Eternally unknown

Attested to this Day
 That awful Tragedy
 By Transport's instability
 And Doom's celerity.

(1437)

The "Tragedy" abides, though it remains "Eternally unknown" "Whether" the "Dew" is "Abducted" by the "Day," "Or emptied by the Sun/Into the Sea in passing." At any rate, it is noteworthy that the "Dew" has the intimation of a "vast destiny" even in such a brief course of "Life." Paradoxically, the knowledge of a "vast destiny" grows from the feeling: "How trivial is Life." This knowledge seems to be Life's greatest gift to man, though Life itself seems trifling in the comparison. Dickinson is deeply concerned with Life, and she knows the nature of Life's gifts. Death, too, may have its own gifts, but

With Gifts of Life
 How Death's Gifts may compare -
 We know not -
 For the Rates - lie Here -

(382)

Our ignorance of "Death," its Heaven or Hell, or both, remains pervasive, and we cannot do anything to mitigate the "darkness" within the narrow human condition. Dickinson knows that. But when she loses her "priceless Hay," symbolic of Love that does not fade, or a fruitful life that one values above all other gifts, Dickinson dares

Whether a Thief did it -
 Whether it was the wind -
 Whether Deity's guiltless -
 My business is, to find! (178)

The "business" of "finding" is the one "Battle" that Dickinson fights most rigorously. In this "Battle," "death" dances on all her sides, and dances its paradoxical dance. It comes and goes simultaneously. It comes like "A Visitor in Marl/Who influences Flowers," who "Caresses" them "in the Night" "and is gone -"

But whom his fingers touched -
 And where his feet have run -
 And whatsoever Mouth he kissed -
 Is as it had not been - (391)

Death's sway is so strong and overpowering that whatsoever comes under its touch drops like "Flakes," "Like Petals from a Rose -/When suddenly across the June/A wind with fingers - goes -" (409).

Describing the aftermath of the death-dance, Dickinson writes:

They perished in the Seamless Grass -
 No eye could find the place -
 But God can summon every face
 On his Repealless - List. (409)

Only "death" or God knows the secret of the "Seamless Grass." "On his Repealless - List" indicates the absolute power of the death-God who is the destroyer. Curiously enough, the images of "Rose," "June," and "Grass," symbolizing life and fertility, are evenly strewn with the images signifying death. The life-death relationship is felt in the

sense that "death" depends upon "life" for its food. The life-death continuity is, however, not even vaguely suggested here. The whole scene dramatizes merely "Mortality's old Custom" in which everything appears "Just locking up - to Die" (479). In this "Forest of the Dead" (615) nothing stirs. Death is motionlessness personified. It is absolutely changeless:

All but Death, can be Adjusted -
 Dynasties repaired -
 Systems - settled in their Sockets -
 Citadels - dissolved -

 Wastes of Lives - resown with Colors
 By Succeeding Springs -
 Death - unto itself - Exception -
 Is exempt from Change - (749)

Dickinson finds herself utterly helpless in the presence of Death. She feels that even the lifeless, old "Dynasties" can be renovated with life--this expresses her "historical" vision. The "Systems" or "traditions" which have outlived their value or use, can be nailed to their hollow "Sockets." "Citadels" of "belief" as well as the seats of domineering power can be "dissolved"--this expresses her "Socio-political" vision. "Wastes of Lives - resown with Colors/By Succeeding Springs -" indicates Dickinson's "psychological" vision. But, she cannot change the Heart of Death, because it is "exempt from Change." In other words, all the external forces of human "revolution" fail to implement a "change" in the "unadjustable" structure of Death. Death asserts itself; no power can punish it:

The Frost himself so comely
 Dishevels every prime
 Asserting from his Prism
 That none can punish him (1236)

"Asserting from his Prism" reveals the paradox of Death's changelessness. "Prism" is Dickinson's metaphor for Love, Self, Life and Destiny.⁷ Here it becomes a metaphor for Death also, connoting death's constant movement. The paradox is involved in the flux of death which is changeless, making death a changeless flux. The symbolic relations of Love, Death, Self, Destiny, and Life are fully explored in my Chapter on Love. In the ultimate sense, Dickinson stands in "awe" and "terror" of all these relations. However, in the present context, Dickinson seems to be emphasizing the sweeping power of "death" over man's "mortality," as well as man's mortal fear and trembling over death's dishevelled energy. In this context, "Death" is "prompter" than "Love"; prompter, because "Love" is hard to come by, whereas "Death" always hovers over man. Death can cut short man's search for Love. Death keeps the "date" and overtakes every other thing that moves towards man or towards which man moves:

It came at last but prompter Death
Had occupied the House -
His pallid Furniture arranged
And his metallic Peace -

Oh faithful Frost that kept the Date
Had Love as punctual been
Delight had aggrandized the Gate
And blocked the coming in.

(1230)

Once "death" has arrived and settled in the "House" of man, "Love" cannot disturb its "metallic Peace." After "death," the mortal man has no need of "Love." But if "Love" comes before the "Frost" can touch him, it can assist man in blocking the way of "death," even in stopping "death" from "coming in." In the presence of "death," however, man's yearning for "love" is merely a source of anguish. Man

cannot win over death's flight. In the presence of "death," man faces only defeat, agony and restlessness:

I meant to find Her when I came -
 Death - had the same design -
 But the Success - was His - it seems -
 And the Surrender - Mine -

I meant to tell Her how I longed
 For just this single time -
 But Death had told Her so the first -
 And she had past, with Him -

To wander - now - is my Repose -
 To rest - To rest would be
 A privilege of Hurricane
 To Memory - and Me.

(718)

Death is the greatdevourer-wooeer in this poem. Death seems to have destroyed and ravished the "beloved" before the "lover" can reach out for her. Death wins, the "lover" loses. The "lover" has not been able to express his "longing" to see the "beloved" even "For just this single time." And now his fate is to wander, and to make wandering his "Repose." The only rest that he can ever hope to know now is the rest that comes as a "privilege" of the violent storm within, meaning that the rest is possible if the "Hurricane" subsides. But the "Hurricane" will subside when everything else subsides: "Memory - and Me." The lover, then, is condemned by "death" to wander-unto-death. When the "Hurricane" becomes a permanent part of life, and when there is no respite from "wander," death seems to be the only possibility for release from the fret and fever of existence. Paradoxically, "death" becomes our only hope that can free us from the existential pathos. The "Alabaster Chambers" seem "Safe," and "death" provides a "Rafter of Satin" (216). The graves seem "Sweet - safe - Houses -/ Glad - gay - Houses -" (457). "To die - takes just a little while,"

and "They say it doesn't hurt -/it's only fainter - by degrees -/And
then - it's out of sight -" (255):

'Tis not that Dying hurts us so -
'Tis Living - hurts us more -
But Dying - is a different way -
A Kind behind the Door - (335)

"Living" seems to "hurt" so much that in this mood Dickinson does not
wish to wake to the reality of "life." Death sits "Kindly" on her
emotions. She feels that when people die

The Earth lays back these tired lives
In her mysterious Drawers -
Too tenderly, that any doubt
An ultimate Repose - (423)

The "dead" are beyond the human strife. They are carefree; they have
no regard for "Day," "Summer," or "Winter" (592). They are above this
our "Baffling Earth" where "Many Things - are fruitless," and for them
"there is no Gratitude/Like the Grace - of Death -" (614). "Best Men"
always die of the "Sickness of this World" (1044). The "pain" of
existence can be relieved only by dying:

Pain has but one Acquaintance
And that is Death -
Each one unto the other
Society enough. (1049)

"The Heart" seeks "Excuse from Pain/And then - those little Anodynes/
That deaden suffering -" (536). Sometimes, suicide seems to be the
only solution for man's agonized self, though legally, he "cannot even
die" (1692). He gropes a little "to see if God" is watching, but
eventually caresses "a Trigger absently" and wanders "out of Life"
(1062). In "death" alone can the "bleating" of the "tired Flocks"
cease "to repeat," and in death alone can their "wandering" be over.
They can, thus, sing:

Thine is the stillest night
 Thine the securest Fold
 Too near Thou art for seeking Thee
 Too tender, to be told. (1065)

"On such a night/How Proud to shut the eye!" (120). Reviewing her "slightest" position "in the House," Dickinson writes: "I had often thought/How noteless - I could die" (486). But, in spite of the mood in which one seeks "death" as a form of liberation from the drudgery and morass of existence, the act of dying or the state of being-in-death constitutes man's greatest anxiety and puzzlement. The "anxiety" about "death" is paradoxical because it does not let man die. The creative man learns to live with this "anxiety" and continue his dialogue with death. Dickinson moves from one angle of the problem to the other, and goes back and forth, in a quick succession. If she considers "death" as "A Kind behind the Door" (335), she also regards that "death" is inconsiderate, even callous. "Death is the other way"; "It - is the White Exploit," and it "annuls the power/Once to communicate" (922). It does not grieve for anyone. It has no sentiment for the dying, for the one who is groping deliriously "for Morn":

Ah, Brig - Good Night
 To Crew and You -
 The Ocean's Heart too smooth - too Blue -
 To break for You - (723)

Death "Bequeaths" man "to the night/Extinct by every hum" (1724). Death is a "stupendous Tomb" which proclaims "How dead we are," and in its closed room

Not any Sunny tone
 From any fervent zone
 Find entrance there - (1674)

Dickinson feels the strangulation and suffocation of "death,"

and it impels her to raise one of the most piercing cries against the ruthless hands of "death":

The Frost of Death was on the Pane -
 "Secure your Flower" said he.
 Like Sailors fighting with a Leak
 We fought Mortality.

Our passive Flower we held to Sea -
 To Mountain - To the Sun -
 Yet even on his Scarlet shelf
 To crawl the Frost begun -

We pried him back
 Ourselves we wedged
 Himself and her between,
 Yet easy as the narrow Snake
 He forked his way along

Till all her helpless beauty bent
 And then our wrath begun -
 We hunted him to his Ravine
 We chased him to his Den -

We hated Death and hated Life
 And nowhere was to go -
 Than Sea and continent there is
 A larger - it is Woe -

(1136)

The poem epitomizes man's helpless struggle with "death." "Secure your Flower" is death's cruel joke upon man, because "death" knows that man cannot fight the limits of "Mortality." The "Flower" of life cannot escape from the freezing hands of "The Frost of Death." The "Sea," the "Mountain," "the Sun," and even man's own "Scarlet shelf," symbolic of the cliff of intensity and passion, cannot save him from the "Frost" which forks "his way along," "as the narrow Snake," symbolic here of man's "fall" from "life" into "death." Man's "wrath" against death is impotent, and his search and chasing are futile. Caught up in the net of crippling inability to challenge "death," man simply "hates" "death," and "hates" "life." He has "nowhere" to go,

excepting that he must compromise with the continent of "Woe," larger than the Sea and the Earth. The pattern of imagery, throughout the poem, is very subtle. The images of life and the images of death are perfectly balanced, indicating on the one hand a constant struggle between "life" and "death," and on the other, a sort of relationship between "death" and "life." But the final tone is that of anguish and "Woe." One cannot surmise here the revelation of a paradox which suggests life-death struggle as one rhythm. There is no catharsis, there is only the agony. There is not much relief in being alive, there is only the pathos of dying:

Two swimmers wrestled on the spar -
 Until the morning sun -
 When One - turned smiling to the land -
 Oh God! the Other One!

The stray ships - passing -
 Spied a face -
 Upon the waters borne -
 With eyes in death - still begging raised -
 And hands - beseeching - thrown! (201 and L219)

The double persona of the poem, wrestling "on the spar," fighting against the night of death, signifies double-consciousness, a life-death consciousness. One part of that consciousness survives the onslaught of the wave of death, the other succumbs to it. The one turns "smiling to the land," the other floats "Upon the Waters" "With eyes in death." The pathos and despair implied in the "still begging" eyes and the "beseeching - thrown" hands of the dead is soul-crushing: "Oh God! the Other One!" The "smile" of the alive seems to fade before the "begging eyes" of the dead. It is the pathos of the "loving bosom" laid "in its vest of snow" (58). It is the despair of being "led" to the "Gallows" "With morning in the sky" (1125). The

sense of futility at the spectacle of death, at man's vain attempts to survive in the heart of "death," is sharply felt in these verses:

Drowning is not so pitiful
 As the attempt to rise.
 Three times, 'tis said, a sinking man
 Comes up to face the skies,
 And then declines forever
 To that abhorred abode,
 Where hope and he part company -
 For he is grasped of God.
 The Maker's cordial visage,
 However good to see,
 Is shunned, we must admit it,
 Like an adversity. (1718)

Death is the "abhorred abode" where no one wants to go; "not a Beggar would accept" "the éclat of Death" "Had he the power to spurn -" (1307). The relationship between God, "The Maker" and "death," the destroyer is obvious here. But when we find "The Maker's cordial visage" associated with "death," it "Is shunned" "Like an adversity." The death-God "grasps" man, and conceals him "forever." The human consciousness refuses to accept such a god and defies him with all the strength that it is capable of. Dickinson experiences the sensation of dying with a sense of consternation:

Consulting summer's clock,
 But half the hours remain.
 I ascertain it with a shock -
 I shall not look again. (1715)

The urge to live takes a stronger hold of Dickinson's mind. She wants to "gloat" on the "Sumptuous moment" of life (1125). She loves "the Summer" and considers it an "Affront" to concede the presence of "the Autumn" and "Of Life's Declivity" (1346). But she is painfully conscious that "The only Balmless Wound is the departed Human Life we had learned to need. For that, even Immortality is a slow solace."⁸

She seems to grow weary of the sense of mortality when she says:

"That Bareheaded life - under the grass - worries one like a Wasp"

(L220). In sheer anguish and anger, she writes:

His Bill is clasped - his Eye forsook -
 His Feathers wilted low -
 The Claws that clung, like lifeless Gloves
 Indifferent hanging now -
 The Joy that in his happy Throat
 Was waiting to be poured
 Gored through and through with Death, to be
 Assassin of a Bird
 Resembles to my outraged mind
 The firing in Heaven,
 On Angels - squandering for you
 Their Miracles of Tune - (1102)

The "Bird" is the persona of the poet. Dickinson imagines her own mutilation at the assassinating hands of "Death." Her organs of perception and communication are paralyzed, or broken. The source of her imaginative flights is withered. The hands that "clung" to Existence are "lifeless" now. The happy melody that "Was waiting to be poured" from her "Throat" is throttled and clotted by "Death." Death's cruel action suggests to the highly "outraged" mind of Dickinson a resemblance between itself and the "firing in Heaven,/On Angels." Dickinson's "Angels," like Rilke's "angels," are poets. Dickinson's "Angels," in the context of this poem, put up with the wrath of Heaven, and still keep on "squandering" for us "Their Miracles of Tune." Or, perhaps, the "Angels" face the "firing in Heaven" because of their lavish wasting of Song on us. In any case, the "Angels" do not get upset over the conduct of "Heaven," as Dickinson gets troubled over the manner of "Death." The "Angels" in the poem, like Rilke's "angels," seem to know the relations of life and death, love and wrath. In a sense, this is implied in the image of "fire" which consumes and

re-creates. But Dickinson, the "supposed" speaker of the poem, is still bewildered at the coldness of death whom she calls "Assassin." Both the angelic peace and the existential agony are necessary for the proper apprehension of Reality. Paradoxically, the experience of being "outraged" at the spectacle of destruction is the necessary qualification to comprehend what is on the other side of "death," which is "Life." The greatest peace becomes possible only through the greatest crisis. "Poetry" itself, says Stéphane Mallarmé, "is the language of a state of crisis."⁹

The way of peace is the way of storm. Dickinson's buffetting through the tempest of "death" continues, and continues in many contradictory ways. Death remains a constant reality. But the moods and postures about death change; some more perspectives are established, which do not have to exclude the others. Dickinson considers "death" from various angles, none of them mutually exclusive. She moves from the subjective agony of personal death to the objectivity of impersonal or universal death with almost equal concern and intensity. She considers death as a source of release from existential suffering and as a source of human passion, and awareness simultaneously.

Dickinson visualizes "death" as a source of "dignity" even for the meek and poor of this world: "One dignity delays for all -" (98). Death confers equal "rank" upon the dead. Even "a powdered Footman" can touch the "Majesty of Death," and be "dressed" like a "Democrat" in "Everlasting Robes" (171). "Death is the Common Right/Of Toads and Men -/Of Earl and Midge/The privilege -" (583). In Death's graveyard, "all mankind deliver here/From whatsoever sea -" (1443). Death does not know distinctions between human beings:

As in sleep - All Hue forgotten -
 Tenets - put behind -
 Death's large - Democratic fingers
 Rub away the Brand -

(970)

Death is the "Leisure" which "equal lulls/The Beggar and his Queen"

(1256). "Death warrants are supposed to be/An enginery of equity"

(1375):

No Life can pompless pass away -
 The lowliest career
 To the same Pageant wends its way
 As that exalted here -

How cordial is the mystery!
 The hospitable Pall
 A "this way" beckons spaciously -
 A Miracle for all!

(1626)

Howsoever "Cordial" the "mystery" might be, the politics of "death" does not alleviate the pain one experiences at the thought of personal death. The idea of universal death or "Democratic" death cannot camouflage the bitter reality of one's own death. As Frederick J. Hoffman has put it, "one's death is a uniquely individual experience. No one can die my death nor can I die anyone else's."¹⁰ Dickinson voices a personal sense of despair at the very thought of death, howsoever "Democratic" it might be:

I can't stay any longer in a world of death. Austin is ill of fever. I buried my garden last week - our man, Dick, lost a little girl through the scarlet fever. I thought perhaps that You were dead, and not knowing the sexton's address, interrogate the daisies Ah! democratic Death! Say, is he everywhere? Where shall I hide my things? Who is alive? The woods are dead. (L195)

Dickinson's engrossment in "death" is not for its own sake, nor does it indicate any morbid taste for the macabre. An intense awareness of "death" leads to an equally intense awareness of "life." For Dickinson, the concern with death means "a search for meaning," to use Anderson's phrase.¹¹ She writes to Mrs. Holland: "I suppose

there are depths in every Consciousness, from which we cannot rescue ourselves - to which none can go with us - which represent to us Mortally - the adventure of Death -" (L555). The "Adventure of Death" is, paradoxically, the adventure of Life: "Death being the first form of Life which we have had the power to Contemplate, our entrance here being an Exclusion from comprehension, it is amazing that the fascination of our predicament does not entice us more. With such sentences as these directly over our Heads we are as exempt from Exultation as the Stones -" (PF70). Dickinson's descriptions of the dead and the dying are explorations into "the first form of Life." Even when the descriptions are external, or about other deaths, they are internalized, because ultimately, death means only when it takes place "Within" the "inner room" (45) of one's own heart or Imagination. Dickinson describes the features of "death" in all its possible variety of forms. The physical and emotional response to the presence of "death" is captured in these lines:

A throe upon the features -
A hurry in the breath -
An ecstasy of parting (71)

In "How many times these low feet staggered -" (187), the sensation of being "dead" flows through the images of "soldered mouth," "awful rivet," "hasps of steel," "cool forehead," "listless hair," and "adamantine fingers." Death, says Dickinson, cannot be feigned:

The Eyes glaze once - and that is Death -
Impossible to feign
The Beads upon the Forehead
By homely Anguish strung. (241)

Describing the death of a friend or the "lover" or the persona, Dickinson writes:

'T was like a Maelstrom, with a notch,
That nearer, every Day,
Kept narrowing its boiling Wheel
Until the Agony

Toyed coolly with the final inch
Of your delirious Hem -
And you dropt, lost,
When something broke -
And let you from a Dream - (414)

Death envelops man in its own whirlpool. It presses upon him its "Wheel" of fire "Until the Agony" starts playing with "the final inch" of his "delirious," hesitating mind. Man drops out of existence as suddenly as one drops out of a "Dream." The images of "notch" and the "final inch" express "death" as a boundary situation of human consciousness. The symbolism of Water and Fire, contained in the images "Maelstrom" and "boiling Wheel," suggests the extreme nature of the experience, as well as the process of continuation. Both Water and Fire are symbolic of destruction and re-creation. "Wheel" is symbolic of movement, and continuity. "And let you from a Dream" seems to imply that man's existence without the experience of death is merely an illusion. But this illusion or "Dream" is necessary and "real." Without this "Dream" the "final inch" experience is not possible.¹²

Death is "A Chill - like frost upon a Glass -/Till all the scene - be gone" (519). In "A Dying Tiger - moaned for Drink" (566), Dickinson sees "death" as "A Vision on the Retina." Dying is "From Blank to Blank -/A Threadless Way" (761). In its process, death is a "Murder by degrees":

The Cat reprieves the Mouse
She eases from her teeth
Just long enough for Hope to tease -
Then mashes it to death - (762)

In the "Crisis" of the moment of death, a "Soul" escapes "the House unseen -" (948). "Death leaves Us homesick, who behind,/Except that it is gone/Are ignorant of its Concern/As if it were not born" (935). In a comparatively less agitated and mute tone, Dickinson describes one death scene in these words:

We waited while She passed -
It was a narrow time -
Too jostled were Our Souls to speak
At length the notice came.

She mentioned, and forgot -
Then lightly as a Reed
Bent to the Water, struggled scarce -
Consented, and was dead -

And We - We placed the Hair -
And drew the Head erect -
And then an awful leisure was
Belief to regulate -

(1100)

The emotional state of those who wait upon the dying is captured with great psychological insight. The fear of personal death disturbs us when we watch someone dying. That time is "a narrow time," a time of real affliction. "Our Souls" are too "jostled" to speak, for the real "struggle" is going on within us. The moment of death comes, the dying person casually mentions it by gesture, and bends like a "Reed" to the "Water" without any outward sign of struggle. We perform the usual acts of placing the dead person in a proper physical posture. But after that we find that our free time is "awful" since it is extremely difficult to "regulate" the "Belief" about our own "existence." In such tense moments, the only "comfort" in the "Dying Room" can be the ticking of "the living Clock" (1703). The "Belief" can also be about the orthodox notion of peaceful death as contrasted with the turmoil we experience within ourselves at someone else's death. Howsoever

contented the dying person might look in his death, it is hard to alleviate our own fears to the contrary when we contemplate our own death. In Nature, death seems to hang "his Granite Hat/Upon a nail of Plush" (1140). Death is a hard rock pressed against our soft lives. We become like flowers "at fall of Frost" (1667). However, this does not deter Dickinson from asking more about "death" and the "dying":

To know just how He suffered - would be dear -
 To know if any Human eyes were near
 To whom He could entrust His wavering gaze -
 Until it settled broad - on Paradise - (622)

Dickinson continues with her long list of questions which concludes with: "Was He afraid - or tranquil -/Might He know/How Conscious Consciousness - could grow -" She is surmising here that "Consciousness" becomes aware of itself in the moment of death. This notion is connected with the problem of Self or Being, to which I shall return later. Dickinson also feels jealous of the "dead," because the dead person symbolizes a rare detachment from the ways of the world:

So proud she was to die
 It made us all ashamed
 That what we cherished, so unknown
 To her desire seemed -
 So satisfied to go
 Where none of us should be
 Immediately - that Anguish stooped
 Almost to Jealousy - (1272)

In her creative "Jealousy" of the dead, Dickinson contemplates and enacts the drama of her own "death" with rare adroitness. She personalizes "death" in the most daring and self-destroying terms. This is what eventually provides her with the sense of meaning in "life," life which is in "death." "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain" (280) may be quoted as an example of the process in which Dickinson

concretizes the spiritual experience of death. She imagines herself to be in her coffin, lying "numb." The coffin "expands" into an infinity of "Space" where bells are ringing all over:

As all the Heavens were a Bell,
And Being, but an Ear,
And I, and Silence, some strange Race
Wrecked, solitary, here -

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,
And I dropped down, and down -
And hit a World, at every plunge,
And Finished knowing - then - (280)

In this death vision, "all the Heavens" are "a Bell," and the "Ear" which is attuned to the music of the spheres, is the "Being" of the persona whose relationship with the "Heavens," like the Ear-Music relationship, is that of perfect "Silence." The persona and "Silence" are also one, as "Death" and the "I" are one in the solitude of the coffin, a perfect situation for the realization of relationship between "I, and Silence." This relationship has caused the destruction of "some strange Race," perhaps a "Race" of "life" without "death." After long or short alienation, as the case may be, life meets with "Death." Once this union takes place, "a Plank in Reason" breaks. The situation parodies the realm of human knowledge conditioned by "Reason." In this relationship, the Consciousness dives "down, and down," deep into the roots, and "at every plunge" discovers a new "World." The whole scene epitomizes a primordial journey which, when completed, leaves "nothing" for "knowing." The knower and the known become one in the mythic centre. Even though there seems nothing more to "know," one question remains: Is that all that we need to know? If the downward "plunge" is final, it is tantamount to escape from

the world of human reality which the truly creative person accepts as necessary to his vision. The poet sees everything happening in the "now" and "here" of Time and Space. The downward "plunge" constitutes the upward" lift, or as Heraclitus puts it: "The way up and the way down are one and the same."¹³ For Dickinson, the "plunge" constitutes an onward journey as well as the upward rise, though this is not made explicit in the poem under evaluation.

The scene of death with people rustling "in and out," the "Milliner" taking "measure of the House," and the "Coaches" getting ready to go, can mean to Dickinson no more than the "Abrupt" mechanical movements, the "Appalling Trade," and the "Dark Parade" (389). She can even sarcastically remark that "The Bustle in a House/The Morning after Death/Is solemnest of industries/Enacted upon Earth -" (1078). But the experience of death itself, and not the shallow concern of the onlookers, is a grievously serious "business" with her:

There is a Languor of the Life
More imminent than Pain -
'Tis Pain's Successor - When the Soul
Has suffered all it can -

A Drowsiness - diffuses -
A Dimness like a Fog
Envelops Consciousness -
As Mists - obliterate a Crag. (396)

Death causes a special type of inertia or loss of "Vitality." It is more dangerous than "Pain." It is a condition in which "the Soul/Has suffered all it can." It is a "Drowsiness" which numbs Consciousness, "As Mists - obliterate a Crag." In this poem, the "Consciousness" does not grow "Conscious" (622), even the "Soul" suffers. But the "Languor" is "of the Life," meaning that the entire experience of

"death" is integral with "life." The images of "Fog" and "Mists" indicate both stasis and movement. The "Crag" is obliterated in the sense in which the "Consciousness" is diffused. However, the "light" concealed in "Dimness" does not shine here very clearly. In "A Clock stopped,"

An awe came on the Trinket!
 The Figures hunched, with pain -
 Then quivered out of Decimals -
 Into Degreeless Noon - (287)

The experience of dying is awesome, as shown here on the face of the "Trinket," symbolizing man's trifling existence. The anguish of death is presented through the "Figures" hunching with "pain." As the "Trinket" refers to man's temporal-clock-existence, the "Figures" refer to the numerical symbols of hours in man's transient show on earth. But then, dying means quivering "out of Decimals," out of the narrow arithmetic of life, "Into Degreeless Noon -,"¹⁴ the "Noon" in which the clock time does not exist. But the vision of "Degreeless Noon" is missing from "I heard a Fly buzz - when I died"

With Blue - uncertain stumbling Buzz -
 Between the light - and me -
 And then the Windows failed - and then
 I could not see to see - (465)

Death seems to mean here the total loss of perception: "the Windows failed" and the persona "could not see to see." The last conscious link with reality is established through the "Blue - uncertain stumbling Buzz" of the Fly. The humming of the Fly or the song of death unsettles the relationship between the dying person and "the light." In death, then, the dying person does not experience anything at all concerning life-after-death either through "the Windows" of

perception or through the heavenly song. The "Blue" which is Dickinson's symbol for eternity becomes here the symbol for complete extinction. "Death's tremendous nearness" is felt by Dickinson as "An Omen in the Bone" (532). In spite of the several contradictory sensations of life and death, she feels: "As if my life were shaven, / And fitted to a frame" (510). The "Choice of Life" (468) seems to betray her at every step. Her existence looks like a living corpse: " 'T was just this time, last year, I died" (445). But it is through death that she realizes: "in going is a Drama/Staying cannot confer":

I'd rather recollect a setting
Than own a rising sun
Though one is beautiful forgetting -
And true the other one. (1349)

In "I've dropped my Brain -- My Soul is numb," Dickinson demonstrates that "death" cannot exhaust the possibilities of Being; rather, it is in itself one of the possibilities of Being. Even when she is "palsied" and her whole body is caught in a "Marble" mould by "Witchcraft" or "Death," the "Instincts for Dance" and "An Aptitude for Bird" remain intact. Even when her "Vitality is Carved and cool," she feels there is "still a chance to strain"

To Being, somewhere - Motion - Breath -
Though Centuries beyond,
And every limit a Decade -
I'll shiver, satisfied (1046)

Dickinson is so passionately in love with "life" that in her Imagination the question of "death" is ultimately tied with the question of existence and its meaning. She craves for the "Roses that never fade" (L86). She writes: "It does not seem to me that I shall ever close my eyes in death. I cannot realize that the grave will be my last

home" (L10). And still she knows that the secret of the "grave" can be found only by passing through the "agony" of the "grave," as no one knows the rose without a thorn. "The Grave" follows her and precedes her wherever she goes (784).

Dickinson experiences the agony of "death" in endless ways but converts its suffering into the metaphoric forms of awareness, passion and power. Death increases her sense of intensity for "life":

The Breaking of the Day
Addeth to my Degree -
If any ask me how -
Artist - who drew me so -
Must tell! (155)

In her Imagination, "A Wounded Deer - leaps highest," and "'Tis but the Ecstasy of death" (165). Without "death" life will be very dull and insignificant. "Uncertain lease - develops lustre/On Time" (857). Death enhances the value of "things": "Death sets a Thing significant /The Eye had hurried by" (360). Only "death" can prove the worth of one's life:

'Tis Honor - though I die -
For That no Man obtain
Till He be justified by Death -
This - is the Second Gain - (522)

"Death's bold Exhibition" reveals to us our true nature, "Preciser what we are," and enables us to "infer" the "Eternal function" of the whole creation (856). "Crisis is a Hair/Toward which the forces creep" (889). Death indicates the "Maturity of Fate," whether it comes early or late (990). Death makes "Nature" look "different" to "Us" by throwing a "great light upon our Minds" (1100). "To disappear enhances -/The Man that runs away/Is tintured for an instant/With Immortality" (1209). By dying, we make a "light escape/Into the

Beautiful" (1540). The fact that from "death" we "will never come again/Is what makes life so sweet" (1741). Death is the "Human Nature's West" in which "softly sinks" the "trembling sun" (1478). Death is as "sovereign as the Sun," in so far as it carries away the "Passion" of the East to "the West" (1033). To those who are attuned with "death," "Winter is good - his Hoar Delights" (1316). Death also increases our power to "sacrifice" the world outside us, though for that we must first learn to annihilate our own self:

When One has given up One's life
The parting with the rest
Feels easy, as when Day lets go
Entirely the West

The Peaks, that lingered last
Remain in Her regret
As scarcely as the Iodine
Upon the Cataract. (853)

The contemplation of "death" serves as a process of education in which one learns the art of living, living which involves constant dying. To experience death within our own selves, and in each moment, is to arrive at "life's meaning in all its depth," to use Nicolai Berdyaev's expression.¹⁵ Emily Dickinson shows the necessary spiritual strength to go through the drama of "death," which constitutes her Courage to be. She is not afraid of even the worst: "to know the worst, is sweet" (172):

Tell that the Worst, is easy in a Moment -
Dread, but the Whizzing, before the Ball -
When the Ball enters, enters Silence -
Dying - annuls the power to kill. (358)

Death heightens our awareness of "Silence" and "freedom," represented here through the image of the "Ball." Once we acquire the status of "Silence," "death" becomes ineffective in its "power to kill."

Dickinson tells us that even the "Lily" passes "Through the Dark Sod - as Education," and feels no "fear" or "trepidation" (392). Without suffering, there is no real knowledge: "The Sailor doesn't know the Stroke -/Until He's past the Pain -" (708). "The Worthiness of Suffering like/The Worthiness of Death/Is ascertained by tasting -" (799). Death should be our immediate concern: "Too little way the House must lie/From every Human Heart" (911). In the "Midsummer" of Mind, "death" is like "The Summer closed upon itself/In Consummated Bloom" (962). Dickinson feels that "death" reveals the dimensions of "life's adventure, as "The Hills in Purple syllables/The Day's Adventures tell" (1016). She "wins" the "privilege of dying" through the "transports of Patience" (1153). Death confers upon man the secret of the "womb"; through "death" one reaches the "Origin" of one's Consciousness:

The Doom to be adored -
 The Affluence conferred -
 Unknown as to an Ecstasy
 The Embryo endowed - (1386)

For Dickinson, "death" also symbolizes the "moment" in which she can "find" the roots of her vocation, meaning that "death" is a necessary ingredient in the integer of her Being:

Why Birds, a Summer morning
 Before the Quick of Day
 Should stab my ravished spirit
 With Dirks of Melody
 Is part of an inquiry
 That will receive reply
 When Flesh and Spirit sunder
 In Death's Immediately - (1420)

To those who feel that Dickinson is "afraid" of death and that she writes poetry to appease her fear of death, the above poem should

prove corrective. The "terror" of creation, which is the "terror" of one's whole being, precedes all fears of mortality. Death in the ultimate sense, in the sense in which it means "continuity," or in the sense in which it means "Action": "Death's Immediately," seems to be the "teller" of the secret of poetic creation which for the poet is synonymous with Creation itself. Poetry comes to Dickinson not because "death" frightens her, but because the "Birds, a Summer morning/Before the Quick of Day" "stab" her "ravished spirit/With Dirks of Melody." Song itself is the stabbing agent or Dirk. The time of action is when the "Day" begins, meaning the dawn of Creation. It is the time when her "spirit" is "ravished," meaning that it is "fully prepared" for the process of "reception" which leads to "creation."

Realizing "life's" eternal process, Dickinson suggests that "We wear Mortality/As lightly as an Option Gown" and we "take it off" when God, the Creator, intrudes upon the scene, in the same way as Life does (1462). Creator, Creation, and Life are all identical. "Mortality" is the paradoxical condition through which we can apprehend these relations. But before we can even arrive at this awareness, we must first "wear Mortality" as a garment that we can "take off" without much dismay: "What if I file this Mortal - off -" (277). The conception of wearing "Mortality" as an optional attire is paradoxical, and hence, cannot be conceptualized. The only way to comprehend it is by way of "ignorance" which is more than wisdom of the élite. Dickinson writes:

We knew not that we were to live -
Nor when - we are to die -
Our ignorance - our cuirass is - (1462)

Life-and-death problem cannot be grasped intellectually. It can be apprehended only spiritually, and rendered only metaphorically. In her death-vision, Dickinson does not show any fear of death. She talks of it as "sweetness" and "flow":

Of Death I try to think like this -
 The Well in which they lay us
 Is but the Likeness of the Brook
 That menaced not to slay us,
 But to invite by that Dismay
 Which is the Zest of sweetness
 To the same Flower Hesperian,
 Decoying but to greet us -

(1558)

Death is the "Well" or a flowing "Brook" which threatens us but does not "slay us." The "Dismay" of dying is "the Zest of sweetness." It allures us to its Western "Flower" and greets us with "the same." "Flower" is symbolic of creativity and growth. Hesperian, the Evening Star, symbolizes light in the darkness. The whole metaphoric structure means that "death" carries within itself the source of life and light, and is also contained by them. It is the "Well" in which we must "plunge." It is the Brook or Sea with which we must "flow." It is in this sense that "death" is the "Rendezvous of Light" (1564). Death comes with the "Snow" and goes "with the resuming ground," or with the Spring. In other words, it abides: goes with implies goes along or that which continues. Therefore, man should "anew embark to live/Upon the depth" of death (1669). We should be "As dauntless in the House of Death/As if it were [our] own" (1752). Only then we can "contemplate the journey/With unpuzzled heart" (43). "The seeds of smiles are planted -/Which blossom in the dark" (55). By "venerating" the "simple days" or "the seasons" which symbolize life-and-death, we can free ourselves of the "trifle/Termed mortality" (57). We should fight

"like those Who've nought to lose -" (759). With "death" "A further force of life" develops "from within" (795). "Death is potential to that Man/Who dies -" (548). Dickinson's poetry or song embodies "death" as an inner force. Death is the Heart of the poet: "Death is the Wealth/Of the Poorest Bird," and it is "death" which is the "blood"--"Red," "Cochineal," "Vermilion"--of poetry (1059). Dickinson dares

Soul, take thy risk,
With Death to be
Were better than be not
With thee (1151)

The human "Soul" or Self is a condition of being "With Death." Without "death," Self or Identity cannot be realized. If there were no death, the human existence would be deprived of all meaning. But, the poet is not concerned with this state, simply because it does not exist. The poet does not look for any tranquillity which might exist before or beyond Life; rather, he is looking for that "Quartz contentment" which comes "After great pain" of existence (341). By going through the experience of life-and-death, the poet achieves his true victory. In "death," the poet stands undefeated:

Surrender - is a sort unknown -
On this superior soil -
Defeat - an outgrown Anguish -
Remembered, as the Mile (325)

Dickinson believes that "Life is Miracle, and Death as harmless as a Bee, except to those who run" (L294). Describing a love scene between the "Bee" and the "Rose," she writes: "Sweet is it as Life, with it's enhancing Shadow of Death" (L446 and 1339). In her letter to Mrs. Sweetser, Dickinson expresses her thought about "death" in these words: "Death is perhaps an intimate friend, not an enemy. Beloved Shakespeare says, 'He that is robbed and smiles, steals

something from the thief' " (L478).¹⁶ Dickinson recommends "smiling" in the face of death. She meets "death" as one meets the "lover," or "friend," or "God": "The first We knew of Him was Death" (1006). Through the "lover" or the persona of death, she knows the "Secrets" of the "Morning's Nest," and of "The Rope the Nights were put across" (446). "Death is the supple Suitor" who carries Dickinson in his "Coach" "To Troth unknown" (1445). In one of her best Death-Love poems, Dickinson dramatizes the role of "Death" as a kind, civil "Lover" who takes her out for a Carriage ride "toward Eternity":

Because I could not stop for Death -
He kindly stopped for me -
The Carriage held but just Ourselves -
And Immortality. . . .

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground -
The Roof was scarcely visible -
The Cornice - in the Ground -

Since then - 'tis Centuries - and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity - (712)

It is interesting to note that the experience of "Death" and "Immortality" is simultaneous in this journey. Immortality is not beyond Death, or as a religious promise of Death, but an accompaniment of Death. The Carriage also symbolizes onward movement and continuity. The element of Time is superbly controlled in the poem. The movement is both within and beyond Time. It is "within time," in so far as the lovers "pause" "before a House that seemed/A Swelling of the Ground." This House is the Grave, a familiar sight. But it is "beyond time," in that the "Horses' Heads/Were toward Eternity." Eternity, as usual, is not an object to be realized beyond time. In being "toward

Eternity," the lovers are in the process and not at the end of their journey. Immortality which is realized as an integral part of "Death" is also a process because it is in the Carriage which is moving. "Pause" before the Grave also indicates movement and not cessation: it is a "pause" not a stoppage. Grave is the condition of Immortality and not Immortality itself. In this way, Dickinson affirms Life and its continuity, or to put it this way, Life as Continuity. Death is merely a "pause."

Dickinson "finds" Life right in the Heart of Death: "To eyelids in the Sepulchre -/How dumb the Dancer lies -/While Color's Revelations break -/And blaze - the Butterflies!" (496). In Death or "Dissolution," man is not "Annulled," but suffers "an Exchange of Territory -/Or World" (560). Death confers a new perspective upon man, in which he can listen to the "Dialogue between/The Spirit and the Dust" (976). "To die is not to go -/On Doom's consummate Chart" (1295). "Existence has a stated width/Departed, or at Home -" (1308). Life is like the "summer too indelible/Too obdurate for Snows -" (1444). In Life, "much can come/And much can go,/And yet abide the World" (1593). "Advance is Life's condition/The Grave but a Relay/Supposed to be a terminus/That makes it hated so" (1652). Dickinson proposes "Life" in "death" and "death" in "life" in a highly paradoxical way:

To die - without the Dying
And live - without the Life
This is the hardest Miracle
Propounded to Belief.

(1017)

The suggestion is, as it seems to me, that one can "die" without really physically dying, that means one can experience "death" in the spiritual sense, and one can "live" without living in the ordinary sense.

Another possible meaning, or perhaps contained in the above meaning, can be that some people are spiritually dead "without the Dying," and they continue to exist "without the Life." The former meaning seems more appropriate because that "is the hardest Miracle" that challenges one's "Belief." Dying to the world and yet living, is really the hardest task. But this can bring one close to the experience of life-in-death or death-in-life. In all these varying postures, it is Dickinson's aesthetic strategy to make concrete the experience which endorses the idea of existence as a continuous process.

In the following pages of this Chapter, I propose to show, through detailed examination of several symbolic structures, that Emily Dickinson's Death-Vision embodies a world of creative continuity. For this purpose, I shall first deal with some of those poems which carry "Sea" as their basic metaphor.

As pointed out earlier, "Sea" symbolizes simultaneous creation and dissolution. Within the "flow" and "flux" of the "Sea," terminal¹⁷ "death" is not possible. In the creative Vision, "death" as the end does not exist:

Those not live yet
 Who doubt to live again -
 "Again" is of a twice
 But this - is one -
 The Ship beneath the Draw
 Aground - is he?
 Death - so - the Hyphen of the Sea -
 Deep is the Schedule
 Of the Disk to be -
 Costumeless Consciousness -
 That is he -

(1454)

Those who disbelieve the possibility of living "again," Dickinson's metaphor for continuity, are not even "alive." This "again" is not "of a twice," as she puts it, but "is one." Therefore, "death" is merely an illusion and not an accomplished fact. The "Ship" of Life, when it

is "beneath the Draw," or when it seems to have gone under water, is not really "Aground." Dickinson seems to ask the question, "Aground - is he?" But the very next line provides the answer: "Death - so - the Hyphen of the Sea." Sea serves here as the "Hyphen," a connecting link between man's life and life, life which is lived with all the fears of mortality, and the life which shatters these fears by illuminating the true nature and purpose of man's creation. The Sea-Ship relationship highlights the "Deep Schedule" or the ambivalent program of "the Disk to be." "Death" in itself becomes involved in the "process"; it is not "final," it is "becoming," it is an everlasting "future" realized in the "costumeless Consciousness" of one's own being. The image of the "Costumeless Consciousness" connotes man's primordial situation in which alone can he apprehend the mystery of his Existence. Howsoever unorthodox it might appear, Dickinson insists on our being "Costumeless," for that is man's "Original" state, a state of purity and innocence. The poet Dickinson cannot deal man with "One - imperial - Thunderbolt," unless he has a "naked Soul" (315). She writes:

Life - is a different Thing -
 So measure Wine -
 Naked of Flask - Naked of Cask - (583)

Without the "Costumeless Consciousness," and without the awareness of the "Deep Schedule" of Sea, the "little boat" which is a human body, seems to man usually to have been "lost" to the "greedy wave" of the "gallant sea" (107). By depicting such scenes or by calling the "Sea" as "the recallless sea" (1633), Dickinson shows us on the one hand the reaction of the ordinary human being towards "death," and on the other, the fundamental ambiguity and paradox involved in man's creative effort to survive his own death. This also points out that human

Consciousness must strive constantly, and strive creatively, in order to survive in the midst of daily dissolution and destruction. The "Sea" which devours from the non-creative point of view, in the creative vision becomes the source of regeneration and "rebirth." In one poem the "Sea" follows the persona as if "He would eat me up," but finally "bowing - with a Mighty look -/At me - The Sea withdrew" (520). In another, "a shining Sea" becomes the last spot in the journey of "Two Butterflies," and "never yet, in any Port -/Their coming, mentioned - be -" (533). Both the situations are ambivalent. However, at the same time, the "Sea" is a promise of life, as seen through the creative Imagination:

A soft Sea washed around the House
 A Sea of Summer Air
 And rose and fell the magic Planks
 That sailed without a care -
 For Captain was the Butterfly
 For Helmsman was the Bee
 And an entire universe
 For the delighted crew. (1198)

When the Ship of life is captained and steered by the "Butterfly" and the "Bee," Dickinson's metaphors for Human freedom and Imagination, as well as vigour and hard work, the "Sea" does not pose any threat. It becomes the "soft Sea" washing "around the House," the House of Existence, and producing "Summer Air," the breath of Life. In the creative Imagination, "life" sails "without a care" and it is "Summer" all over:

My Garden - like the Beach -
 Denotes there be - a Sea -
 That's Summer -
 Such as These - the Pearls
 She fetches - such as Me (484)

The "Garden" of Dickinson's poetry contains the "Sea" within itself,

and it is the source of "Pearls" and "Summer" to her. "Summer" is her favourite metaphor for "life," and "Pearls" stand for everything that is precious; they symbolize the condition of the human soul passing through water and fire at once. In her Imagination, Dickinson dares to "travel" "To Evening's Sea" "By routes of ecstasy" (1513). She "plays" with the Sea of death-and-life, but "life" remains her primary concern:

Three Times - the Billows tossed me up -
Then caught me - like a Ball -
Then made Blue faces in my face -
And pushed away a sail

That crawled Leagues off - I liked to see -
For thinking - while I die -
How pleasant to behold a Thing
Where Human faces - be -

The Waves grew sleepy - Breath - did not -
The Winds - like Children - lulled -
Then Sunrise kissed my Chrysalis -
And I stood up - and lived - (598)

The "Billows" of the "Sea" toss the persona up "Three Times." They "play"; they do not kill. They make "Blue faces" and then "push away." The entire game seems to be the game of "movement." The "Billows" indicate back and forth motion. Pushing "away a sail" also implies onward going. The end is not in sight. The persona "crawls" and sees even while it thinks that death is close at hand. The persona "breathes" and remains conscious of the "Human faces" till the "Waves" grow "sleepy" and the noise of the Sea-Winds gets "lulled" like "Children." The image of the "Children" once again affirms the playfulness of the whole act between the "Billows" and the "I." The night of "play" wears off with the "Sunrise," and the persona comes back to life: "And I stood up - and lived." This is the creative "rebirth"

and not any unverifiable belief in the transmigration of souls after death. The image of "Sunrise" is perfectly harmonized with the Sea-dance. This takes me to the symbolism of sunset and sunrise which also provides Dickinson with the basis for the Aesthetics of Continuity.

The "sunset," symbolic of death, baffles and challenges Dickinson's poetic imagination as much as any other symbol of "death." But she does not stop with the "sunset," because "sunset" and "sunrise" represent to her two movements of a single "dance." The movements are integral and simultaneous in the Imagination, though sequentially they are set apart from each other. The landscape of "death," howsoever long and wide it may be, ultimately merges with the landscape of "life." Dickinson understands the creative function of death and expresses it in many ways: "There's that long town of White - to cross -/Before the Blackbirds sing" (221). The poet also "sings" by crossing the "town of White." Even when "Sunset shuts (her) question down," it does so "With Cuffs of Chrysolite" (221). Chrysolite is an olive-green gem which symbolizes everlasting fertility. Dickinson calls "Sun" "the Juggler of Day," who leaps "like Leopards to the Sky" and "at the feet of the old Horizon" lays "her spotted Face to die" (228). "Sun" in this case is the feminine energy which is symbolic of both creation and destruction. Life must be understood in terms of both the "sunrise" and "sunset," because it is neither only "sunrise" nor only "sunset." If we feel that "Life would all be Spring" (232), we will be greatly disappointed. The double movement of the life-death dance is necessary for the inner harmony of our Being. "Sunset" is the "Western Mystery" which dawns upon us "Night after Night" (266).

"Day's superior close" does not really mean any "Change" or alteration (268), though it seems like "change" for a time:

An ignorance a Sunset
 Confer upon the Eye -
 Of Territory - Color -
 Circumference - Decay - (552)

This is that "ignorance" or darkness which the ordinary human being cannot escape. But the creative person "earns" the "Ethereal Gain" "by measuring the Grave -/Then - measuring the Sun" (574). Sun is the source of Life: " 'Tis His to stimulate the Earth," and "To interrupt His Yellow Plan/The Sun does not allow" (591). Sunset, then, should be experienced with a sense of equanimity, as "the Mountain to the Evening/Fit His Countenance -/Indicating, by no Muscle -/The Experience" (667). In "The Sun kept setting - setting - still," Dickinson writes at the end: " 'Tis Dying - I am doing - but/I'm not afraid to know -" (692). Dickinson's "Ancient fashioned Heart" moves "as do the Suns -/For merit of Return -/Or Birds - confirmed perpetual/By Alternating Zone -" (973). The "Sun" is both "The Yellow Man" of "the East" and "The Purple Man" of "the West" (1032). Both East and West, life and death are carried "in the Sun." Like the "Sun," Dickinson is "A Candidate for Morning Chance/But dated with the Dead" (1194). She experiences "death" with a sense of "Peace" and a feeling of "Ecstasy":

A Sloop of Amber slips away
 Upon an Ether Sea,
 And wrecks in Peace a Purple Tar,
 The Son of Ecstasy - (1622)

Dickinson regards the "Sun" merely as an instrument in the life-death process which is controlled by the Creator himself. The "Sun" is the Eye of "an Approving God":

Apparently with no surprise
 To any happy Flower
 The Frost beheads it at its play -
 In accidental power -
 The blonde Assassin passes on -
 The Sun proceeds unmoved
 To measure off another Day
 For an Approving God.

(1624)

But the "process" never ends. The "Sun" daily "rises - passes - on our South/Inscribes a simple Noon -/Cajoles a Moment with the Spires/And infinite is gone -" (1023). At "Sunset" it seems as if "Life's/Gone Westerly" (950).

Through the symbolism of "sunrise" and "sunset," Dickinson succeeds in defeating the curse of mortality. By capturing the experience of creation and dissolution in the symbolic structures of her art, Dickinson proposes a metaphoric way of apprehending the mystery of Creation and human destiny. In her finest poem on the "Sun", she dramatizes the simultaneity of her Vision of "life" and "death," and suggests the way in which we should go through the creative experience:

I'll tell you how the Sun rose -
 A Ribbon at a time -
 The Steeples swam in Amethyst -
 The news, like Squirrels, ran -
 The Hills untied their Bonnets -
 The Bobolinks - begun -
 Then I said softly to myself -
 "That must have been the Sun!"
 But how he set - I know not -
 There seemed a purple stile -
 That little Yellow boys and girls
 Were climbing all the while -
 Till when they reached the other side,
 A Dominie in Gray -
 Put gently up the evening Bars -
 And led the flock away -

(318)

The "sunrise" and the "sunset" are instantaneously present in

the poetic vision. They refer to the totality of experience in which the light and the dark exist simultaneously. The light and the dark symbolize life and death, movement and stasis. Every image contributes to the thematic pattern of the poem. In the hour of the Dawn, the whole world, with its spiry towers and lofty buildings, bathes and swims "in Amethyst," representing the red of wine and the blue of Sea, symbolizing passion for and contentment in existence. The whole animal world which is represented here by the "Squirrels" and the "Bobolinks" moves and sings and intensifies the area of human activity. The "Hills" unveil themselves; the entire external nature removes the garb of night and comes into the light of the day. In this moment of ceaseless music and motion, the poet speaks to himself "softly": "That must have been the Sun"! The ambivalence of this "soft" utterance merges with the strangeness of the scene depicting sunset or death. The "purple" and "Yellow" fade into "Gray." We die in the very act of living: the "Yellow boys and girls," the sons and the daughters of Apollo, the sun-god, continue "climbing" the "purple stile" to cross the fence of life till they reach "the other side." "Climbing" is an act of living. But since in this drama we are "climbing" over to "death," we are living-in-death. When we reach "the other side," the Lord of "Gray" closes the gates of "death" "gently" and leads the pastoral humanity "away"--away to another dawn. In this process, we die into life, and experience the twilight of the morning and the evening at once. We rise continuously like the Sun, and continuously untie the "Bonnetts" of the night. All this happens on the spiritual level of apprehension. We experience within ourselves,

and consummate through our being, many a death and many a birth. And this continuity is what the poem achieves for us in its sensuous and concrete form. Clark Griffith observes:

The poet's failure to say how the sun set reflects her failure to see beyond life: her confusion about an action in Nature registers her inability to fathom death or to justify it philosophically.¹⁸

I think Griffith has missed the whole point. The ambiguity involved in "But how he set - I know not -" is a part of the total design of the poem. The nature of the experience is such as cannot be known intellectually or rendered in the form of a statement. The inner apprehension cannot be communicated in scientific terms. Hence the expression "There seemed a purple stile." Edward J. Rose aptly remarks that "In reading the poem, we see what it is to see. By describing the sunrise and the sunset, the poet tells us what life and death are, tells us what there is to a day."¹⁹ In her creative perception, Dickinson sees life and death as a Unity. The sunset is followed by the sunrise: life follows death, death follows life:

The Sun went down - no Man looked on -
The Earth and I, alone,
Were present at the Majesty -
He triumphed, and went on -

The Sun went up - no Man looked on -
The Earth and I and One
A nameless Bird - a Stranger
Were Witness for the Crown -

(1079)

"He triumphed, and went on" shows Sun's victory over the realm of death, though it must triumph by going down to "death." It also indicates that by going down, the Sun can move on. The forward movement brings the Sun up. In this sense, "The Sun went down" and "The Sun went up" are integral. The "Sun" becomes the paradigm of our

constant plunge into and out of "death." C. G. Jung refers to this symbolic "plunge" in these words:

Out of the unfolding embrace, the enveloping womb of the sea, the sun tears itself free and rises victoriously, and then, leaving the heights of noonday and all its glorious works behind it, sinks back into the maternal sea, into the night which hides all and gives new birth to all.²⁰

It is in this sense that Dickinson's "Suns go down," and the "Darkness" is always "about to pass" (764). The "Darkness" moves onward and never stops. It is "Death's Experiment -/Reversed - in Victory" (550), and we hear "The Proclamation of the Suns/That sepulture is o'er" (1519).

Through several other symbolic forms, Dickinson continues to discover the never-ending dance of life-and-death. It is in this "dance" that she comes upon the metaphors of poetic Immortality and continuity. Even when her "Robin is gone," she says:

Yet do I not repine
Knowing that Bird of mine
Though flown -
Learneth beyond the sea
Melody new for me
And will return. (5 and L215)

The "little boat" of her life seems to give "up its strife" and gurgle "down and down." But with the new dawn

. . . o'erspent with gales -
Retrimmed its masts - redecked its sails -
And shot - exultant on! (30)

In the process of life and death, Dickinson sees everything as "renewed": "New children play upon the green -/New Weary sleep below - /And still the pensive Spring returns -/And still the punctual snow!" (99). In spite of the snow, or even because of it, Dickinson shows her confidence in "rebirth": "My flowers from a hundred cribs/Will peep,

and prance again" (133). Death continues "Humming the quaintest lullaby/That ever rocked a child." But "The Bumble bees" wake everything up "When April woods are red" (142):

I know a place where Summer strives
With such a practised Frost -
She - each year - leads her Daisies back -
Recording briefly - "Lost" - (337)

In Dickinson's poetic eschatology, "death" is merely a "brief" pause. Her "Winters" do not stay for long:

Myself - for scarcely settled -
The Phoebes have begun -
And then - it's time to strike my Tent -
And open House - again - (403)

In "A Night - there lay the Days between -" (471), Dickinson uses "Night" and "Day" as symbols of Recurrence. Ceasing in the Grave which is "a Summer's nimble mansion," and where "Exists an Oriental Circuit" (813) is the way of fulfillment and not death-without-return. The "Oriental Circuit" is Dickinson's metaphor for endless movement and the process of becoming. In this "Compound" pattern, Dickinson becomes "the Bride" of "Dust" and "Day" (830) and sings:

With Us, 'tis Harvest all the Year
For when the Frosts begin
We just reverse the Zodiac
And fetch the Acres in. (1025)

In this creative vision "death" comes and goes, and becomes "intimate" like "a Tempest past" (1134). One feels "finer is a going/Than a remaining Face" (1422) because this "going" is "Forever" which is "deciduous," and hence repeats itself. The poet experiences the "going" and "coming," "Autumn" and "Spring" at once

The ones that disappeared are back
The Phoebe and the Crow
Precisely as in March is heard [No stanza break]

The curtness of the Jay -
 Be this an Autumn or a Spring
 My wisdom loses way
 One side of me the nuts are ripe
 The other side is May. (1690)

In the poetic imagination or intuition all things are possible. The things "disappear" and come back simultaneously. The "Spring" gets mixed up with the "Autumn," as life gets mixed up with "death." But all this baffles the human "wisdom." The paradox of poetic knowledge is brought out very well in "My wisdom loses way." Poetic knowledge is Wisdom but of a different sort; it cannot state itself as an argument, it lacks "Evidence." The awareness that "Life is death we're lengthy at, death the hinge to life" (L281), or "This World is not Conclusion" must remain a paradox which

Philosophy - don't know -
 And through a Riddle, at the last -
 Sagacity, must go -
 To guess it, puzzles scholars -
 To gain it, Men have borne
 Contempt of Generations
 And Crucifixion, shown -
 Faith slips - and laughs, and rallies -
 Blushes, if any see -
 Plucks at a twig of Evidence - (501)

Death flows into "life," but it does not conclude either "life" or itself. Paradoxically, it means a fresh start, a new awareness. This vision, however, does not take away the "anguish" of Existence; it simply tells the way to live with the "anguish." This "anguish" is integral with the process of "the eternal return":

The longest day that God appoints
 Will finish with the sun.
 Anguish can travel to its stake,
 And then it must return. (1769)

The "Anguish" here is not ordinary despair or nausea. It is an active

partner in man's destiny who accompanies him to the end of "The longest day" and then "returns" in order to strive with man towards the process of continuity. This is the source of man's tragic vision. When "death" creates "awful Vacuum" in our lives, the only way to challenge the emptiness of life is to create "life." Dickinson does that through her art:

I worried Nature with my Wheels
 When Hers had ceased to run -
 When she had put away Her Work
 My own had just begun. (786)

This is not to deny the reality of "death," but a creative way of "defeating" "death" by affirming "life" and "creativity." Dickinson subsumes in her poetry many a "Noon" and many a "Night" (960). She writes: "Night is the morning's canvas" (7). The "Morning Sky" and the "Evening Sky" are eternally present in the colours of her perception (204). She celebrates the "Breath" of Life, which she calls her "Crown," and says "No Wilderness - can be/Where this attendeth me" (195).

The symbolic constructs of Dickinson's poetry fully embody the notion of creative Immortality. The final direction of her death poetry does not lead towards any mystical or traditional kind of Resurrection. There is no Eternity beyond the creative moment. Dickinson's "Forever - is composed of Nows" (624). This does not mean that she is unaware of the orthodox, religious notions. Occasionally, she writes about the traditional ideas of Hell and Heaven, Death and Immortality, and Life beyond the Grave. But whenever she makes these the subjects of her poetry, her tone is almost invariably ironic and sceptical. Not that she disregards the religious notions,

but her mood is often that of inquiry rather than metaphoric assertion. In one poem she asks "Is Heaven then a Prison?" (947). In another she writes: "We pray - to Heaven -/We prate - of Heaven -/Relate - when Neighbors die -" (489). She tells us "Parting is all we know of heaven,/And all we need of hell" (1732). Her treatment of Heaven and Hell is surely sceptical when she writes "the Sepulchre/Defies Topography" (929). Her eyes are always looking towards the Earth: "That Heaven if Heaven - must contain/What Either left behind" (933). She writes "The Lark is not ashamed/To build upon the ground/Her modest house" (143). In "You're right - 'the way is narrow' -," Dickinson ends by saying:

And after that - there's Heaven -
The Good Man's - "Dividend" -
And Bad Men - "go to Jail" -
I guess - (234)

Concerning Death and Immortality, she puts the question in this manner: "Is Immortality a bane/That men are so oppressed?" (1728). She says, "We are molested equally/By immortality" (1646). On the authority of Jesus, Dickinson writes: "I need no further Argue -/ That statement of the Lord/Is not a controvertible -/He told me, Death was dead -" (432). She also writes about "The Stimulus, beyond the Grave" (1001). But when she considers the question of journey after "death," her manner becomes ironic and sarcastic:

Those - dying then,
Knew where they went -
They went to God's Right Hand -
That Hand is amputated now
And God cannot be found -

The abdication of Belief
Makes the Behavior small -
Better an ignis fatuus
Than no illume at all - (1551)

For the orthodox believers, "death" seems to be a simple affair. They know that when they die, they will go to "God's Right Hand." But for the unbelievers, "That Hand is amputated," "And God cannot be found." The loss of "Belief/Makes the Behavior small." It is better to have "an ignis fatuus/Than no illume at all." By making the orthodox "Belief" "an ignis fatuus," Dickinson is undercutting the roots of orthodoxy. Ignis fatuus implies delusive hope, Will-o'-the-wisp, and even idiocy.

It should be obvious, then, that Dickinson is not looking for the Right Hand of God. Religious notions do not satisfy her until they are transformed into the symbols of her art. She is not working for Immortality as most other people do. She is looking for that Immortality which is present in each "moment" of her creative life:

Some - Work for Immortality -
 The Chiefer 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 -

(406)

Dickinson belongs to the "Chiefer part," the best and the choicest of humanity, who work for "Time." She is concerned with "The Bullion of Today," and not with the "Currency/Of Immortality" beyond Time. She receives "Bulletins" from "Immortality" which consists of "Tomorrow and Today," and the only "God" she meets is the God of "Existence" (827). It is the creative Immortality which she calls the "Flood subject" (L319). Even a "Letter feels to her like immortality" (L330). She calls the "promised Resurrection" a "conceited thing" (L184). "Eternity," she thinks "will be/Velocity or Pause" (1295). Motion or

movement being a fundamental ingredient of her creative life, she eludes "stability" (1682). She seeks it only as a "pause" in order to begin anew. This is how she achieves her victory over mortality and comprehends the nature of life-and-death. And she claims

Behind Me - dips Eternity -
 Before Me - Immortality -
 Myself - the Term between -
 Death but the Drift of Eastern Gray,
 Dissolving into Dawn away,
 Before the West begin - (721)

This represents to me the culmination of the Aesthetics of Continuity. Dickinson becomes the dancer and the dance, and "death" as we know it is lost into the "life" of "A loosened spirit" (1587). In this case, poetry absorbs the typology of the "Duplicate divine," the creator and the destroyer, and contains the "Miracle" of the "forward" movement, which is like "A Crescent in the Sea" and "Maelstrom - in the Sky" (721).²¹

CHAPTER VI

SELF: THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY

Lonely one, you are going the way to
yourself. And your way leads past yourself
You must wish to consume yourself in your own
flame: how could you wish to become new
unless you had first become ashes!

Lonely one, you are going the way of the
creator: you would create a god for yourself

- Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra

Self is the matrix of creation. It is the "Centre" to which
"Each Life Converges" (680), the Sea to which every "River runs" (162).
It is "The Ultimate - of Wheels" (633) which governs man's destiny and
"forward" movement. It subsumes all "the Dimensions/Of Possibility"
(1208). "Without this - there is nought -" (655): it is the source
of the Human Imagination which gives order to man's chaotic percep-
tions; it is the secret of man's "freedom." It intensifies man's
experience of Love, and generates in him the spiritual strength to
meet the challenge of Death. It communicates "Without a syllable"
(811). It is still but its "stillness is Volcanic" (175). It is the
Presence which asserts itself by being Invisible. Dickinson's poetry
fully dramatizes the ontological necessity to realize this "seraphic
self" (1465), and proposes this "as a continuous adventure and a
perpetual crisis," to use Glauco Cambon's expression.¹

The realization of Self or Identity is an endless process;

it involves total commitment and constant striving on the part of one who seeks to merge or unify with his/her Being. In this quest, one is always haunted by the notion of "Ourself behind ourself" (670). This engenders a deep sense of "aloneness" or solitude in which one experiences the "final inch" (875) of one's Consciousness. The sense of suffering ripens to such an extent that "A nearness to Tremendousness -/An Agony procures -" (963). "Dread" (770) and "Danger" (974) become the sources of spiritual revelation. "Terror" remains pervasive in "A Being" which is "impotent to end -/When once it has begun -" (565). "Dissolution" (539) and "Creation" (724) represent the prismatic movement of Existence. That Dickinson's poetry embodies the process and the tendencies necessary for the condition of Self has already been shown in the preceding pages of this study. It has also been observed that Dickinson plunges into the "abyss" of her own Being, and by doing so, discovers the secret source of her vocation and destiny. She encounters the spiritual terror and silence of the abyss most daringly. In the darkness of the abyss, she finds the "light" by which she sees "death" as the source of "renewed" life, or "the first form of life" (PF70). That is why she dares her "Soul" to be "With Death" (1151). By "fitting" her "Vision to the Dark" (419), she proclaims that "Consciousness - is Noon" (1056). She describes the apocalypse of the Spirit or Identity in terms of the ample images of "Thunder," "Lightning," and "Fire." She sings the "Fame of Myself" (713), and shows perfect awareness of the paradox that the realization of Self demands the negation of self, and that Identity costs man "Precisely an existence -" (1725) because "All - is the price of All -" (772). In her aesthetics of I-Thou relationship, Dickinson stresses

the creative ability to lose one's self in order to find one's Self; it is by losing one's narrow self that one can discover the larger Self.

In this chapter, I propose to elaborate the assumptions and observations contained in the opening paragraphs, and also show through the reading of Dickinson's poetry that the human body is not an impediment in the process of Self-awareness but if creatively apprehended it becomes an integral part of the human psyche; and that I-Thou relationship is not antagonistic to pure and dynamic Subjectivity or Inwardness; rather, it is integral with the Self or Being. For Dickinson, the greatest crisis of existence is the everlasting problem of Identity. She finds her "Soul condemned to be/Attended by a single Hound/Its own identity" (822). Paradoxically, it is the "Hound within the Heart" (186) which no one can resist. The realization of Self or Identity in and through Time constitutes man's struggle to be himself. Identity is "Time's sublimest target" (8). The quest for Identity entails infinite venture and infinite suffering. To fail in this venture is to remain in one's finitude only: "Finite - to fail, but infinite to Venture -/For the one ship that struts the shore" (847).

In her quest for Identity, Dickinson shows a unique sense of pain and suffering. She thinks that "At leisure is the Soul/That gets a Staggering Blow -" (618). "Garrisoned no Soul can be/In the Front of Trouble -" (1243), says Dickinson, and for her "Safe Despair it is that raves -/Agony is frugal." To be alienated from one's "identity" is to face "the Sovereign Anguish" and "the signal woe" (167). But she deliberately invites "Woe" because "It sets the Fright at liberty -" (281):

The Morning after Woe -
 'Tis frequently the Way -
 Surpasses all that rose before -
 For utter Jubilee - (364)

Woe sharpens her Imagination. She "makes the Quick of Woe!" (509). She equates "Woe" with the "Sea": "They're Water - equally -" (660), and "Water" is her metaphor for "rebirth." She knows that those "who have the Souls -/Die oftener -" (314). She suffers the "Bandaged moments" of the "Soul," faces the "ghastly Fright" of existence, but with her spiritual power converts the suffering into ecstasy: "What Exultation in the Woe -" (1642), and transmutes the "Bandaged moments" of the Soul into her "moments of Escape -" and "Liberty" in which the Soul knows nothing "But Noon, and Paradise -" (512). She experiences the "difficulty" of the "soul in pain" (244), but writes:

The Moments of Dominion
 That happen on the Soul
 And leave it with a Discontent
 Too exquisite - to tell - (627)

Dickinson does not deny the pervasiveness of existential pain and anguish, but she achieves control over mortal agony through her creative Consciousness. The "Discontent" of the "Soul" becomes "Too exquisite - to tell -." She knows the art of doing "Sickness over/In convalescent Mind," and "rewalks a Precipice," so that her "suffering" should prove the existence of her "Identity" (957). The pain of life "prepares" her "for peace" (63). She learns "the Transport by the Pain -" (167). Howsoever "Titanic" the pain may be, her "Features keep their place -" (175). It is that "pain" which she wants to "instil" into us through her art (177). "Pain" is the source of her "Power":

I can wade Grief -
 Whole Pools of it -
 I'm used to that - [No stanza break]

But the least push of Joy
 Breaks up my feet -
 And I tip - drunken -
 Let no Pebble - smile -
 'T was the New Liquor -
 That was all!

(252)

The "tumultuous soil" germinates "Rapture" (1480). "So - many - drops - of vital scarlet -/Deal with the Soul" (269). She does not weep "for the Sorrow" but "the push of Joy" (276). She cries "at Pity - not at Pain -" (588). Pain is "the old-road" "That stops - at Heaven -" (344). "A piercing Comfort it affords/In passing Calvary -" (561). "Delight - becomes pictorial -/When viewed through Pain -" (572). She is acquainted with no less than "Boundaries of Pain -" (644). Pain is the primordial condition of existence:

Pain - has an Element of Blank -
 It cannot recollect
 When it begun - or if there were
 A time when it was not -

(650)

The creative apprehension of "Pain" and "Suffering" is the road to "Identity." Suffering brings spiritual awareness. The more the suffering the richer the awareness is. This is particularly true of the tragic vision of life, though this cannot be affirmed of "life in general."² Dickinson specializes in "pain" and "suffering" as the "minute particulars," and not as merely philosophical concepts. For her, "Pain - expands the Time," and it "contracts - the Time -" (967). It is at once the now and the eternity. It is by "pain" that she realizes her "Identity," and it is also by "pain" that she is eternally on the way to "Identity." Out of her pride for "pain," she tells Jesus: "I usurped thy crucifix to honor mine" (1736). She wears "the 'Thorns' till Sunset" (1737). Pain becomes the source of her "freedom," and her route to "Paradise," the Paradise of her Being:

Joy to have merited the Pain -
 To merit the Release -
 Joy to have perished every step -
 To Compass Paradise - (788)

Dickinson's spirit feeds "on awe" (1486), and she dares every anguish that life can threaten with. Even the impending moment of her own death does not upset her plans towards Self-realization. She views her death with perfect calm and evenness of Mind:

This Me - that walks and works - must die,
 Some fair or stormy Day,
 Adversity if it may be
 Or wild prosperity (1588)

She reveres the agony caused by Love:

I've got an arrow here.
 Loving the hand that sent it
 I the dart revere. (1729)

Through suffering, Dickinson comes to know that "Soul" contains "fortitude" and "That it can so endure" "Felicity or Doom -" (1760). She undertakes the task of Poetry or "identity" with full awareness of the dangers and deprivations involved in the process. Her sure-footedness is expressed in these lines:

To undertake is to achieve
 Be Undertaking blent
 With fortitude of obstacle
 And toward encouragement (1070)

The sense of "fortitude" is fundamental to Self-discovery. If "identity" is the goal, the "anguish" of existence becomes "transporting" (148). The "Anguish" becomes "absolute" (301), and its "excess" or "Avalanches" lead towards the eternal silence of one's Self which makes "no syllable - like Death" (310). Dickinson gets "Wrung" "with Anguish" (497), in order to experience the abyssal face of her "Identity," and feels:

Perhaps 'tis kindly - done us -
 The Anguish - and the loss -
 The wrenching - for His Firmament
 The Thing belonged to us - (534)

Identity assumes the proportions of "His Firmament" which primordially belongs "to us." Through "Anguish - and the loss," we seem to "repossess" or be "reborn" to our true Self. Dickinson sings in the moment of "rebirth": " 'Tis Anguish grander than Delight/'Tis Resurrection Pain -" (984). In her creative Imagination "Mirth is the Mail of Anguish" (165). This "anguish" abides, and the crisis of soul never ends. This is symptomatic of "ripeness," and it impels Dickinson to advance towards the "other scene or other soul" (1756). The "other scene" is the life of the "spirit," and the "other soul" is the mental state in which one transcends the limitations of the empirical ego or the created self or what the Hindus call Jivatman, and passes on to the "awakened soul" or the Atman,³ without ever wholly abandoning the ego or the body. In order to realize the "other soul," Dickinson goes through the ordeal of fire. She sees "a Soul at the White Heat," and consumes herself in "the finer Forge" of her creativity (365). The consuming fire is also the "Temple fire" (203), the Temple which the poet builds (488). For her, even "To think just how the fire will burn -" "Beguiles the Centuries of way!" (207). In her vision "the Fire ebbs like Billows -" (291), and thus, in the symbolic sense, it consumes and re-creates simultaneously. "Fire" burns her every "Day" and every "Night" (362). She believes that the "Bird," the metaphor for the poet, "Through Winter fire" sings as "clear as Plover -/To our - ear -" (495). This "fire" brightens up the "House" of her "identity," and she feels "Sunrise" all over, and the "Noon

- without the News of Night -" (638). Her "Soul" has "Tongues of Diamond," and "A finger of Enamelled Fire -" (753). It is the "Fire that lasts" (1132), and Dickinson "literally" plays with that "fire":

The embers of a Thousand Years
Uncovered by the Hand
That fondled them when they were Fire
Will stir and understand - (1383)

"Fire" is symbolic of "light" and "vision." It is the instrument which "searches Human Nature's creases" (1678), its secrets and its mysteries. It reveals the spiritual topography of our "Home," our true Self or Identity:

I learned - at least - what Home could be -
How ignorant I had been
Of pretty ways of Covenant -
How awkward at the Hymn

Round our new Fireside - but for this -
This pattern - of the Way -
Whose Memory drowns me, like the Dip
Of a Celestial Sea -

What Mornings in our Garden - guessed -
What Bees - for us - to hum -
With only Birds to interrupt
The Ripple of our Theme - . . .

This seems a Home -
And Home is not -
But what that Place could be -
Afflicts me - as a Setting Sun -
Where Dawn - knows how to be - (944)

By the "new Fireside" of her creativity, Dickinson finds herself "ignorant" of the "ways of Covenant," and feels "awkward at the Hymn." Established religion and its practice does not interest her. The "fire" which burns her and brightens her up imposes its own "pattern" upon her mind. It is the "pattern" "of the Way," the way to Self "Whose Memory drowns" her. "Memory" is the "unconscious" remembrance or awareness of its (Self) eternal existence. Remembering "the Way"

is "like the Dip/Of a Celestial Sea-." In this "Dip" one "drowns" in order to be born afresh, as one consumes one's self in the Fire, in order to be born anew. In this new birth, Dickinson remains conscious of only the "Mornings" in the "Garden" of her "identity." The "Bees" "hum," and the "Birds" touch the "Ripple" of the "Theme," the single subject of her poetry. But "identity" does not conclude itself: "This seems a Home -/And Home is not." This represents the paradox of continuity. In the very moment of realization, we must lose the sense of Identity, in order to realize it again and realize it in each moment. The eternal possibility of "identity"—"what that Place could be ——"—"Afflicts" her "as a Setting Sun -/Where Dawn - knows how to be." As the "Setting Sun" is a challenge for the "Dawn" to be, the perpetual loss of "identity" is a spiritual spur for the man of destiny to persistently "find" his "identity." One deserves "identity" only by constantly seeking it. "Identity" is man's "freedom," and his true existence. And "None is of freedom or of life deserving/Unless he daily conquers it anew," to use Goethe's words.⁴

To venture upon the problem of "identity" is to put up with the negation of egocentric self, to bear utter loneliness or privacy, and to undergo the experience of sacrifice and renunciation of all that one normally prizes the most. The reward of "identity" or the Self is the highest aim of man. But the stakes are staggeringly heavy. It calls for virtual self-annihilation. In the process, one "perishes - to live anew -/But just anew to die -" (705). "Annihilation" piles at every step towards "identity." One faces "Miles on Miles of Nought" (443):

Just Infinites of Nought -
 As far as it could see -
 So looked the face I looked upon -
 So looked itself - on Me - (458)

But, the poet, like the "Child" is the "Ruler of Nought,/Yet swaying all -" (637). The poet-Spider "plies from Nought to Nought -" (605). By becoming "nothing," the poet becomes "everything." The creative person contemplates upon the eternal "Nothing" as the "Contemporaneous Nought," and reduces the "mortal Consequence" of his existence (982). In the ultimate sense, the "Nought" is paradoxical because it is rich with content. It is the source from which all life springs. Dickinson displays the sense of complete "negation" through the metaphors of "pebble" and "stone." She becomes "the pebble" of the path of her "lover" (366), or "the Pebble" that "safely plays" by "Droughtless Wells" (460). The "Pebble" which is no other than herself comes alive in these verses:

I took my Power in my Hand -
 And went against the World -
 'T was not so much as David - had -
 But I - was twice as bold -
 I aimed my Pebble - but Myself
 Was all the one that fell - (540)

The "stone" is Dickinson's ample metaphor. It signifies to her "A Quartz contentment" (341), the lid on Grave's mystery, the Silence behind every speech, the "congealed" eyes (519), palsy or "Paralysis" (1046), loss of "love or grace" (1711), and so on. In the context of "identity," however, the stone symbolizes happiness and the fulfillment of "absolute Decree" of self:

How happy is the little Stone
 That rambles in the Road alone,
 And doesn't care about Careers
 And Exigencies never fears - [No stanza break]

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 -

(1510)

The "Stone" shows a perfect degree of "freedom." It "rambles" without any regard for worldly "Careers." It does not fear mortal "emergencies." It "glows alone," and as independently "as the Sun." It wears the dress of "elemental Brown," symbolizing the deep, dark red colour of creation itself, which "A passing Universe" also wears, indicating that the "Universe" is nothing but a creative process. Its posture is "casual" and simple, but it fulfills the ultimate "Decree" of being self-sufficient, of being "in the Road alone." A "Decree/Is Deity -/His Scene, Infinity -" (1584). The "Stone," in being "alone" stands for harmony and integration within the Self. Aloneness or solitude is the essential condition of Identity. In "loneliness" the "sustenance is of the spirit" (1623). "Enlarging Loneliness" is "A pensive Custom" and is a form of "Grace" (1068). "The Soul's Superior instants/Occur to Her - alone -" (306). The "Growth of Man" takes place only when he is essentially "alone" (750). Dickinson feels "It might be lonelier/ Without the Loneliness -" (405). The sense of "Loneliness" is not free from despair and horror. One shudders as if one is "in a Cavern's Mouth" (590). But "Loneliness" is "The Maker of the soul" (777). This "Loneliness" is rare, and "many die without" it (1116). "Loneliness is "a Bliss" and "the Gain" (1179).

It is a lonesome Glee -
 Yet sanctifies the Mind -
 With fair association -
 Afar upon the Wind

(774)

"Lonesomeness" or "solitude" determines man's "quality." It is the

source of man's Courage to be, the courage to choose one's Self and to put up with the abyss of one's Being. This courage is "Not courage before witnesses but the courage of hermits and eagles, which is no longer watched even by a god," to use Nietzsche's insight.⁵ In this state of Being, the created self is completely merged with the spirit or Self, and its finitude becomes an integral part of the soul's "infinity":

There is a solitude of space
A solitude of sea
A solitude of death, but these
Society shall be
Compared with that profounder site
That polar privacy
A soul admitted to itself -
Finite infinity. (1695)

The spiritual solitude is "profounder" than the solitude of "space," "sea," and even "death." The inner "space" contains the "sea" of "death" and "life." Dickinson calls it her "polar privacy," a thematic symbol signifying the union of self and Self, the union in which Time is no more merely transient; rather, it is transmuted into "infinity." Without this relationship the created self or ego remains estranged from its "identity," and without the creative perception of "solitude," our true Self remains a "Stranger to us" (L348).

The soul's "privacy" enhances our power to sacrifice and to renounce what is otherwise valued most highly by the human beings caught up in the web of worldly circumstance. Dickinson gladly suffers the "Dominions dowerless" for the sake of her "Being," and describes the "Reward" of "identity" in terms of the images which integrate royalty and poverty:

My Reward for Being, was This.
 My premium - My Bliss -
 An Admiralty, less -
 A Sceptre - penniless -
 And Realms - just Dross - (343)

The "Reward" is paradoxical. In the state of Being, one loses one's "Bliss" in order to regain it. One feels "royal" without any outward "authority" or richness. One rules over pure wilderness. The things that one likes to possess in life are money and power over others. But authentic living denies these things and confers upon the person the ability to feel rich in his "penniless" state or "Realms of Dross." In the paradoxical sense, then, by choosing one's Being, one chooses against one's self and suffers the agony of the "straight renunciation" which only "the Son of God" (527) can experience in its fullest possibility. Dickinson expresses this paradox in these lines:

Renunciation - is a piercing Virtue -
 The letting go
 A Presence - for an Expectation -
 Not now -
 The putting out of Eyes -
 Just Sunrise -
 Lest Day -
 Day's Great Progenitor -
 Outvie
 Renunciation - is the Choosing
 Against itself -
 Itself to justify
 Unto itself
 When larger function -
 Make that appear -
 Smaller - that Covered Vision - Here - (745)

In order to realize Being, one must go through the "piercing Virtue" of "Renunciation." One has to will the crucifixion of the self which is a felt "Presence," and anticipate the "birth" or discovery of that Self which is not there in the temporal "now." By "putting out" the earthly "Eyes," one experiences the "Sunrise" on the inner landscape

with which the outer Sun, the "Day's Great Progenitor" cannot compete. By "Renunciation," one chooses "Against itself," against the "ego" which is conscious of the external world and its reality. This Choosing is the justification of "Itself" "Unto itself," meaning that the "awakened" soul is autonomous in its activity of denying the independent reality of the created self. The "larger function" of the "enlightened" self makes the egocentric self look "Smaller" by contrast. Unless the Self or Being operates upon the narrow hands of the human ego, man's true "identity" remains a "Covered Vision - Here," it remains hidden or veiled within the human psyche. It is the existential imperative to unveil the inner regions of one's own Being, and realize their abiding truth as against the transiency of one's mortal life. A continuous realization of one's "identity" implies a challenge to one's mortal condition.

The movement towards Self is movement towards one's "interiority" or "withinness." It is a journey towards the inner Paradise. For Dickinson, it is the "Bird" "Within the Orchard," a "King" of the "parlors, shut by day" (103). The "day" in this context signifies the noise and humdrum of daily life. She refers to Self by the name of "intrinsic size" which "Ignores the possibility/Of Calumnies," or the slanders of every day existence. This "Size circumscribes - it has no room/For petty furniture -" (641). It is a mental form which expands as the Mind does. It is the "Diviner Crowd at Home" which obliterates "the need" for going "abroad" (674). It is "the site of the Kingdom of Heaven -" (959). Dickinson writes that:

To own the Art within the Soul
The Soul to entertain

[No stanza break]

With Silence as a Company
And Festival maintain

Is an unfurnished Circumstance
Possession is to One
As an Estate perpetual
Or a reduceless Mine.

(855)

The Soul's only company is Silence, and yet it is the "Festival" "within," by which the "Soul" is entertained. "To own the Art" of the "Soul" is to be in "Possession" of "an Estate perpetual," or the endless realm or a never-diminishing "Mine." The apprehension of "Silence" within the "Soul" is the prerequisite for our encounter with the Self.⁶ True "transport" and "agony," the everlasting conditions of the "Soul" are understood only in terms of their muteness. In the ultimate sense, Silence defines every existing phenomenon. Everything seems to "Sweep by our . . . Heads/Without a syllable -" (282). Silence is the "phraseless Melody" of our inner life (321). It is the source of genuine "fear" and "dread." Dickinson says: "I fear a Man of frugal Speech -/I fear a Silent Man - . . ./Of this Man - I am wary -/I fear that He is Grand -" (543). "Silence is all we dread./There's Ransom in a Voice -/But Silence is Infinity./Himself have not a face" (1251 and L397). But Dickinson shows great courage to plunge into "The Cellars of the Soul" (1225) and live in their utter silence, in order to ultimately transcribe the experience in the metaphors of her art. Dickinson also knows that

Its Hour with itself
The Spirit never shows.
What Terror would enthrall the Street
Could Countenance disclose

(1225)

The Spirit's dialogue with "itself" is a mystery, and its "Terror" cannot be disclosed. It is the reality of "the deepest Cellar" (1182)

of one's Being. Dickinson respects the muteness of the human psyche, for which she finds the analogue in the "inaudible" flowers (L388). She is aware that "How little of our depth we tell" (L955). The "depth" of the Self contains enormous "issues" (42), even "Embarrassments/And awes" (1214). The soul's function is to "comprise" (1533) everything and reject nothing. The soul's manner is all-inclusive. It can be "slow," "rapid," "timid," and "bold" at once (1297). But its withinness defies direct expression. Its Riddle abides. It is like the "brook within the breast" (122). It is the "appalling Ordnance" "within" (175). It is "The Lamp" that "burns sure - within -" (233). It is "The Brain, within its Groove" (556). In spite of its inherent "terror," Dickinson shows no mortal fear of the Self which means to her the summum bonum of existence. In the structure of her Imagination, Life, Poetry, and Identity are all synonymous, and she is prepared to risk anything and everything in order to be worthy of her Destiny:

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!

(270)

Dickinson shows readiness to invest the spiritual earnings of her lifetime to gain "One Life." The process of "payment" is "ceaseless." This "One Life" means to her the "One Pearl," symbolic of both her art and "identity," for which she is only too willing to "dive" into the "Sea," even though "to take it" means the "loss" of her "life." Her eyes are so intently fixed on the "Gem" of her creativity or the "Diadem" of her own "identity" that her vision does not get blurred by the presence of innumerable other Pearls or identities. Her own "burns - distinct from all the row." Dickinson knows the existential predicament of "life" in general. She knows that it lacks lustre and vision; it is indistinct and dull. But, in spite of life's cloudy surface, she can visualize her own "Monarchs," her poetic perceptions, the secrets of her own Existence, Identity, and Freedom, even "Far down the dustiest Road!" In her quest for Identity, she transcends and transmutes the "dust" of existence and compels it to surrender the fire-like clarity of perception. Once she perceives the Self, or "when a soul perceives itself/To be an Emperor" (980), Dickinson consecrates herself to the Vision, in order to "find" it perpetually. For her, there is constant restlessness; the striving is without an end:

Finding is the first Act
 The second, loss,
 Third, Expedition for
 The "Golden Fleece"
 Fourth, no Discovery -
 Fifth, no Crew -
 Finally, no Golden Fleece - . . . (870)

The venture begins with the "Finding" and ends with the loss of the "Crew" and the "Golden Fleece," but it ends and begins again. The "Golden Fleece" of Identity remains an everlasting target and a

continuous Presence. In this posture of persistent consecration, Dickinson experiences the sense of spiritual elation, and, thus, reflects as such:

The Height I recollect -
 'T was even with the Hills -
 The depth upon my Soul was notched -
 As Floods - on Whites of Wheels -

To Haunt - till Time have dropped
 His last Decade away,
 And Haunting actualize - to last
 At least - Eternity -

(788)

In her contemplation upon "identity," Dickinson finds herself equal to the "Height" of the "Hills." The "Depth" of her "Soul" is further deepened or sharpened, and she is inundated with the purity of intuition and spiritual perfection or Wholeness, represented here in the double metaphor of "Whites of Wheels." In this state of psychic ablution, she Haunts "Time" and makes it lose its temporality measured by Decades. And by a process of "Haunting," she actualizes Time as "Eternity." Once again, the "identity" becomes a problem for "Eternity."

Dickinson's response to Self or Identity is so complete that in her creative system, the human body which is normally thought of as an obstacle in the way of spiritual realization, turns into a mental form and becomes a spiritual Body or the container of the "Kernel" of Being. In her Imagination the "Spirit" turns "unto the Dust," and says: " 'Old Friend, thou knowest me' " (1039). In case where the "Dust" or the human body merely impedes the process of the Soul

The spirit looks upon the Dust
 That fastened it so long
 With indignation,
 As a Bird
 Defrauded of its song.

(1630)

The "Spirit," or "Self," or "Being" is of essence "free." In the ultimate sense, the body cannot check the course of the Spirit. Moreover, to retard the movement of the Self is not the only function of the body; this is just its one finite possibility. A creative apprehension of the body reveals its infinite quality, its inseparable relation with the Spirit. In this sense, the Self cannot be conceived without the body. The body provides the existential form to the Being. Dickinson views the body in its creative form and visualizes it as a Bird bearing the "wings" (430), symbolizing its essential "freedom." She writes: "soul, or spirit, or body, they are all alike to me" (L34). "Flesh" is the "door" through which one can watch the "movement" of the "Soul" (292). In the existential sense, it is true that "A single Screw of Flesh/Is all that pins the Soul" (263), but the "Flesh" is a co-sharer of the Soul's destiny. The "Flesh" puts up with "A Weight with Needles on the pounds," and reveals the strength of the "Compound Frame" (264), signifying the Flesh-Soul relationship. The "Flesh" or the "Body" provides "shelter" to the "Soul" and becomes its "Temple":

The Body grows without -
The more convenient way -
That if the Spirit - like to hide
Its Temple stands, alway,

Ajar - secure - inviting -
It never did betray
The Soul that asked its shelter
In solemn honesty

(578)

The "Body" stands "Ajar," and invites the "Spirit" or the "Soul" to stay in its "secure" abode. The "Body" also meets the challenge of the "Self" which is like an "Assassin hid in our Apartment." The

"Body" "bolts the Door" and encounters the "Horror" of the "Self" in all its nakedness (670). This means that the relationship between the "Body" and the "Spirit" is full of dangers and perils. In the process of meeting the "terror" of the "Spirit," the "Body" gets transformed. The "Flesh" loses its "fleshliness." The "Body" becomes "Bodiless" (524) in the paradoxical sense. It becomes "a Body, that/Stand without a Bone -" (780). The "Body" puts off its earthly "filaments," "And during its electric gale -/The body is a soul -" (1431). "The finite" gets "furnished/With the Infinite -" (906). Of this "Body," Dickinson is as "afraid" as she is of the "Soul":

I am afraid to own a Body -
 I am afraid to own a Soul -
 Profound - precarious Property -
 Possession, not optional -

Double Estate - entailed at pleasure
 Upon an unsuspecting Heir -
 Duke in a moment of Deathlessness
 And God, for a Frontier. (1090)

Dickinson equates "Body" with "Soul," and "fears" both. This "fear" is not any physical fright; it is the spiritual "terror" at the apprehension of the "Profound - precarious Property," the "Possession" of which is "not optional." Both "Body" and "Soul" are man's permanent conditions of Being. Both jointly make the "Double Estate" which is man's only legacy of "pleasure." By possessing this "Estate," one becomes like the "Duke" who experiences "a moment of Deathlessness," a moment of everlasting life, and one becomes one's own "God," ever ready "for a Frontier," ready for the "forward" movement which takes one beyond the borders of ordinary consciousness. The battle of existence is won by contemplating both the "Body" and the "Soul." In the Isha Upanishad, it is stated: "To darkness are they doomed who

worship only the body, and to greater darkness they who worship only the spirit. Worship of the body alone leads to one result, worship of the spirit leads to another. So have we heard from the wise. They who worship both the body and the spirit, by the body overcome death, and by the spirit achieve immortality."⁷ Dickinson meditates upon both the "Body" and the "Soul" as the symbols of the Being. She believes that the "Spirit" alone has no meaning. The "Body" houses the "Soul" and the "Soul" illuminates "the House" (1492). The "Face" and "Eyes" express the "Spirit," and the "Spirit" inflates the "countenance" (1486). The two are coeval:

The Spirit lasts - but in what mode -
 Below, the Body speaks,
 But as the Spirit furnishes -
 Apart, it never talks -
 The Music in the Violin
 Does not emerge alone
 But Arm in Arm with Touch, yet Touch
 Alone - is not a Tune -
 The Spirit lurks within the Flesh
 Like Tides within the Sea
 That make the Water live, estranged
 What would the Either be? (1576)

The "Body" is the incarnation of the "Spirit," and the "Spirit" is the vital force of the "Body." The "Spirit lasts" only in the mould of the "Body," and the "Body speaks" only when the "Spirit furnishes" it with Sound. The relationship between the "Spirit" and the "Body" is analogous to the relationship between the "Violin" and the "Touch," or between the "Tides" and the "Sea." Without the human "Touch," the musical instrument cannot dilate into "Music." But the "Touch" alone is not harmony. They must remain "Arm in Arm," in order to be meaningful. As one cannot conceive the "Sea" without the "Tides," or the "Tides" without the "Sea," one cannot think of the "Spirit" without the

"Flesh," or vice versa. They cannot be "estranged" from each other. In the Christian context, God, or the ultimate truth, is also apprehended in terms of the "body" of Jesus Christ, because it is believed that "He/'Made Flesh and dwelt among us' " (1651). The "Flesh," then, becomes sacred, as the "Spirit" is sacred. The religious reference does not take away the existential "suffering" to which the "Flesh" is subject; rather, it intensifies the sense of "suffering," as Christ is the paradigm of man's ultimate limit of suffering and sorrow. "Only God - detect the Sorrow -," says Dickinson (626). She does not mind the suffering of the "flesh." In her letter to Austin Dickinson, she writes: "Give me the aching body, and the spirit glad and serene, for if the gem shines on, forget the mouldering casket!" (L54). She also writes that the "Best - must pass/Through this low Arch of Flesh - /No Casque so brave/It spurn the Grave -" (616). The "Flesh" is the source of "Sorrow" and of "Peace"; it embodies the "Tides" of the "Sea," and the "Music" of the "Violin." The "Spirit" is the reservoir of Sound by which man communicates, and it is also "the Conscious Ear" by which "We actually Hear" (733). For Dickinson, the spiritual "Body," embodied in its various parts, also represents Courage which is instrumental in all forms of Revolution, and which prompts one to face even "Death" with a sense of Victory:

Such spirit makes her perpetual mention,
That I - grown bold -
Step martial - at my Crucifixion -
As Trumpets - rolled -

Feet, small as mine - have marched in Revolution
Firm to the Drum -
Hands - not so stout - hoisted them - in witness -
When Speech went numb -
Let me not shame their sublime deportments - [No stanza break]

Drilled bright -
 Beckoning - Etruscan invitation -
 Toward Light - (295)

The "boldness" to face one's own Crucifixion with a "martial" spirit is the ontological Courage. The "Feet" remain "Firm," and one marches on in "Revolution" and "Toward Light," one breaks the shackles of ignorance, leaves the darkness of the "Dungeons," and walks towards the open "Light" of the "Spirit." In this "sublime" manner, the mere flesh with all its infirmities, crawls "Centuries from" the "soul" (1686), or, to put it in a different way, the corporality is infinitely transcended and it is "soul there - all the time" (1727), the "soul" or the Self which contains the "terror" of the abyssal "Sea" and the "ecstasy" of the sunny "Sky." Dickinson finds the "Self" by going through the "Flesh" in her own creative way. The "Flesh" remains but not in its materiality. She writes:

Of all the Souls that stand create -
 I have elected - One -
 When Sense from Spirit - files away -
 And subterfuge - is done -
 When that which is - and that which was -
 Apart - intrinsic - stand -
 And this brief Drama in the flesh -
 Is shifted - like a Sand -
 When Figures show their royal Front -
 And Mists - are carved away,
 Behold the Atom - I preferred -
 To all the lists of Clay! (664)

The poem describes Dickinson's choice of the "Self." The opening lines suggest a pattern of movement away from "all the Souls" towards the "One," towards one's own Identity, the Being that one is. The choice seems deliberate and decisive, indicated here in the words: "I have elected." In this Choice, the "Sense," or the faculty of ordinary empirical perception, goes off by the "Spirit." The

"Subterfuge" or escape "is done" without any rupture. The "Spirit" signifies the "inner" mode of perception. The "outer" mode parts company with the "inner" mode, and they stand "Apart," as "that which is" and "that which was." The difference between the "outer" and the "inner" is perceived intrinsically only. The "brief Drama in the flesh" indicates the external-temporal dimension of the "body." In the moment of "election" of the "One," the externality of the "flesh" shifts "like a Sand," it disappears like something unreal and unstable. Not the "Body" but its outward manifestation loses meaning for the life of the "Spirit." Not the outer space but its outward perception becomes irrelevant to the Self. To the Self or the Soul, the "Figures," or the mental forms, images or emblems show only their authentic, authoritative or sovereign "Face." Obscurities or "Mists - are carved away"; only clarity prevails in the Self. Dickinson calls this Self her "Atom," the structure of energy, and she prefers this "To all the lists of Clay," signifying a stiff, cold, and inert mass, a body without the Soul. Without "identity" with the Spirit or the Self, the "body" is a sheer bondage. But, with "identity," the "body" achieves its "freedom," though "freedom" imposes its own "responsibility" on the person. The "soul" or the "Self" in its moments of "freedom" or "Liberty," bursts "all the doors," and "dances like a Bomb, abroad,/ And swings upon the Hours" (512). The concept of the Self or the Soul as a "Bomb" is surely unique in the history of American Letters of the nineteenth century. The idea of the Self as the "Atom" (664) is deeply rooted in Dickinson's aesthetics. She defines poetry by its quality of "Thunder" (1247) which, among other things, means the poet's creative power (1581) "to illuminate endlessly the interior life,"⁸

or the Landscape of Absence. "Thunder" is pervasive "in the Room" in which Dickinson's "Soul" resides (293). In her poetic imagination, even "the Minutest Bee" "emits a Thunder -/A Bomb - to justify -" (591). In "Nature" as well as in her Self, Dickinson finds "Thunder" juxtaposed with "Harmony" (668). This "Thunder," like the Self, is paradoxical. "Thunder's Tongue" is "Loud" (276) but it gossips "low" (824). Dickinson clasps her "identity" with all her force, and thereby apprehends the storm and the tranquillity of her Being at once.

Emily Dickinson's Self cannot be equated with the Transcendent Self or the Over-Soul of Emerson.⁹ Nor can her "Identity" be examined in terms of the mystical Self of Meister Eckhart or the highly metaphysical Self of Shankara.¹⁰ In Dickinson's poetry, the Self is proposed as a creative principle. It dominates creativity, and its awareness occurs not through the forms of religious or spiritual meditation but through the very creative act. Dickinson's Self, then, constitutes what Rollo May calls the "creative consciousness of self."¹¹ As pointed out earlier, it entails a continual search, even "doubt" in its presence. One perceives it in paradoxical "ignorance," and perceives it by constant questionings of the Heart:

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

The "Dawn" is the culmination of Self-Consciousness. Dickinson keeps "every Door," or every pore of her existential being, "open," so that "Consciousness" should not escape her. She questions, though the questions contain the answers, if the Self is "like a Bird" or like the "Billows" of the "Sea," free and violent, becoming manifest only

when man has achieved necessary "freedom" and "boldness" within himself. It instigates constant exploration of one's own inner life where alone can be found the hidden "Continent" of Self which is "alone" and uninhabited by any external phenomenon:

Soto! Explore thyself!
 Therein thyself shalt find
 The "Undiscovered Continent" -
 No Settler had the Mind. (832)

The Self causes inner expansion, and it has to be obtained at the cost of one's total energy. There is no other way to "discover" it. Those who "keep" it within themselves without ever realizing it never know its true "Worth":

I cannot want it more -
 I cannot want it less -
 My Human Nature's fullest force
 Expends itself on this.

 And yet it nothing is
 To him who easy owns -
 Is Worth itself or Distance
 He fathoms who obtains. (1301)

Dickinson is fully dedicated to the perpetual discovery of the Self. She spends all her "force" to obtain it. "To him who easy owns" points out the irony of situation in which the person has the Self but to him "it nothing is," because he does not exert about it. The Self is there all the time but the "easy" one never finds it, and thus, exists without meaning. The "easy" one lives but not with himself. To be without one's Self is to be hollow and worthless. The meaning of the "Worth" of one's existence is in proportion to one's awareness of one's Being. Only "He fathoms" the "Worth" of the Self or its inner "Distance," "who obtains" it by spending all his "Human Nature's" strength, by straining to the utmost of his physical and moral capacity.

Only then can one realize the "freedom" that the "Bird" knows. The "Being is a Bird," and

It soars - and shifts - and whirls -
And measures with the Clouds
In easy - even - dazzling pace -
No different the Birds - (653)

Dickinson the poet identifies herself with the Bird, and says: "Superfluous my whole career/Beside this travelling Bird" (1655). The "Bird" is her favourite metaphor for the poet. This shows that "Beside" poetry and the essential freedom of the poet, everything else is "Superfluous" for Dickinson. The "Self" is rendered in terms of poetry; rather, Self is poetry. Poetry is Dickinson's real "Gold" and "Richness." It is not the Gold "in solid Bars" which symbolizes captivity but the Gold which she calls "Myself," and which makes her "bold," symbolizing freedom (454). The images of "Dawn," "Feathers," "Billows," and "Shore" (1619), to mention just one poem, render the phenomenology of Being or Self in its most concrete and sensuous form.

Emily Dickinson realizes the reality of Self or Being within the concrete structure of her own creativity. She does not evince any interest in the Being or Identity which the mystic experiences beyond himself, a metaphysical identity with God, the Maker. For Dickinson "The Maker's Ladders stop," and she is not inclined to see any change in the perspective of the "Ladders," because she feels "Wonderful" in her realm below where she distinctly hears the voice of her Being:

A Solemn thing within the Soul
To feel itself get ripe -
And golden hang - while farther up -
The Maker's Ladders stop -
And in the Orchard far below -
You hear a Being - drop -

A Wonderful - to feel the Sun
 Still toiling at the Cheek
 You thought was finished -
 Cool of eye, and critical of Work -
 He shifts the stem - a little -
 To give your Core - a look -

But solemnest - to know
 Your chance in Harvest moves
 A little nearer - Every Sun
 The Single - to some lives.

(483)

The real "ripeness" takes place "within the Soul" itself. The "Being" must be felt within "the Orchard far below," in the realm of the existential being. It is in this "Orchard," the inner Eden, where the Sun, the symbol of vision, toils endlessly on the "Cheek" of the Self. The Sun appraises his "Work" quite critically and perceives it with "Coolness," and then "shifts the stem" of Being "a little" to give the "Core," the Centre of Self, one perceptive and enquiring "look." In this sense, the "Sun" is the persona of the poet. Dickinson visualizes her "chance" of "Harvest," the symbol of fulfillment, through her own critical development of the Self. The process of fulfillment never ends, it only draws "nearer" "Every Sun," or every Day. This is what means "The Single," the symbol of Self or Oneness, "to some lives." It is evident from the poem under discussion that Dickinson stresses the importance of the creative realization of the Self over other forms which take one beyond the periphery or Circumference of Existence. She "toils" towards the "Harvest" of her own "Core" or Being within the moving wheel of Time indicated by the constant going and coming of the Sun. And she feels her Identity or Being in a fully sensuous and concrete way:

I felt my life with both my hands
 To see if it was there -
 I held my spirit to the Glass,
 To prove it possibler -

I turned my Being round and round
 And paused at every pound
 To ask the Owner's name -
 For doubt, that I should know the Sound -

I judged my features - jarred my hair -
 I pushed my dimples by, and waited -
 If they - twinkled back -
 Conviction might, of me -

I told myself, "Take Courage, Friend -
 That - was a former time -
 But we might learn to like the Heaven,
 As well as our Old Home!" (351)

The sensuous and the psychic become one in the process of the poem. Dickinson draws upon almost all the senses in order to convey the experience which is essentially Mental or Spiritual. She makes her Being real in the "physical" and existential sense. She feels her "life" with her "hands," and sees "if it" is "there." She holds her "spirit to the Glass," and proves it "possibler," meaning that the degree of awareness heightens by visualizing the "spirit," or "The Visage of the Soul" (1311), through the sparkling clarity of the mirror. In a more subtle sense it means the viewing of the "spirit" through the spirit represented here by the "Glass," it is proving the mirror through the mirror, or showing the mirror to the mirror, so that the reality of the mirror or the spirit should not get distorted. She turns her "Being round and round," and pauses to "ask the Owner's name," not so much for the sake of the "name," as for the sake of the Being's affirmation through its own "Sound." The Being, thus, becomes the "object" that one can touch, see, hear, and feel in all its concreteness. Dickinson examines her "features," strikes her "hair," and pushes her "dimples," and waits to see if they gleam back to her. For her, their sparkling means the "Conviction" of herself. In the final stanza,

"myself" becomes the "Friend," and Dickinson walks hand in hand, and courageously, with her "Being" which is an "entity" of "a former time," the time of which we are generally not conscious. The "Being" is Present from the moment of our "birth," but we become unconscious of that moment as we grow--the growing is indeed ironical. This Being is "the Heaven," the "Heaven" which "is the root" (1436), that we have to "learn to like," because that is "our Old Home!" Self is the primordial Centre to which we originally and eventually belong. Our Consciousness of the fact of our own birth which constitutes the symbolic act of Creation, is a necessary step towards the realization of Being which is creativity. To realize one's Self creatively, and in one's own creativity, is the greatest "Battle" that can be "fought" within one's own being. This "Battle" constitutes man's war against the formless abyss of his psyche in which lies hidden the mystery of Being:

The Battle fought between the Soul
And No Man - is the One
Of all the Battles prevalent -
By far the Greater One -

No News of it is had abroad -
Its Bodiless Campaign
Establishes, and terminates -
Invisible - Unknown -

Nor History - record it -
As Legions of a Night
The Sunrise scatters - These endure -
Enact - and terminate -

(594)

The "Battle" is surely concrete and real in every possible sense. But in this "Battle," "Man" does not remain man in the ordinary sense. The whole "Campaign" is "Bodiless." The awareness of inner struggle is indeed existential, but the struggle itself cannot be verified

physically or empirically. The "Battle" "Between the Soul/And No Man," or between the Self and the transmuted man, "is the One," and is "Greater" than "all the Battles prevalent." The cultural or political wars are insignificant in comparison with this Spiritual "Battle." There can be "No News of" this "Battle," because it "Establishes, and terminates -/Invisible - Unknown," meaning that the spiritual "Battle" has no external or surface bearings. "History" cannot "record it," because it is not "fought" in the "temporal" time. The only way to apprehend it is through the inner light which like the "Sunrise scatters" the "Legions of a Night," symbolizing the forces of darkness. In the moment of Self-discovery, the darkness of the abyss becomes translucent. The armies of Night endure and are endured only before the "dawn." The entire drama is enacted and terminated within the Self. Termination does not mean the end, because it "Establishes" "and terminates" simultaneously. Each termination means a new beginning. This "continuity" is not without "danger" and "terror." Dickinson faces the "horror" of the "Battle" between the "Legions of a Night" and "Sunrise" most courageously. The creative reality of the Self or Identity can be discovered only in the tension of "Night" and "Sunrise," or Day and Night. Day-Night symbolism, like life-death symbolism, defines her aesthetic continuity which is also the continuity of Being:

The first Day's Night had come -
 And grateful that a thing
 So terrible - had been endured -
 I told my Soul to sing -

She said her Strings were snapt -
 Her Bow - to Atoms blown -
 And so to mend her - gave me work
 Until another Morn-

And then - a Day as huge
 As Yesterdays in pairs,
 Unrolled its horror in my face -
 Until it blocked my eyes -

My Brain - begun to laugh -
 I mumbled - like a fool -
 And tho' 'tis Years ago - that Day -
 My Brain keeps giggling - still.

And Something's odd - within -
 That person that I was -
 And this One - do not feel the same -
 Could it be Madness - this? (410)

Dickinson begins from the beginning. She experiences the "first Day's Night," the primordial dawn of Creation followed by death and dissolution, with a great enduring spirit. She meets the "terror" of destruction with equanimity and tells her "Soul to sing." This also explains the "terror - since September" (L261). The Soul, in passing through the Night of dissolution and Chaos, finds that her "Strings" or the musical cords are rudely pulled, and that "Her Bow" is "to Atoms blown." Dickinson mends the musical instrument of the Soul by collecting the particles of force or energy into a single whole. The power of the Soul is not lost but is only scattered into parts for a short while, "Until another Morn." For Dickinson, the "Day," symbolic of Light and Creation also holds "horror," equalled only by the terror of Night or destruction in which one cannot perceive anything. When the "Day" unrolls "its horror in" her "face," her outer "eyes" are "blocked." But, paradoxically, it is out of the "darkness" that "light" is born; Perception lies in the loss of perception. The paradox reveals itself to the poet in the moment of the latter's encounter with the creative reality of the Day and the Night, or the Night and the Day, or as Dickinson puts it, the "Day's Night." In this vision, the "Brain" of

the poet, which is also his Self, laughs, and the poet mumbles "like a fool." The "Brain" laughs with "Glee intuitive and lasting" (L472), and the poet mumbles "like a fool," because the poet's wisdom and Vision cannot be stated in the form of a straight philosophical argument. The Vision abides and is continuously achieved. Even after many "Years," the "Brain keeps giggling - still." The tension of terror gets interfused with the ecstasy of Vision. In this "giggling" and the "foolery," Dickinson finds the "difference" between the "person" that she was and "this One" that she is, her Being or Identity. She becomes aware of the "oddity" "within" her former state of being, and calls her present state of Being "Madness." The interrogatory form of the last line, "Could it be Madness - this?" does not mean that Dickinson has no answer to her question. She is "So intimate with Madness" (1284) that she knows that the poetic vision in itself is "Madness," and "Much Madness is divinest Sense/To a discerning Eye -" (435), or, as she writes:

A little Madness in the Spring
Is wholesome even for the King,
But God be with the Clown -
Who ponders this tremendous scene -
This whole Experiment of Green -
As if it were his own! (1333)

The poet views the whole creation, the never ending "Experiment of Green," as "his own," out of the exuberance of divine "Madness." He assimilates in his own Being the "terror" and the "ecstasy" of simultaneous creation and dissolution. This Being is realized as Subjectivity, and "is realized in the moment of passion," to use Kierkegaard's expression.¹² The "passion" is the poet's creativity, and the source of his Imagination. It is in the Imagination that the

Being or Self is realized, and thus, it can be rendered only imaginatively. Dickinson chooses her Self or Subjectivity, and relates it to an existential Inwardness. She renders the experience in these words:

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
Upon her Mat -

I've known her - from an ample nation -
Choose One -
Then - close the Valves of her attention -
Like Stone - (303)

The "Soul" or Self chooses "her own Society," or the Inwardness, and "shuts the Door" to all externalities, in order to protect "her divine Majority," the "Majority" of One. She, then, remains "Present no more" in the ordinary sense. The Self is present only by its Absence. In this state, the Being becomes immune to the wheels of Time. The "Chariots" pause at "her low Gate," symbolizing the arch of divine suffering and affliction, but the Soul is not moved by Time and the gifts of Time. Dickinson considers the "Chariot" also as the bearer of "the Human soul" (1263), but when the "Soul" is related to nothing but itself, it does not need any Chariot; rather, it becomes its own Chariot. In "her own Society," the "soul" does not show any interest in the external symbols of royalty and power. The "Emperor" kneels "Upon her Mat," but the Soul shows complete indifference towards his posture of love and romance. Dickinson has "known" such a Self "from an ample nation," from the Kingdom of her poetic Vision. She chooses the One, and "Then," closes the "Valves" of the heart of Self, so that

there should be no outward pressure upon the Being. The Self becomes "Like Stone," the symbol of perfection and harmony. The Self is, thus, the inner Paradise, the Heaven that can exist only so long as the Mind or the Soul exists. Its size and beauty are proportionate to our own spiritual or psychic "Capacity":

Heaven is so far of the Mind
That were the Mind dissolved -
The Site - of it - by Architect
Could not again be proved -

'Tis vast - as our Capacity -
As fair - as our idea -
To Him of adequate desire
No further 'tis, than Here - (370)

The human "Mind" is the container of the "Heaven" which is man's "identity." If the "Mind" is "dissolved" or disintegrated, the Heaven cannot be located by any means, howsoever professional. The dimensions of the Self are as "vast" as our "ability" to perceive. Its "fairness" is the power of our conception. It defines the adequacy or limits of our "desire," meaning that we need sufficient "desire," or "passion," or "creativity" to possess it. And it is "No further" "than Here"; it is at least ever possible in the "Here" and now of existence. Because of the essential inwardness of Subjectivity or Self, the Being is infinitely tied down to the "Mind," or "psyche," or "Consciousness": "Of Consciousness, her awful Mate/The Soul cannot be rid -" (894). It is like the "Secret" which should not be "told," because

A Secret told -
Ceases to be a Secret - then -
A Secret - kept -
That - can appal but One -

Better of it - continual be afraid -
Than it -
And Whom you told it to - beside - (381)

The "Secret" or the mystery of the Self (Existence) "Ceases to be a Secret" if "told." The mystery must "appal" the "One" to whom it belongs. The mystery of existence belongs eternally to each existing individual, but still no one can share one's "terror" of it with the other. Each person's awareness of the essential "horror" of existence is unique and subjective. However, if and when a possibility of sharing it with the other exists, and is actualized, one is faced with the spiritual predicament of being "afraid" of the "horror" or "Secret" itself, as well as of the person with Whom one shares it. Dickinson admonishes: "Better of it - continual be afraid." By sharing it with the "other," as long as the "other" remains the "other" and not internalized into the identity, the "Secret" or mystery loses its ontological authenticity. Perfect sharing is possible only when I-Thou forms a single identity. In one sense, then, Dickinson does not "tell" her "Secret" to anyone, but only "sings," and yet, in another sense, or perhaps in the same sense but in a paradoxical way, she tells the "Secret" in the form of her poetry and assumes the necessary identity with the readers. In this important sense, the meaning of Dickinson's "terror - since September" (L261), or for that matter the meaning of her entire song or poetry cannot be fully apprehended unless the reader identifies himself/herself with the "Haunted House" of her "Art" (L459a). At any rate, Dickinson continues to believe in the autonomy of the "Soul" or the "Self," and she understands the Self in terms of its own inner mood and circumstance:

The Soul unto itself
Is an imperial friend -
Or the most agonizing Spy -
An Enemy - could send -

Secure against its own -
 No treason it can fear -
 Itself - its Sovereign - of itself
 The Soul should stand in Awe - (683)

The "Soul" embodies all the contradictions of life. It is the "imperial friend," and "the most agonizing Spy." It is "unto itself," its own defender and its own "Enemy." It is "Secure against its own," meaning that it contains its own "danger," and it does not "fear" any "treason" from outside itself. It is complete in "Itself"; it is "its" own "Sovereign." Dickinson says that the "terror" or the "Awe" that the "Soul" should experience must be of "itself" and the nothing else beside.

Dickinson's autonomous Self does not exclude the "Other"; rather, it includes the "Other," though only as an I-Thou identity. The "Other" does not remain outside herself; it is internalized into the Being that she is, and therefore, merges with the inner "horror." As pointed out earlier (Chapter IV), the daemon of the "Other" is an integral part of the Self. Dickinson conveys this theme in many paradoxical postures. The "Other" seems to condition her Being to fructify:

He found my Being - set it up -
 Adjusted it to place -
 Then carved his name - upon it -
 And bade it to the East (603)

"He" or the "Other" creates the mould for the "Being" and gives it its proper form. The "Other" adjusts the "Being" "to place," and then carves its own "name - upon it." And after doing so, the "Other" bids the Self towards "the East," symbolizing life and the dawn of Consciousness. In the process of "carving," the "Other" is syncretized into the Self. By merging with the "Other," the "Being" grows in Self-awareness. The I-Thou relation or "identity" is paradoxical in so far as it is objectivized. But this is the mode in which it can be related, though

it can be realized only in the dynamic Subjectivity. In "The look of thee, what is it like" (1689), Dickinson seeks to affirm "thee" or "thou" as the "Mansion of Identity." She proposes "thou" as "Identity" through the indirect method of imaginative rendering. By raising questions, she provides the answers. The relations of "Identity" are "realms," "Themes," "Delight," "Fear," "Longing" and "Values," meaning that the existential "realms" and "Themes" define the "Pursuit" of "identity." "Delight" and "Fear" define its mood, and "Longing" and "Values" determine its tone and character. Viewing "Identity" through the flux of Time, Dickinson aims to show it as untouched by the "Change" which transfuses "all other Traits," and enacts "all other Blame," signifying Time's censure of everything except "Identity." Time condescends to grant the affirmation "That thou shalt be the same." The "Mansion of Identity" is impervious to Time, though it is realized within Time. Man's "Identity" is the source of his victory over the sense of impermanence. The "thou" which is proposed as changeless and as "Identity" is the projected form of the Self; it is essentially and existentially within the Being towards which man's whole activity moves. Man's search for Being does not take place outside himself, though the outward forms can serve as symbolic representations of what is happening --action and metamorphosis--within man. The search for Self within One's Self constitutes the dialogue between the created self (ego) and the inner Being of the Individual in which the created self gains a true perspective of its infinite possibility, its intrinsic quality of endlessly becoming the Being. In the process, the created self loses its egocentricity and not itself. It becomes aware of its larger function to be Itself. This drama has been rendered by Dickinson in

these verses:

The Drop, that wrestles in the Sea -
Forgets her own locality -
As I - toward Thee -

She knows herself an incense small -
Yet small - she sighs - if All - is All -
How larger - be?

The Ocean - smiles - at her Conceit -
But she, forgetting Amphitrite -
Pleads - "Me"?

(284)

The "Drop," by wrestling "in the Sea" merges with the Sea, and "Forgets her own locality." By losing identity, the "Drop" finds her true "identity." She forgets from where she started. The "I" also moves "toward Thee -" in the same manner. The "Drop," like the created self or the "I" of the poem, grows conscious of her insignificance before the vastness of the "sea" or "Thee." But this consciousness is paradoxical, because in the very moment of encounter with the Sea, the "Drop" wishes to become All, and sees herself as All. The state of humility is also the state of assertion. The created self is like the incense, short-lived but precious and sweet-smelling. The sighing of the "Drop" is a pose of her creative humility. The "Drop" "Pleads - 'Me'," in spite of the fact that "The Ocean - smiles - at her Conceit." The "Drop" eventually forgets her host, the "Amphitrite" (Amphitrite was Poseidon's wife, queen of the Sea), as well as the commonplaceness of her own smallness. The final "Me" implies that by growing to the full consciousness of one's possibility, one can appropriate and enact the vastness of one's true Being, represented here in the symbol of the "Sea." The created self, once exposed to the size of the Self or the "Sea," or to its own "smallness," enters the process of becoming the "Sea." In the paradoxical and ultimate sense, then, the germ or

seed of the Self is contained in the egocentric self. That is why, the created self can never be abandoned. The Being is born of the existing being. The "Sea" is contained in the "Drop," and the "I" contains the "Thou." The entire action takes place, within the Individual. The "Drop" and the "Sea" are inner dimensions. In Dickinson's poetry, the I-Thou relationship is a psychological state in which the "I" cannot be distinguished from the "Thou." The "I" and the "Other" are interfused into the oneness of the Being. In the structure of her Imagination, the "guest" and the "host" are One:

He was my host - he was my guest,
I never to this day
If I invited him could tell,
Or he invited me.

So infinite our intercourse
So intimate, indeed,
Analysis as capsule seemed
To keeper of the seed.

(1721)

"He" or the "Other" once again gets lost in the larger Identity of the relationship which is like "the seed" in the "Capsule of the Mind" (998). The "intercourse" between the "host" and the "guest," or between "He" and "I," and vice versa, is "So infinite" and "So intimate" that it is difficult to "tell" who is who. The sexual symbolism also refers to the basic oneness of the relation. The I-Thou Identity is fully realized. The "Thou" does not remain "Thou" any more. Like the Being or Self, "I" and "Thou" are referred to as "One and One":

One and One - are One -
Two - be finished using -
Well enough for Schools -
But for Minor Choosing -

Life - just - Or Death -
Or the Everlasting -
More - would be too vast
For the Soul's Comprising -

(769)

"One and One - are One -" symbolizes the fundamental Unity of the "Two." In the ultimate sense, the Being or the Self can be apprehended only in terms of the creative monad which subsumes the polarity of the Subject-Object relationship. The Being is essentially "One," and yet it contains everything that is outside itself. It gives perspective to the contradictions of existence without ever denying the reality of tension and irony that stem from the paradox of ever abiding unity in polarity. I have already observed (Chapter I) that Dickinson's poetry represents a polar-monadic structure of reality. The major and the authentic act of "Choosing" to be springs from the "One" and not "Two." The authentic Self or the "Soul" comprises "Life - just - Or Death -/Or the Everlasting." "More - would be too vast" is ironic, because there is nothing beyond the reality of "Life" and "Death." To comprise the "Everlasting," the endless process of "Life-and-death," is to comprise all.

In terms of our daily existence, the authentic Oneness of the Self is often misunderstood by most people as erratic individuality. But Self-sufficiency or Self-reliance is not a disease of the Soul; rather, it is its only health. In his essay on "Self-Reliance," Ralph Waldo Emerson succinctly remarks: "Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world."¹³ Dickinson poetizes her own sense of "Self-Reliance" and Inwardness, and, thereby, celebrates in intention "the greatness of man."¹⁴ Dickinson "strictly" keeps the "Appointment" of "Waiting with Myself," and learns through herself the "fortitude of Fate" (740). She knows that "the Man within" "Never" experiences "Satiety," and "Never for Society/He shall seek in vain -/Who His own

acquaintance/Cultivate -" (746). She believes that "The Soul with strict economy/Subsist till Paradise" (1081), "For nothing higher than Itself/Itself can rest upon -" (751). In the existential realm, human life is full of deprivations and denials. The only way to cope with the agony of existence in general is to spiritually withdraw from the cold, uninviting look of the world into one's own Self. The world's indifference is paradoxical in so far as it cultivates in some the urge to become themselves. Dickinson writes:

Deprived of other Banquet,
I entertained Myself -
At first - a scant nutrition -
An insufficient Loaf -

But grown by slender addings
To so esteemed a size
"Tis sumptuous enough for me -
And almost to suffice

(773)

After being "Deprived" of the outer "Banquet," or the feast, Dickinson entertains herself with Herself. The process is gradual. "At first" it seems "a scant nutrition" and "An insufficient Loaf" to exclusively depend upon one's inner resources. But "by slender addings" of inwardness, the "Self" grows "To so esteemed a size" that it becomes "sumptuous," and "almost" suffices the need. Dickinson's "almost" indicates that we can never know the end of the experience; we must continue to "add" into the holdings of the Self and "entertain" ourselves with the eternity of the process. For Dickinson, Life never concludes. "Concluded Lives" sound "Lacerating" to her "Ears" (735). Dickinson feeds upon the ever-growing "Self" which is her inner "Banquet." The "Self" is her Banquet of Abstemiousness" which "Defaces that of Wine" (1430). This is "That indestructible estate" which no one can steal "From any Human soul -" (1351). She advises:

Who goes to dine must take his Feast
 Or find the Banquet mean -
 The Table is not laid without
 Till it is laid within. (1223)

The withinness or inwardness of man is the constant of Dickinson's poetry. The "Soul" or the "Self" is "the Mutineer" that cannot be "subjugated" (1617). The Self is Revolution and Freedom:

Go thy great way!
 The Stars thou meetst
 Are even as Thyself -
 For what are Stars but Asterisks
 To point a human Life? (1638)

The "Self" is the "great way" which never ends anywhere. It is the starry Heaven which influences "human Life." It is the "Asterisk" which illuminates one's destiny, the "Light" which "is sufficient to itself -" (862). Dickinson feels that "Who Court obtain within Himself/Sees every Man a King -/And Poverty of Monarchy/Is an interior thing -" (803). Her only "Divinity" is the profound sense of "Me-" (355). To rely on the "Self," and to creatively visualize "The Visage of the Soul" (1311), is to prepare one's self to meet all the extremities and perils of Existence:

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 - (789)

The metaphor of the "Columnar Self" is unusually profound. The cylindrical form symbolizes spiritual perfection and intuition. It

represents a continuing state of Being, its motion being circular. To depend on this "Self" is surely "ample." The person who discovers his own Being, can go through the "Tumult - or Extremity -" of Existence with a peaceful demeanour. The perilous storms and the uprooting commotions cannot disturb him, as he has the "Certainty" that "Lever cannot pry -," meaning that no external force, howsoever powerful, can look into the Self impertinently. "And Wedge cannot divide" indicates that the Self is impervious to the splitting energy of the "Wedge." The mechanical images of "Lever" and "Wedge" point out the ruggedness of existence, and symbolize the brute material force. But the Self is "Columnar," and is proposed as far above the brutality of the existential scene, although it exists within existence. The "Self" in itself is the "Granitic Base," and its "Conviction" strengthens man. Even when nobody is on his "Side" and he is all "alone," the Self secures man against the challenge of "a Crowd." Dickinson suggests that a perfect awareness of our "Self" leads towards fruition. We become "Ourself," complete in our continuity, and in the moral perfection of our "Being," even God, the "furthest Spirit" is "not far off" from us; rather, He is within us. By creating the "Self," Dickinson creates her own God. The God that is her creation, or the God that she perpetually becomes, is the pervasive concern of her poetic life. It is the abiding spirit or "soul" that she "cannot see" empirically, but knows " 't is there" (1262). For Dickinson, man's perpetual creation of his own Being or Self is identical with God's act of Creation. As God manifests Himself in His Creation, man also manifests his true Self through his creativity. Dickinson manifests herself in her poetry which is the embodiment of her Identity. Roy Harvey Pearce aptly remarks:

Writing poems, she writes herself. She claims to do nothing more and dares do nothing less. She must know as much of the world as she can, yet in the end know it only as it serves to shape her knowledge of herself. Her words are exact: She is hounded by her own identity. The most apt analogy is Melville's Ishmael, insisting that he is writing his novel after the fact, urging our assent to his utter freedom to adduce material from whatever quarter he wishes and to write from various points of view and in various forms, just so he may understand what has happened to him, just so he may create himself, or at least the possibility of himself.¹⁵

Dickinson's conception of the Self, howsoever personal and private it may seem, is not devoid of the social vision. She takes her "Power" in her "Hand" and goes "against the World -" (540) in a highly paradoxical sense. Her pose of detachment from the world is full of compassion for the world. She confesses: "This is my letter to the World/That never wrote to Me -" (441). In her creative obsession with Self-reliance, Dickinson tells us in the metaphoric-metamorphic way that before we can be useful to others we must first become meaningful to our own selves; that before we can ask others to Choose for themselves we must first Choose for our own selves; and that before we can show any genuine concern for others we must first feel concerned about our own selves. We cannot give unless we have Something to give. From this point of view, Dickinson's poetry can be called the "poetry of concern," to use Northrop Frye's phrase.¹⁶ In her revolutionary ethic of Self-reliance, Dickinson proposes the Self for every man, and proposes it as "the House" that ultimately stands on its own. She is fully conscious that "To be singular under plural circumstances, is a becoming heroism -" (L625). Her message is contained in this symbolic structure:

The Props assist the House
Until the House is built
And then the Props withdraw

[No stanza break]

And adequate, erect,
 The House support itself
 And cease to recollect
 The Auger and the Carpenter -
 Just such a retrospect
 Hath the perfected Life -
 A past of Plank and Nail
 And slowness - then the Scaffolds drop
 Affirming it a Soul. (1142)

The "House" is assisted by the supporting poles and structures "Until" it is "built." Once "the House" is complete, the supports are withdrawn, and the "House" stands "erect" and "adequate" on "itself." Man's life is like "the House." In the process of Self-making, one accepts the "Props," symbolizing the forces of the Tradition and all forms of external assistance. Once the shaping of the Self is achieved, the Self becomes Self-sufficient, robust and assertive. In due course of time, the Self ceases "to recollect," or has no memory of the tools and the artificer which were instrumental in its making. The "perfected Life" has "Just such a retrospect," or a view of its past situation. The Soul or the Self is "affirmed" only when the thought of its association with outward timber and steel and the elevated structures as the supporters of its destiny is withdrawn from Consciousness. The images of "Carpenter," "Plank," and "Nail" bring to mind the scene of Jesus on the Cross. In this dimension, the "suffering" involved in Self-finding comes to mind as a past, yet contemporaneous event. It shows that one who seeks the Self must "suffer," get himself nailed to the cross and then forget having suffered, or, go beyond suffering. This posture expresses the amplitude of the Self. The man of Self does not need the support of the "Props" of Culture and Tradition. He ultimately creates a new Culture and a new mythology through his own Suffering. He lives by his own "Light House" while "rowing in the Dark" (259).

The creative Self is the paradigm of man's Wholeness, the totality of his Being. It is the Perfection which is perpetually achieved or perfected. It is not subject to public opinion or censure. It is the "Truth," that "outlasts the Sun -" (1455). The person who experiences that Self stands "on the tops of Things -"; he sees "Mirrors on the scene," and "No Lightning" frightens him away:

The Perfect, nowhere be afraid -
 They bear their dauntless Heads,
 Where others, dare not go at Noon,
 Protected by their deeds - (242)

The Self is like "the Spring" which in its "inundation," "Enlarges every soul -/It sweeps the tenement away/But leaves the Water whole -" (1425). Dickinson plays with the "Waters" of the "Flood" and feels that "We part with the River at the Flood through a timid custom, though with the same Waters we have often played" (1466). The "Water" or the "Self" makes us "Whole." The "Flood" refers to the eschatology of new creation after destruction. The Self is the Whole to which nothing can be added:

Unto the Whole - how add?
 Has "All" a further Realm -
 Or Utmost an Ulterior?
 Oh, Subsidy of Balm! (1341)

The Self is the "All." It is the last Kingdom or "Realm" in man's journey through Existence. It is the "Utmost" which has no beyond or the future but Itself. It is the "Subsidy of Balm," the "peace" that "Nothing can bring" "but yourself."¹⁷ Out of this "Peace" grows Perception which makes Dickinson sing:

The Meadows - mine -
 The Mountains - mine -
 All Forests - Stintless Stars -
 As much of Noon as I could take
 Between my finite eyes -

The Motions of the Dipping Birds -
 The Morning's Amber Road -
 For mine - to look at when I liked - (327)

And out of this "Peace" grows "Love" which "nought can supersede" (L357).

The Self is "Without the date, like Consciousness or Immortality -"

(L356). Its beginning and the end are the same:

The Opening and the Close
 Of Being, are alike
 Or differ, if they do,
 As Bloom upon a Stalk.

That from an equal Seed
 Unto an equal Bud
 Go parallel, perfected
 In that they have decayed. (1047)

The "Bloom upon a Stalk" symbolizes the creative perfection of the "Being." The "Flower" is perfect in the moment of creation. "Stalk" is the axis or the "Centre" from which the flower stems and to which it goes. The "Being" opens and closes in the same endless manner. The "Seed" becomes the "Bud," the "Bud" becomes the "Seed," and in this continuous metamorphosis they "decay" into "perfection." The "Being" is both the "Seed" and the "Bud," and as the "Flower" dies or decays in order to be born afresh, the "Being" eternally renews itself. This shows the ultimate Unity of Life and Death within the Self. This Unity or Perfection is rendered in Dickinson's poetry also in terms of the Snake symbolism. The "narrow Snake" which is her symbol of "death" in "The Frost of Death was on the Pane -" (1136) is also the symbol of ultimate harmony and perfection in "The Trees like Tassels - hit - and swung -" (606): the "Snake" winds itself "round a Stone," meaning that the "Snake" coils itself in a circular pattern which is the pattern of creative Unity, and identifies itself with the "Stone" which symbolizes Silence and Perfection. The "Snake" also symbolizes

creativity and fertility; it is the "narrow Fellow in the Grass" (986). But since creation also means destruction, it fascinates and horrifies at once. With her "Barefoot" Vision Dickinson attempts "to secure it" "at Noon," but the "Snake" eludes the grasp. She writes:

Several of Nature's People
I know, and they know me -
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality -

But never met this Fellow
Attended, or alone
Without a tighter breathing
And Zero at the Bone -

(986)

For "Several of Nature's People," Dickinson expresses a feeling of "cordiality," but her response towards "this Fellow," the Snake, is fraught with intense chill and "terror." In terms of its symbolism also, the process of "finding" the "Snake" is never without the paradoxical "terror." To have "a tighter breathing" at the creative vision of Reality is perfectly normal. In this context, the "zero at the Bone" means utter loss of sensitivity, but it also means utter gain of Sensibility. "Zero" is the mathematical symbol, the figure "0" which means Nothing and yet Everything because it is the Self-sufficient entity to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be subtracted. The Snake-Perception, then, is the Perception of Nothing, Nothing which is most meaningful, because it defines the abyss of the Self and its ultimate purpose. In terms of its sexual or erotic symbolism, the "Snake" means the irresistible "power," and "beauty." It "projects" itself upon the Consciousness and "fathoms" one's whole Being. One recoils in horror from it and yet feels attracted towards it. It means "death" but it also means "rebirth." Dickinson calls this experience "a dream" (1670), not because she does not want to face

it in wakeful reality but because its enormous and paradoxical dimension can be apprehended only in the "freedom" of the "dream" and Imagination. This vision is not possible to man's actual and practical existence; it is the culmination of his desire within Existence. In so far as the "snake is summer's treason" (1740), it symbolizes life's endless search for death, life's own design to destroy itself but only in order to re-create itself.¹⁸ That Creation is the Self.

POSTSCRIPT

It was her voice that made
The sky acutest at its vanishing.
She measured to the hour its solitude.
She was the single artificer of the world
In which she sang. And when she sang, the sea,
Whatever self it had, became the self
That was her song, for she was the maker. Then we,
As we beheld her striding there alone,
Knew that there never was a world for her
Except the one she sang and, singing, made.

- Wallace Stevens, "The Idea of Order At Key West"

In this study, I have paid little attention to Dickinson's prosody,¹ because my chief concern has been the exploration, via imagery and symbolism, of her "meanings" and not the metric patterns. In commenting upon Dickinson's metaphoric structures, I have dealt with the nature of the poetic language, but it has not been within the scope of the present work to take "account of the theories and methods of modern linguistics"² in literary criticism. Dickinson's manner of writing evinces her essential "freedom" from the burden of rules of grammar and syntax: her poetic utterance constitutes her revolt against the traditional techniques of verbal art. Dickinson's frequent use of the dash has been accepted as indicative of a pause, a suspense, or a mark of musical notation. To my mind, the use of the dash also represents the open or inconclusive form of her poetry. The free use of the capital letters--other than the opening letters of the verses--often signifies not only Dickinson's mood of emphasis but also her fundamental

concern for the images and the metaphors of her poetry. For Dickinson, the act of poetry is the act of living. The creative process is the way of Self-realization which is embodied in her poetic images and symbols. My primary concern, then, has been with the expanse and the depth of Dickinson's poetic Vision which is also her Vision of Life.

In the "Twentieth Century Views" volume, Richard B. Sewall writes: "My own prediction is that Emily Dickinson will grow stronger with the years as we continue to outdistance the sentimentalities that still cling to her. Her eccentricities will fall into perspective. We will become increasingly aware of the toughness and sinew of her poetry, its range and versatility, its challenge to our understanding. We will test our knowledge of humanity against hers and find that we can learn on almost every front. Far from the little figure of frustrations and renunciations and regrets, we will come to see her as a poet of great strength, courage, and singleness of purpose."³ My own encounter with Dickinson's poetry has revealed, in more ways than one the validity of the basic contentions of Sewall's "prediction." In my reading, I have, in the main, dealt with "the toughness and sinew of her poetry, its range and versatility, its challenge to our understanding" from several angles. I have shown that Dickinson is "a poet of great strength, courage, and singleness of purpose." But the "task" is not yet over; rather, it is a continuing one. Literary commentary on Dickinson's poetry, I believe, has to be a process in itself. Therefore, I am not implying finality or definitiveness of any sort. As a matter of fact, the existential or the "experiential" mode of evaluation forbids conclusiveness.

I cannot myself predict the future trends in Dickinson criticism, but in order that we may comprehend the dimensions of her creative mind, in all its subtleties and paradoxes, its darkneses and illuminations, we must confront the whole of her poetry, and closely examine the metaphoric and/or the symbolic structures in which she presents the drama of her inner life. In suggesting this, I am fully aware of the onerous demands that Dickinson's poetry imposes upon the critic. Since the poet "cannot talk about what he knows," to use Northrop Frye's⁴ critical axiom, the critic's job is to talk about the poetic creation, and to make explicit what is implicit in the metaphors of the poet's art. In this venture of talking, the critic has to almost create the medium through which he can communicate his imaginative perception of the creative work he intends to evaluate. In other words, the critic has the responsibility not only to enhance our appreciation of the mystery of the poetic perception but also to rescue his own work from being merely parasitic. This position can be summed up in the words of Arturo B. Fallico:

. . . the first and most important thing we must understand is that though the artist, in doing art, has no need to do criticism, the art critic, in doing his art criticism, must be able to enact the aesthetic presentation he wishes to talk about. This is a little more involved than it sounds, for the sense in which the art critic must be artist is twofold: he must be able to speak in the manner of the first utterance which is the art work he wishes to talk about and he must also be able to make his own first speech by which to say what he has to say concerning the work of art he wishes to criticize. The work of art speaks for itself in any case, so that the critic's job is never to speak for, but only about it, and this is the critic's own first utterance. This can only mean that, successful or unsuccessful (in the sense in which such evaluations apply to the art-thing), the work of criticism is, at the same time, a work of art on its own. If it were not, it could not speak at all or say anything.⁵

Emily Dickinson's poetry, then, must be explored and rendered

"in the manner of the first utterance." Like Blake, Stevens, and several others, Dickinson is the true "literalist of the imagination."⁶ In order that her metaphors should "yield their full meanings," we have to intuit the heart of her perceptions. The voice of her poetry cannot be heard without Imagination. The "Scarlet Experiment" (861) of her poetry, I am afraid, cannot be understood within the "limits of Judgment," to use Yvor Winters phrase.⁷ Purely intellectual or the "rational" analyses of her poems will not take us very far. She is not a "surface" poet, and to evaluate her as such is to show spiritual lethargy. Douglas Duncan observes:

Certainly the finest comments on her poetry have come, not from the analysts, but from other poets. When the town of Amherst celebrated its bicentenary in 1959, three distinguished American poets--Louise Bogan, Richard Wilbur, and Archibald MacLeish--were invited to lecture on its most famous inhabitant. Their lectures . . . were illuminating and subtly appreciative in a way that more severely academic criticism has often failed to be.⁸

It does not mean to say that to appreciate poetry is the sole right of the poets, or that in order to comment on poetry one has to be a poet in the professional sense of the word. But it certainly implies that one must have poetic sensibility and a certain "point of view" before one assumes the role of the critic. I think these are the necessary qualifications for the critic who undertakes to grapple with the Violence and the Peace of Dickinson's poetic Vision. In order to fully perceive the nature of her creative experience, the critic must also have the ability to see both the inside and the outside of Dickinson's poems, I mean her metaphoric structures or the symbolic constructs. Herbert Muller has rightly observed that "The language of a poem is a continuous reference to things outside itself. Its meaning is never intact, self-contained, self-explanatory."⁹ The metaphor must be

explored in all its dimensions, intrinsic as well as extrinsic. Hence the urgency to simultaneously read the poem on the page, and "to stare a hole in the page." My own evaluation of Dickinson's poetry is, in every sense, an attempt to meet the requirements of the approach that I have outlined above and in the foregoing paragraphs. But in no sense can I claim to have exhausted the possibilities of the said approach. There is scope for more rigorous and more imaginative readings of Dickinson's poetry.

REFERENCE NOTES

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REFERENCES FOR "INTENTIONS"

¹Anderson's book was published in 1960, and it is so far the best critical study of Emily Dickinson's poetry. In his critical method, Anderson considers the "work" itself as central, and pays an almost negligible attention to Dickinson's biography, and her social or historical background. The other full-length study which deserves mention here is Albert J. Gelpi, Emily Dickinson: The Mind of The Poet. Gelpi's book appeared in 1965, and is a useful contribution to Dickinson criticism. But the "challenge" remains to be met as yet.

²"Emily Dickinson," Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology, 216.

³For the "sources" of Dickinson's poetry, see Jack Lee Capps, Emily Dickinson's Reading: 1836-86. I do not intend to undermine the relative importance of contributory streams of thought, but I wonder if a truly creative mind can be understood wholly in terms of the so-called "influences."

⁴In my study, I intend to explore what constitutes the creative "terror" in Dickinson's spiritual biography, and show its true significance in relation to her theory of perception or poetry. This aspect has not so far been adequately explored by any critic of Dickinson's poetry.

⁵"Psychology and Literature," Modern Man In Search Of A Soul, translated by W. S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes, 172.

⁶Fables of Identity, 198.

⁷Ibid. Also see Martin Buber, Between Man and Man, translated and introduced by Ronald Gregor Smith. Buber observes (33): "When we really understand a poem, all we know of the poet is what we learn of him in the poem - no biographical wisdom is of value for the pure understanding of what is to be understood: the I which approaches us is the subject of this single poem." I entirely agree with Buber's observation. Our knowledge of the poet should proceed from our understanding of his poetry. The real poet is his work.

⁸In any case, my study of Dickinson's poetry will be markedly different from most other studies which rely heavily on Dickinson's external biography, her literary and social heritage, her immediate ethos, and so on. Some of the studies that I have in mind here are: Josephine Pollitt, Emily Dickinson: The Human Background of Her Poetry (New York: 1930); Genevieve Taggard, The Life and Mind of Emily Dickinson

(New York: 1930); George Frisbie Whicher, This Was A Poet: A Critical Biography of Emily Dickinson (New York: 1938); Rebecca Patterson, The Riddle of Emily Dickinson (Boston: 1951); Richard Chase, Emily Dickinson (New York: 1951); Thomas H. Johnson, Emily Dickinson: An Interpretive Biography (Cambridge: 1955); Theodora Ward, The Capsule of The Mind: Chapters in the Life of Emily Dickinson (Cambridge: 1961); Polly Longworth, Emily Dickinson: Her Letter to the World (New York: 1965); Thomas W. Ford, Heaven Beguiles The Tired: Death in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson (Alabama: 1966); and J. B. Pickard, Emily Dickinson: An Introduction and Interpretation (New York: 1967).

⁹Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy, 120-146.

¹⁰See Henry W. Wells, Introduction to Emily Dickinson (Chicago: 1947). Wells seems to me to be the pioneer of the idea that Dickinson's poetry can be fruitfully studied in relation to the insights of the writers who are not American, and whose cultural environments differ widely from that of Dickinson's own.

¹¹Benjamin T. Spencer, "Criticism: Centrifugal and Centripetal," Criticism, VIII (1966), 139. Spencer observes that there "is the great temptation that centripetal criticism confronts us with: to discount literature both aesthetically as a value in itself and also cognitively as a unique mode of achieving a kind of knowledge. It countenances literature chiefly as a confirmatory or illustrative agent of ideas already fully conceived and understood. It distrusts the ambiguities of centrifugal reading and prefers the clear-cut security of formula, the one-dimensional assurance of a key idea to the fuller reality of contradiction and paradox which the greatest works seem to hold forever in solution in the name of the widest truth about things. In effect, it denies to literature what William Faulkner in Knight's Gambit has claimed for it as a raison d'être: '... it is only in literature that the paradoxical and even mutually negating anecdotes in the history of a human heart can be juxtaposed and annealed by art into verisimilitude and credibility'" (149).

¹²Thomas H. Johnson, ed., The Poems of Emily Dickinson, Including variant readings critically compared with all known manuscripts. Johnson must be praised for undertaking the monumental task of making available both the product and the workshop of Dickinson's creative life. The variorum reproduces in one place all the manuscripts--fair copies, fair with variant readings, semi-fair drafts, and worksheet materials. This edition is responsible for almost all the textual studies of Dickinson's poetry. But this edition does not bring us anywhere close to a truly definitive edition or what is called the "reader's copy." In this connection, the subsequent findings of Ralph William Franklin, The Editing of Emily Dickinson: A Reconsideration, and the arrangement of manuscripts pointed out by Ruth Miller, The Poetry of Emily Dickinson, deserve every attention. I am not sure if another, and more definitive edition of Dickinson's poetry is in the process of making. But there is an urgent need to settle the questions about variant fair copies,

worksheets, and semi-final drafts of the poems. For my own purpose, however, I intend to comment on individual poems and/or the clusters of poems in such a manner as should be representative of the whole of Dickinson's poetic vision. I am mainly concerned with her symbolic structures and not with the number of poems.

¹³The word "developmentally" is from Richard B. Sewall, ed., "Introduction," Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays. For studies based on the chronological order of poems or the theory of periods in Dickinson's poetic life, see David Thomas Porter, The Art of Emily Dickinson's Early Poetry; and William R. Sherwood, Circumference and Circumstance: Stages In The Mind and Art of Emily Dickinson. However, my own examination of Dickinson manuscripts revealed that the imposed chronological order can be even misleading in so far as we are concerned with the study of Dickinson's mind and her creative method. Like her poetry, the manuscripts are dateless, and they should be allowed to remain as such.

¹⁴Fables of Identity, 193.

¹⁵"Introduction," Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays, 3.

REFERENCES FOR CHAPTER I: CENTRE OF THE SEA: THE AESTHETICS OF TERROR

¹"Burnt Norton," V, 142-143.

²For a typology of "the eternal return," the following poems may be read as a single unit: 5, 30, 99, 133, 140, 142, 204, 221, 304, 337, 369, 392, 403, 471, 550, 680, 764, 830, 1025, 1134, 1274, 1320, 1422, 1519, 1572, and 1690. The cluster method, used throughout this study is based on the related patterns of imagery and common symbolic constructs of the poems. The numbers assigned to Dickinson's poems, both after the citations and in the references, are those of the Thomas H. Johnson's variorum edition The Poems of Emily Dickinson (third printing; Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963).

³Being and Having: An Existentialist Diary, 40. (See Footnote 1.)

⁴The numbers assigned to Dickinson's Letters, after the citations or in the reference notes, are those of the Thomas H. Johnson's edition The Letters of Emily Dickinson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1958). All references to letters will be preceded by letter L. In case of Prose Fragments, the numbers will be preceded by PF.

In order to provide a fuller background and context in which the discussion concerning Dickinson's sense of danger has taken place, I

would suggest a close reading of the following poems: 179, 238, 241, 242, 264, 379, 419, 455, 544, 686, 703, 772, 807, 845, 870, 875, 925, 951, 1070, 1109, 1217, 1416, 1448, 1487, 1516, 1518, 1534, 1563, 1613, 1629, 1642, 1656, 1677, 1678, 1736, and 1758. See Selected Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke, ed. Harry T. Moore. Rilke also expresses his belief in the "difficult," in the aesthetics of danger, when he writes to Emmy Hirschberg, in 1904 (77-78): "What is required of us is that we love the difficult and learn to deal with it. In the difficult are the friendly forces, the hands that work on us. Right in the difficult we must have our joys, our happiness, our dreams; there, against the depth of this background they stand out, there for the first time we see how beautiful they are. And only in the darkness of the difficult does our smile, so precious, have a meaning; only there does it glow with its deep, dreamy light, and in the brightness it for a moment diffuses we see the wonders and treasures with which we are surrounded."

⁵For a variety of existential moods and postures, read the following poems: 320 (existential learning), 404 and 1293 (existential void and predicament), 301, 669 (existential questioning), 1506 (existential transiency of time and permanency of sorrow), 521 (existential sympathy), 118 (existential grotesquity), 125, 193 (existential anguish and ecstasy), 335 (existential hurt and "kind" death), 344, 1440, 1733, 1769 (continuous existential pain, scar, awe, and anguish), 1350 (existential toil), and 405 (existential fate). For references to existential suffering see L30, L33, L56, L278, and L416, also.

⁶The Poetry of Emily Dickinson, 69-70. It would have been more plausible to say that the "terror" is that of Dickinson's own impending death which makes her "sing" or write poetry with all the more fear and intensity so that she should fulfill her destiny before she dies. But there is no indication of such a premonition in Dickinson's biography in 1862. Also see: "Afraid! Of Whom am I afraid?/Not Death - for who is He?" (608)

⁷For the theme of the aesthetics of terror, I recommend that poems numbering 281, 315, 323, 362, 410, 528, 535, 591, 875, 986, 1225, 1486, and 1581 should be read in conjunction with 505, 544, 569, 883, and 919 in which the awe, pang, and terror of the poet are fused in his ultimate role. The theme of the Poet is developed further in Chapter III.

⁸For Emily Dickinson's use of the paradox, irony, and the opposites, employed not only as literary devices to accomplish indirection (in-direction) but also as symbolic constructs to portray fulfillment and the "syncretic" vision, the following poems may be read as a cluster: 7, 21, 22, 23, 67, 125, 135, 148, 175, 256, 276, 281, 299, 313, 329, 353, 355, 364, 384, 385, 451, 572, 599, 684, 689, 738, 771, 791, 816, 834, 838, 910, 918, 1054, 1057, 1093, 1106, 1125, 1168, 1179, 1287, 1439, 1470, 1503, 1562, 1573, 1640, 1642, and 1726. For Opposites and Paradox see L34, L874, and PF65.

⁹"In Search of Goethe from Within," The Dehumanization of Art

And Other Writings on Art and Culture, 127. For Dickinson's theme of existential courage and the sense of danger, read the following poems: 10, 20, 48, 73, 147, 172, 252, 269, 554, 561, 875, and 1113.

¹⁰The following poems refer to Emily Dickinson's celebration of the Earth: 313, 370, 623, 889, 1012, 1024, 1118, 1145, 1205, 1228, 1231, 1370, 1373, 1408, 1544, 1665, 1719, and 1775. Linked with the here are the poems of the now, which refer to her aesthetic treatment of time called the present moment. These are: 434, 624, 672, 765, 825, 1165, 1250, 1309, 1367, 1380, 1398, 1578, 1631, 1684, and 1734.

¹¹For references to Earth, World, and Mortality, see the following letters also: L11, L13, L23, L185, L389, and L524.

¹²The reference here is to the opening lines of the "Auguries of Innocence":

To See a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.

¹³T. S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton," I, 42-43.

¹⁴The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley, ed. Harold Bloom, 445.

¹⁵Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry, 172-173.

¹⁶Jacques Maritain, Art and Scholasticism and The Frontiers of Poetry, trans. Joseph W. Evans, 127-128. Maritain's distinctions between poetry and metaphysics (128 of Art and Scholasticism) and poetry and mysticism (172-173 of Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry) are quite valid. Poetry, he maintains, is ontology because it deals with "the roots of the knowledge of Being" (Footnote 179 of Art and Scholasticism).

¹⁷Letter to the Rev. Dr. Trusler, August 23, 1799.

¹⁸"Jerusalem," Chapter I, Plate 10, lines 20-21.

I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Mans
I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create

¹⁹In "Out of The Cradle Endlessly Rocking," the bird-bard relationship is the crucial point of the poem's development (144-157).

²⁰See poems 857, 859, 1329, 1335, and 1411.

²¹The Shaking of The Foundations, 63.

²²The Vision of Tragedy, 6.

²³Emily Dickinson's Poetry: Stairway of Surprise, 322.

²⁴See poems 193, 225, 295, 317, 322, 506, 527, 538, 553, 740, 833, 1487, 1543, and 1736.

²⁵The poems cited are: 387, 626, 817, 1021, 1163, and 1743.

²⁶The poems cited are: 61, 103, 116, 226, 234, 248, 376, 413, 476, 576, 724, and 1479. The other poems that I have in mind to put with this cluster are: 59, 185, 324, 401, 437, 503, 508, 597, 600, 947, 1069, 1144, 1201, 1258, 1317, 1357, 1377, 1412, 1461, 1545, 1551, 1569, 1591, 1639, 1657, 1672, 1718, 1719, and 1751.

²⁷See Soren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie, 327-329. Kierkegaard questions the validity of Baptism in these words: "What is baptism without personal appropriation? . . . Baptism is surely not the slip of paper that the parish clerk issues and which he frequently fills with errors of writing; it is surely not the mere external event that took place at 11 o'clock on the morning of the 7th of November? That time, or existence in time, should be sufficient to decide an eternal happiness is in general so paradoxical that paganism cannot conceive its possibility. But that the whole matter should be decided in the course of five minutes, two weeks after birth, seems almost a little too much of the paradoxical."

²⁸Emily Dickinson's Poetry: Stairway of Surprise, 20-21.

²⁹This is the title of a sermon which Jonathan Edwards preached in 1741, at Enfield, Connecticut. The Sermon has Calvinistic undertones and overtones, though Jonathan Edwards was not a thorough going Calvinist. See Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson, eds., Jonathan Edwards: Representative Selections (New York: 1935).

³⁰The quotations in this paragraph are from L389 and L387.

³¹Christian Existentialism: A Berdyaev Anthology, selected and translated by Donald A. Lowrie, 225.

³²William Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality From Recollections of Early Childhood," IV, 51.

³³Between Man and Man, 19.

³⁴The other poems which have not been cited, but are necessary to the whole discussion of "What mystery pervades a well!" are: 888, 891, 892, 905, 978, 1172, 1298, 1397, 1558, and 1727. These numbers do not by any chance exhaust the list of nature poems.

³⁵ Arturo B. Fallico, Art and Existentialism, 20-25.

³⁶ Quoted in Richard B. Sewall, "Emily Dickinson: The Problem of The Biographer," Occasional Stiles V. Yale University (April, 1968), 128.

³⁷ Robert Frost, In his "For Once, Then, Something," seems to me to be searching for the same Reality, the reality of his being which he loses in the very moment of "discovery." It is a constant search for the constant presence which is presence only by its absence. Scepticism of tone is integral with the ambivalent nature of poetry:

Once, when trying with chin against a well-curb,
I discerned, as I thought, beyond the picture,
Through the picture, a something white, uncertain,
Something more of the depths - and then I lost it.
Water came to rebuke the too clear water.
One drop fell from a fern, and lo, a ripple
Shook whatever it was lay there at bottom,
Blurred it, blotted it out. What was that whiteness?
Truth? A pebble of quartz? For once, then, something.

Emily Dickinson writes:

So fleet thou wert, when present -
So infinite - when gone -
An Orient's Apparition -
Remanded of the Morn - (788)

³⁸ Fallico, Art and Existentialism, 104.

³⁹ Ibid., 91. See the entire discussion of Art as First Utterance (91-109). Fallico links the idea of language as "first utterance" with the notions of "freedom," "aesthetic purposing," "personality," and "existential sharing."

⁴⁰ Ibid., 95.

⁴¹ For reference to the "power" of words, see: 952, 1126, 1212, 1261, 1409, 1467, 1563, 1587, and 1651. Also see: L374, L379, L791, L797, L873, L946, and L965.

⁴² Nicolai Berdyaev (Beginning, p. 164 ff.), Christian Existentialism, 90.

⁴³ For complete understanding of the problem of the inadequacy of language, or the simple human inadequacy of the poet, to communicate the poetic vision, read the following poems at once: 407, 581, 797, 1358, 1452, 1472, 1668, 1700, and 1750.

⁴⁴Walden and Other Writings of Henry David Thoreau, ed. with an Introduction, Brook Atkinson (A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers: "Friday"), 421-422.

⁴⁵"Song of Myself," Section 50.

⁴⁶"A Defence of Poetry," The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley, ed. Harold Bloom, 443. [Italics mine.] See the whole passage beginning with: "Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge . . . the media of the process" (442-444).

⁴⁷On the inadequacy of linear language, see Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in A New Key: A Study in The Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art, 92; T. S. Eliot, "East Coker," V, 172-182; and George Steiner, Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, And The Inhuman, 40. In the last cited study, see particularly "The Retreat From the World," 12-35 and "Silence And The Poet," 36-54. Steiner offers a rigorous analysis of the loosening power of the "language," the poet's transcendence of his own medium, and the final silence which still awaits the "word." He writes: "But as the poet draws near the Divine presence, the heart of the rose of fire, the labor of translation into speech grows ever more exacting. Words grow less and less adequate to the task of translating immediate revelation. Light passes to a diminishing degree into speech; instead of making syntax translucent with meaning, it seems to spill over in unrecapturable splendor or burn the word to ash (40) . . . language, when truly apprehended aspires to the condition of music and is brought, by the genius of the poet, to the threshold of that condition. By a gradual loosening or transcendence of its own forms, the poem strives to escape from the linear, denotative, logically determined bonds of linguistic syntax into what the poet takes to be the simultaneities, immediacies, and free play of musical form. It is in music that the poet hopes to find the paradox resolved of an act of creation singular to the creator, bearing the shape of his own spirit, yet infinite renewed in each listener (43) But there is a third mode of transcendence; in it language simply ceases, and the motion of spirit gives no further outward manifestation of its being. The poet enters into silence. Here the word borders not on radiance or music, but on night" (46). Eliot and Langer have several references to the power of words as well.

⁴⁸Archibald MacLeish, Poetry and Experience, 8. The phrase occurs in the Wen Fu of Lu Chi, a Chinese poet of the Third Century. As quoted by MacLeish, the text appears as follows:

We poets struggle with Non-being to force it to yield Being;
We knock upon silence for an answering music.
We enclose boundless space in a square foot of paper;
We pour out deluge from the inch space of the heart.

REFERENCES FOR CHAPTER II:
THE LANDSCAPE OF ABSENCE: "MANSIONS OF MIRAGE"

- ¹Art and Existentialism, 143.
- ²"On The Ontological Mystery," The Philosophy of Existentialism, trans. Manya Harari, 36. [Italics mine.]
- ³For Wheel symbolism, see Blake, "Jerusalem," Chapter I:15:14-20: Blake contrasts the wheels of Ezekiel with the wheels of vegetable existence.
- ⁴Romeo and Juliet, 2.2.85; 2.2.133; 2.1.32 respectively.
- ⁵The Courage to Be, 34.
- ⁶"What is Metaphysics," trans. R. F. C. Hull and Alan Crick, Existence and Being, with an introduction and analysis by Werner Brock, 353 and 360.
- ⁷The Ethics of Ambiguity, 156. For "The Aesthetic Attitude," see 74-78.
- ⁸Ibid., 159.
- ⁹The poems quoted in this paragraph are 5, 32, 262, 313, 1001, and 1259.
- ¹⁰Selected Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke, ed. Harry T. Moore, 388-391. The letter is dated November 13, 1925.
- ¹¹The images are taken from poems 152, 210, 421, 501, 662, 774, 998, 1051, 1108, 1120, 1195, 1209, 1235, 1245, 1254, 1353, 1382, 1442, 1463, 1468, 1524, 1567, 1740, 1744, and 1746 respectively. Other poems, indicating veil, silence, riddle, and unknowability of the "Landscape" are 915, 920, 1118, 1200, 1222, 1417, 1429, and 1490.
- ¹²Gerard Manley Hopkins has used the words inscape and instress in his writings, in many different contexts. For sources and full treatment of the terms see W. H. Gardner, Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) A Study of Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Relation to Poetic Tradition, 2 vols.
- ¹³Conrad Aiken "Emily Dickinson," Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Richard B. Sewall, 10. Also see Caesar R. Blake and Carlton F. Wells, eds., The Recognition of Emily Dickinson: Selected Criticism Since 1890, 111.
- ¹⁴Walden ["Solitude"], 122-123.

¹⁵Selected Letters, 110 (Letter to Mimi Romanelli, dated May 11, 1910). I am using Rilke's expression in my own way.

¹⁶"Emily Dickinson," Interpretations of American Literature, eds. Charles Feidelson, Jr. and Paul Brodtkorb, Jr., 202. Also see Richard B. Sewall, ed., Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays, 19-20. Tate's essay was written in 1932.

¹⁷See Friedrich Schiller, On The Aesthetic Education of Man: In A Series of Letters, translated with an Introduction by Reginald Snell, 125-132; The Philosophy of Nietzsche, edited with an Introduction by Geoffrey Clive, 498-543; Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form, 45-68; and C. G. Jung, Modern Man In Search of A Soul, trans. W. S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes, 152-172. Also see R. G. Collingwood, Essays in the Philosophy of Art, ed. Alan Donagon, 52-72; Herbert Read, The Forms of Things Unknown, 64-65; and Ortega Y. Gasset, The Dehumanization of Art And Other Writings on Art and Culture, 3-50.

¹⁸The Dehumanization of Art and Other Writings on Art and Culture, 20.

¹⁹Ibid., 29.

²⁰Feeling and Form, 68. Langer discusses the "experiential character" of illusion in Chapter XIII: "Poesis," 208-235.

²¹For the power of dream, dream as a metaphor for imagination and perception, see 103, 188, 302, 371, 475, 493, 518, 531, 569, 646, 939, 1291, 1376, and 1592.

²²See Karl Jaspers, Truth and Symbol, translated with an Introduction by Jean T. Wilde, William Kluback, and William Kimmel, 22-24. Jaspers has put forward this point of view with great lucidity and I consider it vital to the acts of true philosophizing and literary criticism: "the being of the subject itself is the necessary condition for the presence of Being through a content which appears from out the depth of subjectivity. Consciousness of Being lies simultaneously in the grasping of the object and in the consummation of subjectivity. . . . In point of fact, however, there is no separated duality of subjectivity and objectivity. Both are inseparably bound together. The presence of Being is in the movement which grasps and permeates subject and object simultaneously. We take possession of Being in the polarity, but in such a way that subject and object mutually overlap. While we are directed towards the object, Being in its essence is not already before our eyes as an object but is present only in the Encompassing, through object and subject simultaneously as that which permeates both. . . . Existenz appears in the intertwining of subjectivity and objectivity. . . . Only in the polarity of subject and object is our life. In this polarity the object can attain that suspension which at the same time allows it to exist and elevates it. This suspension makes possible the consciousness of Being; for this the object is imbued from the depths with spirit.

From this depth of Being the object obtains an irreplaceable meaning" (22-24 and 39).

²³Some other poems relevant to the whole discussion of "Absence" as "Perception" and the notions of metaphors as "relations" and "human forms," are: 2, 78, 375, 495, 564, 629, 696, 890, 993, 1320, 1559, and 1627.

²⁴Letter to George and Thomas Keats, December 21, 1817.

²⁵See Lionel Trilling, "Introduction," The Selected Letters of John Keats, 29. The concept of Negative Capability is highly paradoxical in that it favors selflessness in a creative artist, in order that he might discover his true Self, his freedom through empathy and receptivity.

²⁶Emily Dickinson's Poetry: Stairway of Surprise, 211.

²⁷Either/Or, Vol. 1, 447. Sensuousness is a quality which is defined by its directness, its immediacy, and its spontaneity. It is intuition which is most tangible, and yet highly elusive. In music, sensuousness expresses itself fully in the moment of performance, which is its eternity. Love shares with Music the traits of sensuousness or "spiritual sensation."

²⁸C. G. Jung, "Psychology and Literature," Modern Man In Search of A Soul, 172.

²⁹See Keats's Letter to Richard Woodhouse, October 27, 1818.

³⁰For full-length treatment of the symbolism of the moon, see J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, translated from the Spanish by Jack Sage. Foreword by Herbert Read, 204-207.

³¹See Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality, 21-74.

³²T. S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton," V, 138-139.

³³The phrases in this paragraph are from 1445, 1633, 1454, and 396.

³⁴See Soren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling And The Sickness Unto Death, translated with Introductions and Notes by Walter Lowrie. In The Sickness Unto Death, Kierkegaard considers Despair from several points of view. His treatment of Despair under the aspects of Finitude/Infinitude seems to be relevant to Dickinson's notion of Self as a process: "The self is the conscious synthesis of infinitude and finitude which relates itself to itself, whose task is to become itself, a task which can be performed only by means of a relationship to God. But to become oneself is to become concrete. But to become concrete means neither to become finite nor infinite, for that which is to become

concrete is a synthesis. Accordingly, the development consists in moving away from oneself infinitely by the process of infinitizing oneself, and in returning to oneself infinitely by the process of finitizing. If on the contrary the self does not become itself, it is in despair whether it knows it or not. . . . In so far as the self does not become itself, it is not its own self; but not to be one's own self is despair. . . . For the self is a synthesis in which the finite is the limiting factor, and the infinite is the expanding factor. Infinitude's despair is therefore the fantastical, the limitless. The self is in sound health and free from despair only when, precisely by having been in despair, it is grounded transparently in God" (162-163).

³⁵ Refer to the discussion at pages 10-15 of Chapter I.

³⁶ In his Stairway of Surprise, 245, Anderson writes that "a slanting light . . . is that pale light of 'Winter Afternoons,' when both the day and the year seem to be going down to death, the seasonal opposite of summer which symbolizes for her the fullness and joy of living. It is when he feels winter in his soul, one remembers, that Melville's Ishmael begins his exploration of the meaning of despair." I only wish to emphasize that in the poetic experience death is integral with life, winter is integral with Spring and Summer. I hope that Anderson implies this, though this aspect does not appear to have been fully explored in his otherwise brilliant discussion of this poem.

³⁷ Jacques Choron, Death and Western Thought, 237.

³⁸ See Yvor Winters, "Emily Dickinson and the Limits of Judgment," Maule's Curse: Seven Studies in the History of American Obscurantism, 149-165; Laurence Perrine, "Dickinson's 'There's a Certain Slant of Light'," The Explicator, XI (May, 1953), Item 50; Donald E. Thackeray, Emily Dickinson's Approach to Poetry, New Series No. 13 (University of Nebraska Studies, 1954), 76-80; and Thomas H. Johnson, Emily Dickinson: An Interpretive Biography, 189-190.

³⁹ See Paul Tillich, The Shaking of The Foundations. In the Chapter on "Meditation: The Mystery of Time," Tillich writes (35): "Time is as inexhaustible as the ground of life itself. Even the greatest minds have each discovered only one aspect of it. But everyone, even the most simple mind, apprehends the meaning of time - namely, his own temporality. He may not be able to express his knowledge about time, but he is never separated from its mystery. His life, and the life of each of us, is permeated in every moment, in every experience, and in every expression, by the mystery of time. Time is our destiny. Time is our hope, Time is our despair. And time is the mirror in which we see eternity. Let me point to three of the many mysteries of time: its power to devour everything within its sphere; its power to receive eternity within itself; and its power to drive toward an ultimate end, a new creation." The concept of time as both creator and destroyer is as old as the Bhagavad-Gita, "one of the foundational documents of Hinduism,"

as described by S. G. F. Brandon. In his History, Time and Deity: A Historical and Comparative Study of The Conception of Time in Religious Thought and Practice, 31-64, Brandon offers a brilliant analysis of Time as Deity.

⁴⁰ See William F. Lynch, Christ and Apollo: The Dimensions of The Literary Imagination, 49.

⁴¹ Expanded perception is not the same thing as a "mystical trance" in which one liberates oneself from the tyranny, suffering, and the relentless logic of temporal time. The poetic methodology is different from the route of "asceticism." See Brandon, History, Time and Deity, (102-103). The poet is highly conscious of his Being in time; the mystic obliterates the sense of self defined by time. For the mystic, time is an illusion, for the poet time is real, though he struggles to achieve timelessness through the creative imagination. Brandon (105) offers a very profound analysis of the notion of Time in Indian thought, which one can apply with certain qualifications, to the position of the poet also: "The conception of deity as ambivalent in character, manifesting itself in both creation and destruction, and the equation of this deity with Time, connotes a realistic appreciation of what existence in time and space must involve. The acceptance of this situation did not, however, remove its dread, and the instinct to escape from it has been, through the centuries, the abiding motive of Indian religious thought and practice. Hence the twofold effort to magnify the suffering caused by the 'sorrowful weary wheel' of Time, and to deny Time's ultimate reality. The solution is essentially an existential one; for it assumes both the reality of empirical existence and the reality of those psychic states that attest an existence beyond Time. In other words, the nunc fluens is real for those who accept it and become enmeshed in it, and it is, moreover, for such, endless. But its spell can be ended by the enlightened Yogin, who, by meditative techniques, perceives its fundamental illusion and glimpses the nunc stans into which he will for ever pass on the extinction of his Karma." The poet is certainly a Yogin-artist, but he achieves the goal of timelessness in and through time, and by the creative process of his art, and not by the "Yoga praxis." I must insist that the poet and the mystic are poles apart in their methods, perhaps not so much in their objectives.

⁴² "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," Plate 14. Blake writes about infinity in terms of vortex symbolism (Milton, 15:21-35).

REFERENCES FOR CHAPTER III: PERCEPTION: "THE BILLOWS OF CIRCUMFERENCE"

¹ Poetic perception or poetic experience cannot be understood in terms of sense-datum theories or the rational structures of empirical knowledge. Poetic knowledge is primarily intuitive and can be rendered

only in symbols and metaphors, and not in scientific, objective, or one-dimensional language. For the sake of the above-noted contrast, see Robert J. Swartz, ed., Perceiving, Sensing, And Knowing: A Book of Readings From Twentieth-Century Sources in The Philosophy of Perception, with an Introduction; and Jacques Maritain, Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry. Maritain (144) rightly points out that "in poetic knowledge things are known as resounding in the subjectivity, and as one with it, and this knowledge - essentially obscure - is expressed, not through abstract ideas, but through the images awakened by intuitive emotion. As a result, science, the kind of science unnaturally required of poetic knowledge, is to be ruled by the law of images for which there is no principle of noncontradiction, and for which the sign contains and conveys the very reality of the thing signified. In other words, poetic knowledge transformed into absolute knowledge is magical knowledge."

²Refer to 81-85 of Chapter II. Seeing, in this context, is inclusive of the other means of perception: hearing, feeling, smelling, tasting, et cetera. Seeing emphasizes the central position of the perceiver, and the faculty of Imagination which is the primary creative organ. Seeing is both contemplation and creation.

³Paul Tillich, The New Being, 129. Tillich develops the notion of seeing into to its expanded dimension of seeing beyond in these words: "We never see only what we see; we always see something else with it and through it! Seeing creates, seeing unites, and above all seeing goes beyond itself. If we look at a stone we see directly only the colors and forms of the side which is turned towards us. But with and through this limited surface we are aware of the roundness, of the extension and mass of the structure of the whole thing. We see beyond what we see. . . . If we look at a human face, we see lines and shades, but with it and through it we see a unique, incomparable personality whose expressions are visible in his face, whose character and destiny have left traces which we understand and in which we can even read something of his future. With and through colors and forms and movements we see friendliness and coldness, hostility and devotion, anger and love, sadness and joy. We see infinitely more than we see when we look into a human face. And we see even beyond this into a new depth" (129-130). Whatever theology Tillich's statement might adumbrate, it is surely true of the poetic perception that it sees "into a new depth."

⁴See George Whalley, Poetic Process, 28. Whalley explains that the "interface" is "to be regarded as a medium joining, not separating, subject and object; as I conceive it the interface has depth, some spatial characteristics - one can 'move about in' the interface. In actual life, subject and object interpenetrate each other; but since for purposeful action we must pretend that subject and object can be separated, the interface also represents this assumed separation. Let us suppose that life, naked living, occurs at this interface - that is here that man meets and shapes 'nature' and is himself shaped by nature. Let us imagine further that living consists in plunging the hands into

the interface in order both to control nature and to become real. The type of this action is to be seen in the way a painter handles his brushes, or the way a gardener breaks soil with his hands. Man's zest to live and his longing for freedom makes his living an aggressive action, plunging his hands through the interface as though to assault the objective sphere. But the image of a conquering hero or an advancing army will not serve, because there is nothing in terms of life and value to be gained on the other side of the interface. At the interface and within it everything is in continual flux, in a complicated involute movement of mutual adjustment. All values cluster at the interface and are not to be found elsewhere." He further writes (31): "To be involved at the interface is to experience, to engage in, (in some sense) to construct, an event of reality; and this event I call paradeigmatic. This term has two implications: (a) the form or archetype of human experience is to be found in paradeigmatic experience and not in the experience of everyday man in a workaday world; and (b) that this order of experience is its own argument, carries its own proof within itself, is at once an event of value and of knowing." "The poet," Whalley says (29), "looks at and along the interface; for his purpose is to reveal 'what it is like' at the interface." This, in a sense, imposes a limit on the seeing power of the poet. I think, the poet can see both through and at the interface, though the poetic perception is different in character and purpose from that of the mystics.

⁵Ibid., 31.

⁶Art and Existentialism, 60-61.

⁷"Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting The Banks of The Wye During A Tour," Line 49.

⁸The images refer to poems: 737, 1233, 931, 1556, and 1581. For the power of Eyes or Seeing, and the paradoxical blindness, see: 196, 327, 507, 647, 761, and 1284.

⁹Herbert Read, The Forms of Things Unknown, 134.

¹⁰See Jacques Maritain, Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry, 296. At the end of "The Three Epiphanies of Creative Intuition,"--Poetic Sense, Action and Theme, and Harmonic Expansion--Maritain writes: "Creative intuition is the only supreme gift that a poet, in any art whatsoever, ought to seek - in the way in which a gift can be sought: not in the sense that it might be acquired by any effort of the human will, but in the sense that it can be cared for, and protected, and assisted, when it is there. And it is there, perhaps in a humbler way than he believes, in any man who is inclined toward the workings of art by an inner necessity. Sometimes, and in the greatest artists, creative intuition may be at work in darkness and despairing agony. Then they may think of what Pascal felt about another kind of grace, and this holds true for them also: 'Take comfort, thou wouldst not be seeking me, hadst

thou not found me'." This means that the creative intuition is the presence in the inmost subjectivity of every man, but the artist discovers it, and is impelled by it to create.

¹¹See M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and The Lamp: Romantic Theory and The Critical Tradition, 22. I borrow the words "projective" and "reflector" from this study. There are obvious connections between Dickinson's way of perception and the Romantic poetics. Summarizing the "central tendency of the expressive theory of art," Abrams writes: "A work of art is essentially the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of feeling, and embodying the combined product of the poet's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. The primary source and subject matter of a poem, therefore, are the attributes and actions of the poet's own mind; or if aspects of the external world, then these only as they are converted from fact to poetry by the feelings and the operations of the poet's mind." He continues (60): "As in the English Platonists, so in the romantic writers, the favorite analogy for the activity of the perceiving mind is that of a lamp projecting light."

¹²For symbolic reference to "withinness" or the "interior" of the poet, see 383, 395, 526, 579, 636, 803, 903, 926, 1097, 1123, 1223, 1242, 1695, 1712, and 1748.

¹³Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology, 273.

¹⁴Emily Dickinson: The Mind of The Poet, 135. Also see Charles R. Anderson, Emily Dickinson's Poetry: Stairway of Surprise, 89-106. Anderson writes (104): "Nature to her is graspless and its meaning unmanifest. God has simply made his experiment and she must make hers. It is the poet's task to create in a similar way, so that his poem also will contain the kind of dual significance he has discovered in nature by coercing the flux of experience into intelligible forms. Since his poems are artifacts rather than natural facts, he must 'try,' as nature does not need to, in order to make them haunted. Nature best serves him, then, not as a source of subject matter nor as a key to meaning but as exemplar. Also as a reservoir of imagery, since through perception he can select certain aspects of nature, or rather define his impressions of them, and give them a quasi-symbolic value that helps him create his own world." I agree with Anderson's insight as a whole. But I would like to point out that Dickinson apprehends Nature as a "Haunted House," with all its terror, awe, wonder, freedom, and creativity. The meaning of Nature is "manifest" to her mind, in its original ambivalence. That is why she wants her art to become both haunted and haunting like Nature. I have stressed this point in my discussion of "What mystery pervades a well!": 43-50 of Chapter I.

¹⁵The Romantic theory of perception or consciousness is, in more than one sense, a revolution against the empirical philosophy of Locke

and Hartley. Locke (1632-1683) considered experience as the fountain of all ideas; ideas which are ultimately derived from sensation or from reflection. "Sensation," in Lockean terminology, is what the external objects convey to the mind; and "reflection" constitutes the preception of the workings of our minds such as "perceiving, thinking, doubting, believing and willing." Hartley (1705-1757) extended further the sensationalistic premise of Locke's theory. He argued that the mind is devoid of content, but he did not treat "reflection" as a distinct source of ideas: sensation was considered to be the only source. The complex structure of man's mental life was explained in terms of "associationist psychology." See Frederick Copleston, S.J., A History of Philosophy: Modern Philosophy: The British Philosophers, V, Part I, 86-88 and 203.

¹⁶ Emily Dickinson's Poetry, 100.

¹⁷ See Jose Ferrater Mora, Being and Death: An Outline of Integrationist Philosophy, translated from the Spanish with Extensive Revisions by the Author. I do not wholly subscribe to Ferrater Mora's highly philosophic, scientific and rational methodology of knowing the nature of human experience. But I think there is some relevance in what he regards "the external" and "the internal," to our examination of Dickinson's theory of perception, and to the way Dickinson relates the external with the internal in spite of the seeming or real emphasis on the internal. Ferrater Mora writes (71-72): "'the external' and 'the internal' are names of absolute realities, and since the latter do not exist the former do not properly name anything. But by means of them the universe is made intelligible. I have said that every entity tends to be more or less external or more or less internal because its being is determined by both poles. I am not affirming that reality is primarily something external, for example, something primarily inorganic, so that the ontological measure of each thing would be determined by its orientation toward that exteriority. Nor am I maintaining that reality is primarily something internal, for example, something personal, so that the ontological measure of each thing would be determined by its orientation toward that interiority. I am postulating an ontological succession of entities. But I assume that this succession cannot be depicted by a single, uninterrupted line having only one direction which, like an arrow, would indicate the direction of being toward 'real existence.'" It would be more accurate to represent this succession by a line on every point of which two contrary and complementary tendencies or polar directions converge. The corresponding ontology can be variously named: the 'ontology of double direction,' the 'bi-directional ontology,' the 'two-way ontology,' and so on. In any case, it is the 'ontology of integrationism'."

¹⁸ Concerning the ontological as well as aesthetic problem of subject-object relationship, and its significance for the Romantic theory of poetry, the insights of Plotinus, Blake, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Schiller, Keats, Coleridge, Kierkegaard, Thoreau, Emerson, Rilke, Hölderlin, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Wallace Stevens,

Marianne Moore, Hart Crane, and many others come to mind. Some of the useful studies or works which deserve mention here are: M. H. Abrams, The Mirror And The Lamp: Romantic Theory And The Critical Tradition; James M. Edie, ed., Maurice Merleau-Ponty: The Primacy of Perception, with Introduction; Martin Heidegger, Existence and Being, with an Introduction and analysis by Werner Brock; Erich Heller, The Disinherited Mind; Frederick J. Hoffman, The 20's: American Writing in the Postwar Decade; Joseph J. Kockelmans, ed., Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Its Interpretation; F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance: Art and Expression in The Age Of Emerson and Whitman; Elmer O'Brien, The Essential Plotinus; Herbert Read, The True Voice of Feeling: Studies in English Romantic Poetry; Rainer Maria Rilke, Letters to A Young Poet, trans. M. D. Herter Norton; Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination; and Oskar Walzel, German Romanticism.

¹⁹Letter to The Rev. Dr. Trusler, August 23, 1799. The Portable Blake, 179.

²⁰Wordsworth seems to be indebted to Coleridge for the notion of external-internal relationship. Coleridge writes much earlier than Wordsworth: "In looking at objects of Nature while I am thinking . . . I seem rather to be seeking, as it were asking, a symbolical language for something within me that already and forever exists, than observing anything new." This remark of Coleridge is quoted in M. H. Abrams, "Structure and Style in Greater Romantic Lyric," From Sensibility to Romanticism, ed. Frederick W. Hilles and Harold Bloom (New York: 1965), 551. At the above-noted level of poetic perception, the mind is subconsciously in the possession of the objective experience as a part of its own reality, and thus seems to appropriate the objective reality or Nature.

²¹"Where I Lived, And What I Lived For," Walden and Other Writings, ed. Brooks Atkinson, 73.

²²Thoreau, A Week On The Concord And Merrimack Rivers. "The Inward Morning," Walden and Other Writings, ed. Brooks Atkinson, 401.

²³Quoted from American Poetry and Poetics: Poems and Critical Documents from The Puritans To Robert Frost, ed. Daniel G. Hoffman, 338.

²⁴Eudo C. Mason, Rilke, 54.

²⁵Quoted in Mason, Rilke, 54-55.

²⁶For reference to the poems of Stevens, see The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens (New York: 1954). For my discussion of Stevens, I am indebted, in general, to: Northrop Frye, "The Realistic Oriole: A Study of Wallace Stevens," Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology (New York: 1963); Louis L. Martz, "Wallace Stevens: The World As Meditation," Literature and Belief, edited with a Foreword by M. H. Abrams (New York: 1958); Ralph Freedman, "Wallace Stevens and Rainer Maria Rilke: Two Versions of a Poetic," The Poet As Critic, ed.

Frederick P. W. McDowell (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967); and Frank Kermode, Wallace Stevens (London: 1960).

²⁷ I find Merleau-Ponty's point of view especially of interest and relevance to our discussion of Dickinson's theory of perception. In his "The Primacy of Perception and Its Philosophical Consequences," trans. James M. Edie, included in Maurice Merleau-Ponty: The Primacy of Perception, edited with an Introduction by James M. Edie, Merleau-Ponty writes (16): "Perception is thus paradoxical. The perceived thing itself is paradoxical; it exists only in so far as someone can perceive it. I cannot even for an instant imagine an object in itself. As Berkeley said, if I attempt to imagine some place in the world which has never been seen, the very fact that I imagine it makes me present at that place. I thus cannot conceive a perceptible place in which I am not myself present. But even the places in which I find myself are never completely given to me; the things which I see are things for me only under the condition that they always recede beyond their immediately given aspects. Thus there is a paradox of immanence and transcendence in perception. Immanence, because the perceived object cannot be foreign to him who perceives; transcendence, because it always contains something more than what is actually given. And these two elements of perception are not, properly speaking, contradictory. For if we reflect on this notion of perspective, if we reproduce the perceptual experience in our thought, we see that the kind of evidence proper to the perceived, the appearance of 'something,' requires both this presence and this absence." This view may be applied to Dickinson's "A Something in a Summer's Day" (122), discussed at 57-58 of Chapter II.

²⁸ The Origins And History of Consciousness, Vol. I, 35. Erich Neumann describes "centroversion" as "a striving for wholeness which regulates the psychophysical harmony and the interplay of the psychic systems themselves" (Vol. II, 357). He further elaborates the process in these words: "It sets to work whenever the whole is endangered through the ascendancy of the unconscious and its autonomous contents, or, conversely, through the excessive insulation and overvaluation of the conscious system. . . . All the objects of the outside and inside worlds are introjected as contents of consciousness and are there represented according to their value. The selection, arrangement, gradation, and delimitation of the contents so represented depend in large measure on the cultural canon within which consciousness develops and by which it is conditioned. But it is characteristic of every individual, under all circumstances, to create for himself a consciously constellated and synthetically constructed view of the world, however great or small in scope" (357-358). The entire discussion of "centroversion" or the psychology of wholeness is, I believe, relevant to the uroboric symbolism of centre and circumference in Emily Dickinson.

²⁹ On the need and efficacy of "faith" or poetic fidelity, see the following poems: 81, 260, 387, 440, 455, 497, 637, 702, 792, 797, 912, 969, 972, 999, 1007, 1054, 1152, 1424, 1433, 1766, and 1768. In

Dickinson's poetry, faith should be understood as a creative principle and not as a traditional theological term. Dickinson is quite conscious of the loss of faith or the "tattered Faith" (1442) that happens frequently in day-to-day existence (see, for instance, 145 and 1557). But she suggests that "faith" can be recovered by creative imagination:

To mend each tattered Faith
There is a needle fair
Though no appearance indicate
'Tis threaded in the Air - (1442)

³⁰The poems mentioned here are: 288, 779, and 1510 respectively. In his "The Making of A Poem," Stephen Spender has this to say about poetic faith: "The poet's faith is therefore, firstly, a mystique of vocation, secondly, a faith in his own truth, combined with his own devotion to a task. There can really be no greater faith than the confidence that one is doing one's utmost to fulfill one's high vocation, and it is this that has inspired all the greatest poets. At the same time this faith is coupled with a deep humility because one knows that, ultimately, judgment does not rest with oneself. All one can do is to achieve nakedness, to be what one is with all one's faculties and perceptions, strengthened by all the skill which one can acquire, and then to stand before the judgment of time." I have quoted the above from The Creative Process, ed. Brewster Ghiselin, 123.

³¹For "process" and/or the continuity of creation, see the following poems: 501, 724, 1036, 1073, 1593, 1599, and 1605.

³²The Mentor Book of Major British Poets, ed. Oscar Williams, with an Introduction by Julian Symons, 363.

³³For the image of "Barefoot" see the following poems as well: 78, 117, 166, 215, 275, 717, 763, and 986.

³⁴The Forms of Things Unknown, 132. Herbert Read maintains, and rightly so, that Psychology has been of little help in exploring the basic problems of creativity: "We have to admit that the illumination cast by modern psychology on these 'fundamental problems' of creativity is almost nil. Myth and dream, symbol and image - all the paraphernalia of depth-psychology - are conceived as shadow play, and it is their analysable signification, and not their sensuous actuality, that attract the analyst. The depth-psychologist may claim that therapy is his only concern, and that the sensuous quality of works of art would merely distract him. That is to misunderstand the nature of art, and precisely its most intrinsic values. It is to disregard the unity of the psyche, which is not a unity of concepts, of spirit or intellect, or even of images, but of sensation. . . . The poem is a sensuous unity, a totality of utterance, and meaningful as unity or totality. . . . Do we then end with a mystery, and a veto on psychological attempts to explain it? Not exactly. We end with the reality of being or existence, and the

experience of poetry is a proof of its intrinsic originality, of its ceaseless novelty, of its unpredictable form. There is a chain of cause and effect in our practical life, in our intercourse with the external world; but deep within man's subjectivity there is an effect which has no discernible cause, which is a process of discovery, self-realization, a rending of the numinous veil of consciousness. The immediate object of the poetic experience refuses to be identified: it is infinite and eternal, formless and uninformed. In so far as this poetic experience can be described, Francis Thompson described it in these paradoxical words:

O world invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
O world unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!

View, touch, clutch - these are sensible modes of knowledge, and what we know by these means can be described only by the one simple but ambiguous word: Truth" (133-135).

³⁵"Literature and Psychology," Relations of Literary Study, ed. James Thorpe, 73. Crews' paper is highly informative.

³⁶"Creativity And Encounter," The Creative Imagination: Psychoanalysis and the Genius of Inspiration, edited with an Introduction by Hendrik M. Ruitenbeek, 283. In this brilliant paper, Rollo May proposes a theory: "Creativity occurs in an act of encounter, and is to be understood with this encounter as its center." He explains his theory in these words: "Cézanne sees a tree. He sees it in a way no one else has ever seen it. He experiences, as he no doubt would say, a 'being grasped' by the tree. The painting that issues out of this encounter between a person, Cézanne, and an objective reality, the tree, is literally new. Something is born, comes into being, something which did not exist before - which is as good a definition of creativity as we can get. Thereafter everyone who has the experience of encounter with the painting, who looks at it with intensity of awareness and lets it speak to him, will see the tree with the unique powerful movement and the architectural beauty which literally did not exist in our relation with trees until Cézanne experienced and painted them" (284). The same may be said of Emily Dickinson's poems because they are encounters with the forms of reality, as seen through the creative vision.

³⁷The Creative Process, ed. Brewster Ghiselin, 110. Amy Lowell does not seem to be trying to explain the genesis of a poem in what we might call her simple language. Even when she talks about "words," her tone is ambivalent: "Some poets speak of hearing a voice speaking to them, and say that they write almost to dictation. . . . I do not hear a voice, but I do hear words pronounced, only the pronouncing is toneless. The words seem to be pronounced in my head, but with nobody speaking them. This is an effect with which I am familiar, for I always hear

words even when I am reading to myself, and still more when I am writing. In writing, I frequently stop to read aloud what I have written, although this is really hardly necessary, so clearly do the words sound in my head."

³⁸Ibid., 125.

³⁹Ibid., 135-136.

⁴⁰Ibid., 136.

⁴¹Albert J. Gelpi, Emily Dickinson: The Mind of The Poet, 126. I entirely agree with Gelpi's observation: "There is an alternate last line, and when the poem is made to speak of the knight 'that dares to covet thee' and 'that bends a knee to thee,' it stands even more emphatically as the final testament to the multiple complexities which characterized (for Emily Dickinson at least) the life of consciousness: the ambivalence of the active and passive self in the pain and pleasure of experience. Here is the sublime culmination: within the awesome Circumference she is both bride and knight, each possessing and being possessed" (126-127).

⁴²The Hero With a Thousand Faces, 87 (Footnote 51).

⁴³"Eternity" is a frequently used image in Dickinson's poetry. She puts it to useful purpose in poems dealing with the themes of Love, Death, Self, and Time. The other poems under reference are: 13, 76, 263, 271, 296, 343, 350, 372, 388, 453, 461, 511, 587, 622, 644, 682, 694, 695, 712, 721, 728, 765, 781, 788, 800, 802, 827, 889, 892, 900, 924, 1053, 1078, 1260, 1295, 1380, 1499, 1503, 1668, and 1684.

⁴⁴The poems that refer to "awe" directly are these: 287, 525, 575, 609, 683, 732, 776, 829, 1363, 1370, 1394, 1397, 1400, 1419, 1486, 1620, 1678, 1733, and 1740. For reference to "awful," see: 160, 187, 198, 505, 506, 609, 786, 894, 1100, 1106, 1134, 1171, 1173, 1204, 1217, 1323, 1347, 1428, 1437, and 1667. For reference to "terror," see: 281, 410, 565, 1124, 1225, 1323, and 1476. A close reading of these and other poems will show that "awe" and "terror" are the creative forces of her poetry.

⁴⁵A Study of English Romanticism, 135.

⁴⁶See The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature.

⁴⁷The Future Poetry, 39-51. Mantric poetry concerns itself primarily with the discovery of one's Being or Self, through the metamorphosis of experience. The poet captures his whole being in the form of a poetic transcription. The true poem is always the poet himself, the real source of creative experience. But, it happens when the dynamic

vision of the poet, his psyche, the illumined mind--all dilate into the form of his creation. In this case, poetry becomes something much more than mere word and rhythm, rhyme and meter; it becomes Mantra. To the greatest poets, the power to transcribe the true and the vital experience, comes by drops, as if in a flash, gleaming intermittently. But when it comes, the vision becomes the mould with supreme inevitability and spontaneity. Think of Keats's "Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam/Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn," Shelley's "Life like a dome of many-coloured glass/Stains the white radiance of Eternity," Shakespeare's "The prophetic soul/Of the wide world dreaming on things to come!", and Goethe's "Shaping - re-shaping -/The eternal spirit's eternal pastime." Instances of mantric utterances, in a great variety of style, can be multiplied. Homer, Dante, Shakespeare--all abound in them. The Gita and the Upanishads are unsurpassably rich in flights of spiritual vision. Emily Dickinson possesses the qualities of a great seer as well as a great sayer. She excels many a great poet in the mode of her saying. The nature of her creative experience prompts her to write poetry of lyrical intensity. She has a great sense of poetic austerity (tapasyā); her language is rich in the severity and meditative restraint of expression.

29. ⁴⁸ Christ and Apollo: The Dimensions of the Literary Imagination,

⁴⁹ A Study of English Romanticism, 33.

⁵⁰ Modern Man in Search of A Soul, 164.

⁵¹ Quoted in Herbert Read, The Forms of Things Unknown, 135. These lines belong to the last section of Lu Chi's Essay on Literature, Wen Fu. This section concludes with the following verses (135-136):

But there are other moments as though the Six Senses were
stranded,
When the heart seems lost, and the spirit stagnant.
One stays motionless like a petrified log,
Dried up like an exhausted river bed.
The soul is indrawn to search the hidden labyrinth;
Within oneself is sought where inner light may be stored.
Behind a trembling veil Truth seems to shimmer, yet ever
more evasive,
And thought twists and twirls like silk spun on a clogged
wheel.
Therefore, all one's vital force may be dispersed in rueful
failure;
Yet again, a free play of impulses may achieve a feat
without pitfall.
While the secret may be held within oneself,
It is none the less beyond one's power to sway.
Oft I lay my hand on my empty chest,
Despairing to know how the barrier could be removed.

My purpose in quoting the above lines is to show that the great poets of all lands pass through a similar experience, and to say that Emily Dickinson is no exception. In fact, Emily Dickinson must have gone through the entire experience, because the moods described in Lu Chi's poem are integral parts of the human psyche. For instance, see Dickinson's "I felt a Cleaving in my Mind -" (937).

⁵²I have borrowed these expressions from Edward J. Rose, "Blake's Milton: The Poet As Poem," Blake Studies, 20.

⁵³Demian: The Story of Emil Sinclair's Youth, 76.

⁵⁴The phrases quoted here are from poem 291.

⁵⁵The reference is from Henry David Thoreau, Walden, 290. The conception of the artist as both in and beyond Time, and the conception of the art work as a non-linear, symbolic process are highlighted in this intensely imaginative parable in Walden (290-291): "There was an artist in the city of Kouroo who was disposed to strive after perfection. One day it came into his mind to make a staff. Having considered that in an imperfect work time is an ingredient, but into a perfect work time does not enter, he said to himself, It shall be perfect in all respects, though I should do nothing else in my life. He proceeded instantly to the forest for wood, being resolved that it should not be made of unsuitable material; and as he searched for and rejected stick after stick, his friends gradually deserted him, for they grew old in their works and died, but he grew not older by a moment. His singleness of purpose and resolution, and his elevated piety, endowed him, without his knowledge, with perennial youth. As he made no compromise with Time, Time kept out of his way, and only sighed at a distance because he could not overcome him. Before he had found a stick in all respects suitable the city of Kouroo was a hoary ruin, and he sat on one of its mounds to peel the stick. Before he had given it the proper shape the dynasty of the Candahars was at an end and with the point of the stick he wrote the name of the last of that race in the sand, and then resumed his work. By the time he had smoothed and polished the staff Kalpa was no longer the pole-star; and ere he had put on the ferule and the head adorned with precious stones, Brahma had awoke and slumbered many times. But why do I stay to mention these things? When the finishing stroke was put to his work, it suddenly expanded before the eyes of the astonished artist into the fairest of all the creations of Brahma. He had made a new system in making a staff, a world with full and fair proportions; in which, though the old cities and dynasties had passed away, fairer and more glorious ones had taken their places. And now he saw by the heap of shavings still fresh at his feet, that, for him and his work, the former lapse of time had been an illusion, and that no more time had elapsed than is required for a single scintillation from the brain of Brahma to fall on and inflame the tinder of a mortal brain. The material was pure, and his art was pure; how could the result be other than wonderful?" There are some marked similarities between Thoreau's aesthetics and Dickinson's view of Art. For critical evaluation of

Thoreau's mythic passage concerning the "artist in the city of Kouroo," the city of Kurukshetra where Arjuna of the Bhagavad-Gita fought his battle against his very kinsmen, and destroyed the "night of ignorance," see Edward J. Rose, "'A World With Full and Fair Proportions': The Aesthetics and the Politics of Vision," Thoreau Society Bulletin 19, 45-53; and Charles R. Anderson, The Magic Circle of Walden, 276-278.

⁵⁶ Emily Dickinson's Poetry: Stairway of Surprise, 73. The quotations in this passage are from L900, 430, and 675 respectively. The other poems in which Dickinson uses the word India are: 3, 202, 299, 791, and 1477.

⁵⁷ For a more detailed discussion of poetic language, its power and tension, as experienced by the poet, see pages 50-55 of Chapter I. Also see L413 and L556 for reference to words and their paradoxical nature.

⁵⁸ For Hand symbolism, I am indebted to Edward J. Rose, "Blake's Hand: Symbol and Design in JERUSALEM," TSL, Vol. VI, No. 1 (Spring, 1964), 47-58.

⁵⁹ For a detailed evaluation of "Of Bronze - and Blaze -" (290), see Charles R. Anderson, Emily Dickinson's Poetry: Stairway of Surprise, 53-65. This is the best critical commentary on the poem that I have read so far, and I find myself unable to improve upon it, though I might differ with some of its details.

⁶⁰ For the image of the "Saint," see: 60, 65, 144, 195, 214, 322, 431, 476, 527, 680, 977, 1228, 1591, and 1631.

⁶¹ For "Butterfly" symbolism, see: 14, 18, 35, 64, 70, 86, 100, 111, 129, 137, 154, 173, 176, 188, 214, 247, 257, 328, 333, 354, 380, 397, 438, 496, 533, 541, 593, 647, 682, 730, 805, 970, 1058, 1099, 1198, 1246, 1338, 1434, 1521, 1526, 1627, and 1685.

⁶² For the "Bird" figure, see: 5, 14, 35, 48, 74, 89, 92, 96, 101, 103, 130, 143, 146, 148, 153, 164, 176, 179, 191, 238, 243, 248, 254, 262, 274, 294, 304, 328, 334, 335, 346, 376, 380, 495, 500, 507, 513, 514, 526, 533, 592, 602, 606, 613, 617, 620, 653, 655, 703, 728, 743, 766, 768, 774, 783, 790, 791, 794, 797, 805, 846, 861, 880, 885, 886, 925, 941, 944, 949, 1012, 1046, 1059, 1079, 1084, 1102, 1107, 1134, 1137, 1155, 1160, 1177, 1252, 1259, 1265, 1279, 1304, 1310, 1320, 1364, 1381, 1389, 1407, 1420, 1449, 1451, 1466, 1483, 1514, 1530, 1574, 1585, 1591, 1600, 1606, 1619, 1630, 1634, 1650, 1655, 1666, 1677, 1723, 1758, 1761, and 1764. The "bird" symbolizes freedom, imagination, and creativity. In most poems "bird" is the persona of the poet.

⁶³ "Bee" and "Flower" symbolisms are quite pervasive in Dickinson's poetry. For "Bee," "Bee's," and "Bees," see: 2, 14, 18, 20, 26, 40, 46, 50, 54, 92, 111, 128, 130, 134, 138, 142, 154, 155, 200, 206, 211, 213, 216, 230, 297, 302, 319, 330, 333, 366, 373, 380, 386, 438, 447,

557, 591, 593, 620, 647, 661, 668, 676, 727, 743, 782, 805, 852, 869, 896, 899, 916, 956, 981, 991, 994, 1042, 1058, 1077, 1107, 1115, 1154, 1198, 1220, 1224, 1338, 1339, 1343, 1381, 1388, 1405, 1522, 1526, 1627, 1628, 1693, 1755, and 1763. For "Flower," "Flower's," and "Flowers," see: 31, 32, 75, 81, 94, 97, 100, 104, 106, 109, 133, 134, 137, 140, 149, 154, 169, 179, 180, 197, 322, 339, 380, 391, 404, 434, 467, 495, 513, 574, 606, 620, 629, 663, 707, 766, 790, 811, 849, 903, 905, 945, 978, 1019, 1026, 1037, 1058, 1136, 1202, 1214, 1224, 1241, 1250, 1310, 1324, 1372, 1423, 1456, 1490, 1519, 1520, 1558, 1579, 1586, 1621, 1624, 1650, 1667, 1673, 1722, 1730, 1734. The following poems may be read for "Rose" symbolism: 5, 12, 19, 34, 35, 44, 46, 56, 93, 100, 110, 163, 179, 208, 339, 342, 409, 442, 500, 512, 517, 620, 656, 675, 876, 880, 930, 956, 991, 994, 1154, 1316, 1339, 1416, 1434, 1444, and 1582. Some poems are common to all the symbolisms mentioned here.

⁶⁴This is Friedrich Nietzsche's expression which I have borrowed from "Composition of Thus Spake Zarathustra," The Creative Process, ed. Brewster Ghiselin, 202.

⁶⁵"Psychology and Literature," Modern Man in Search Of A Soul, 169. Also see Psychological Reflections: An Anthology of the Writings of C. G. Jung, selected and edited by Jolande Jacobi. Jung writes (183): "Whether the poet knows that his work is generated in him and grows and ripens there, or whether he imagines that he creates out of his own will and from nothingness, it changes in no way the curious fact that his work grows beyond him. It is, in relation to him, like a child to its mother." On the high office of poetry and the poet, we have Coleridge's famous words in his Biographia Literaria: "The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which I would exclusively appropriate the name of Imagination" (151).

⁶⁶"Emily Dickinson," Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology, 196.

⁶⁷See Erich Neumann, The Origins and History of Consciousness, Vol. 2. Neumann's commentary on the wholeness of the human psyche is worth quoting here: "Structural wholeness, with the self as center of the psyche, is symbolized by the mandala, by the circle with a center, and by the hermaphroditic uroboros. But this uroboric circle now has the luminous core of the self for a center. Whereas in the beginning the uroboros existed at the animal level only, so that the ego germ contained in its midst was almost hidden, in the unfolding flower of the mandala the animal tension of opposites is overcome, transcended by a self which blossoms forth into a corolla of opposites. At the beginning of the development, consciousness was all but extinguished by the crushing superiority of the unconscious; at the end, it is broadened and strengthened by its connection with the self. This combination of the

self with the stability of the ego serves to subdue and bind in a magic circle all contents, whether of the world or the unconscious, outside or inside." Neumann continues: "The self-differentiating structure of the psyche is reflected in a world cleft asunder by the principle of opposites into outside and inside, conscious and unconscious, life and spirit, male and female, individual and collective. But to the maturing psyche, slowly integrating itself under the sign of the hermaphrodite, the world, too, assumes the appearance of the hermaphroditic ring of existence, within which a human center takes shape, be it the individual who comes to self-realization between the inner and outer worlds, or humanity itself. For humanity as a whole and the single individual have the same task, namely, to realize themselves as a unity. Both are cast forth into a reality, one half of which confronts them as nature and external world, while the other half approaches them as psyche and the unconscious, spirit and daemonic power. Both must experience themselves as the center of this total reality" (417-418).

⁶⁸ Walden and Other Writings, ed. Brooks Atkinson, 297.

⁶⁹ For Dickinson's use of Day-Dawn symbolism, see: 24, 101, 133, 174, 425, 450, 469, 471, 575, 595, 638, 659, 716, 808, 839, 850, 888, 902, 931, 938, 944, 958, 975, 1018, 1053, 1171, 1289, 1381, 1528, 1542, 1583, 1619, 1644, 1675, and 1739.

REFERENCES FOR CHAPTER IV: LOVE: THE GARMENT OF FIRE

¹ See Soren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript. On the mode of a lover's communication, Kierkegaard writes (68: footnote): "A lover, for example, whose inwardness is his love, may very well wish to communicate; but he will not wish to communicate himself directly, precisely because the inwardness of his love is for him essential. Essentially occupied constantly in acquiring and reacquiring the inwardness of love, he has no result, and is never finished. But he may nevertheless wish to communicate, although he can never use a direct form, because such a form presupposes results and finality. So, too, in the case of a God-relationship. Precisely because he himself is constantly in process of becoming inwardly or in inwardness, the religious individual can never use direct communication, the movement in him being the precise opposite of that presupposed in direct communication. Direct communication presupposes certainty; but certainty is impossible for anyone in process of becoming, and the semblance of certainty constitutes for such an individual a deception." Communication in such matters assumes the form of the paradoxical because paradox alone can fulfill the role of joining the contradictory movements.

² The subject of most of her letters to Susan Gilbert Dickinson is Love. See, for instance, L38, L73, L74, L77, L85, L92, L93, L94, L96, L102, and L107. The tone of these letters is highly intense.

For example: ". . . Susie - I shall think of you at sunset, and at sunrise, again; and at noon, and forenoon, and afternoon, and always, and evermore, till this heart stops beating and is still" (L92). But this mood wanes in L173. The reason of rift, if any, between Emily Dickinson and Susan Gilbert could have been "the disagreement on spiritual matters," or something else. But that in itself is not very important. The letter brings out clearly Dickinson's power of feeling, her sense of pathos at the loss of persons whom she deeply loved, her rich experience, and her courage to put up with "Time's brief masquerade" (70), in order that she should be able to look forward to something far more abiding than mere human caprice. The letter deserves quoting here: "Sue - you can go or stay - There is but one alternative - We differ often lately, and this must be the last."

You need not fear to leave me lest I should be alone, for I often part with things I fancy I have loved, - sometimes to the grave, and sometimes to an oblivion rather bitterer than death - thus my heart bleeds so frequently that I shant mind the hemorrhage, and I only add an agony to several previous ones, and at the end of day remark - a bubble burst!

Such incidents would grieve me when I was but a child, and perhaps I could have wept when little feet hard by mine, stood still in the coffin, but eyes grow dry sometimes, and hearts get crisp and cinder, and had as lief burn.

Sue - I have lived by this. It is the lingering emblem of the Heaven I once dreamed, and though if this is taken, I shall remain alone, and though in that last day, the Jesus Christ you love, remark he does not know me - there is a darker spirit will not disown its child.

Few have been given me, and if I love them so, that for idolatry, they are removed from me - I simply murmur gone, and the billow dies away into the boundless blue, and no one knows but me, that one went down today. 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." The poem with which Dickinson concludes this letter is published as number 5 in Johnson's edition of poems, and I have mentioned it elsewhere in my study, indicating Dickinson's typology of "the eternal return."

³ Emily Dickinson: A Revelation, 9-10.

⁴ Ortega y Gasset, On Love: Aspects of A Single Theme, 7. In this brilliant study, Gasset writes (13): "Everything I say refers to the act of love in its psychic inwardness as a process of the soul. You cannot go to the God that you love with the legs of your body, and yet loving Him means going toward him. In loving we abandon the tranquillity and permanence within ourselves, and virtually migrate toward the object. And this constant state of migration is what it is to be in love." He continues (13-14): ". . . love is prolonged in time: one does not love in a series of sudden moments or disjointed instants which are ignited

and die like the spark of a magnet, but one loves the beloved with continuity. . . . love is a flow, a stream of spiritual matter, a fluid which flows continually like a fountain. We could say, in searching for metaphoric expression to crystallize and qualify intuitively the character of that to which I now refer, that love is not an explosion, but a continued emanation, a psychic radiation which proceeds from the lover to the beloved. It is not a single discharge, but a current." The notion of continuity, or an endless process, is quite relevant to our study of Dickinson's love poetry.

⁵ Ibid., 18.

⁶ See Miguel De Unamuno, Tragic Sense of Life, translated from the Spanish by J. E. Crawford Fitch (New York: 1954). Chapter VII, "Love, Suffering, Pity, and Personality" (132-155), of this study is most relevant to our purpose here. Unamuno remarks (135): "This other form of love, this spiritual love, is born of sorrow, is born of the death of carnal love, is born also of the feeling of compassion and protection which parents feel in the presence of a stricken child. Lovers never attain to a love of self abandonment, of true fusion of soul and not merely of body, until the heavy pestle of sorrow has bruised their hearts and crushed them in the same mortar of suffering."

⁷ Love, in the ultimate sense, is that Choice which man finds already made in his own being. It is the Existential Imperative of the process of becoming which no human being can deny himself. For this insight, I am indebted to George Price, The Narrow Pass: A Study of Kierkegaard's Concept of Man (London: 1963), 41-42 and 77-79 (Appendix 1, Note 39).

⁸ Martin Buber, Between Man and Man, 73. Buber is right in pointing out that "our human way to the infinite leads only through fulfilled finitude" (84).

⁹ Other poems in which Dickinson has used the words "face" and/or "faces" with some depth meanings are: 50, 58, 82, 122, 137, 144, 154, 157, 175, 196, 220, 225, 253, 256, 286, 310, 311, 322, 336, 355, 359, 398, 418, 421, 426, 431, 458, 461, 463, 464, 474, 488, 506, 508, 552, 558, 559, 564, 570, 577, 590, 598, 623, 640, 643, 649, 652, 663, 692, 734, 737, 754, 757, 763, 768, 788, 792, 820, 821, 851, 881, 932, 954, 955, 956, 968, 978, 984, 1000, 1002, 1026, 1080, 1133, 1141, 1187, 1189, 1203, 1227, 1236, 1237, 1251, 1260, 1298, 1305, 1318, 1327, 1328, 1345, 1400, 1422, 1429, 1473, 1490, 1492, 1499, 1598, 1649, 1672, and 1722.

¹⁰ Selected Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke, ed. Harry T. Moore, 278. The description is a part of Rilke's letter to Merline, dated December 16, 1920. The imagery of the whole description is markedly Dickinsonian. When Dickinson describes her lover God and "His Face," she uses the paradox of Light and Dark in this way:

The Light His Action, and the Dark
 The Leisure of His Will -
 In Him Existence serve or set
 A Force illegible.

(820)

¹¹See Martin Buber, I and Thou, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: 1958). Buber clarifies the I-Thou relationship in these words (63): "Where there is no sharing there is no reality. Where there is self-appropriation there is no reality. The more direct the contact with the Thou, the fuller is the sharing. The I is real in virtue of its sharing in reality. The fuller its sharing the more real it becomes. But the I that steps out of the relational event into separation and consciousness of separation, does not lose its reality. Its sharing is preserved in it in a living way. . . . Genuine subjectivity can only be dynamically understood, as the swinging of the I in its lonely truth. Here, too, is the place where the desire is formed and heightened for ever higher, more unconditioned relation, for the full sharing in being. In subjectivity the spiritual substance of the person matures." Buber's position is valid and is fully applicable to Dickinson's love poetry of the Internal-Immanent Possibility and the Internal-Eternal Possibility.

¹²See Mircea Eliade, Myth And Reality (New York: Harper & Row, 1968). In his chapter on "Eschatology and Cosmogony," Eliade writes (54): "Myths of cosmic cataclysms are extremely widespread. They tell how the World was destroyed and mankind annihilated except for a single couple or a few survivors. The myths of the Flood are the most numerous and are known nearly everywhere (although extremely infrequent in Africa). In addition to Flood myths, others recount the destruction of mankind by cataclysms of cosmic proportions - earthquakes, conflagrations, falling mountains, epidemics, and so forth. Clearly, this End of the World was not final; rather, it was the end of one human race, followed by the appearance of another. But the total submergence of the Earth under the Waters or its destruction by fire, followed by the emergence of a virgin Earth, symbolize return to Chaos followed by cosmogony." Eliade further writes (55): "The Flood opened the way at once to a re-creation of the World and to a regeneration of humanity. In other words, the End of the World in the past and that which is to take place in the future both represent the mythico-ritual system of the New Year festival projected on the macrocosmic scale and given an unusual degree of intensity."

¹³The Shaking of The Foundations, 110.

¹⁴In the Greek language both Eros and Agape mean Love, and Love is God. For the Greek conception of Eros, Plato's Symposium, Plotinus's Enneads, and Plutarch's Dialogue on Love can prove highly useful readings. Plotinus's notion of Caritas offers a sort of reconciliation between the Greek conception of Eros and the Christian ideal of Agape. Other studies which deserve mention here are: Soren Kierkegaard, Works of Love, and Edifying Discourses; Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros: A Study of The Christian Idea of Love, Part I; Martin C. D'Arcy, The Mind and Heart of Love; Denis De Rougemont, Passion and Society; Erich Fromm, The Art of

Loving; and C. S. Lewis, The Four Loves. Of particular interest is Father D'Arcy's The Mind and Heart of Love. D'Arcy counters the interpretations of De Rougemont. For instance, he does not consider Eros (human passion) and Agape (divine love) as irreconcilable. D'Arcy also differs with Nygren's standpoint represented in Agape and Eros. De Rougemont considers Eros as a "dark passion," but Nygren regards it as a divine passion in the Greek sense. D'Arcy focuses on the sharp contrast between the differing viewpoints of De Rougemont and Nygren, and takes a position which emphasizes God-Man's love as a two-way street.

¹⁵With an Introduction by V. S. Pritchett, 70.

¹⁶See Albert J. Gelpi, Emily Dickinson: The Mind of The Poet. Gelpi begins and ends his study with L93, and I find his analysis of the letter very helpful. He writes (2-3): "The passage itself reads as though Emily realized that she had summoned up a frightening, long submerged secret to plain view. However unconscious she may have been of the full implications of her remarks, she was revealing the dilemma that determined her response to experience on all levels. For a few moments and in her own words she is caught hesitating between the desire to be ravished and the fear of being violated, between the need for integration with something else and the assertion of self-contained individuality, between the need for union with or subservience to the not-me and the insistence upon the separate identity of the ego."

¹⁷Agape and Eros, 85. Nygren further writes (86): "Had we never known the manifestation of love on the Cross, we might have known the meaning of love in general, but we should never have known the Christian meaning of love; we should never have known love in its highest and deepest meaning, God's own love, Agape. The testimony of the Cross is that Agape-love is a love which gives itself, pours itself out, even to the uttermost." According to Nygren, or rather, according to Paul "who first introduces the term Agape in the Scriptures, and thereby hands it down to later generations" (84), God's Agape is a one-way street: "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Corinthians 5:18). Christ is symbolic of God's forgiveness and man's atonement (at-one-ment). In forgiveness God restores man to his primal state of being. This we must accept on the authority of Jesus, the God-Man. But, since God does not spare man from the existential process of becoming what is being, the responsibility falls upon man to strive endlessly in order to obtain the condition of God's forgiveness. This brings in the notion of man's love for God, or the Greek conception of Heavenly Eros in which man constantly strives to ascend to God. The notions of God's love for man and man's love for God need to be understood simultaneously. Because, man's existential striving is meaningful only in his relationship to God. The seeming polarity between God's descent towards man and man's ascent towards God, can be aesthetically resolved. The daring paradox of the knowledge that God exists can be stated only in terms of the metaphor. It is Jesus as the "type" who can provide a clue to man's destiny, and give meaning to man's otherwise

"absurd" suffering.

¹⁸For full account of the image of Shiva, see Nancy Wilson Ross, Three Ways of Asian Wisdom, 19, 24, 32, 38, 49, 57, 58, 60-63, and 75. For Dickinson's use of the word "Himmaleh," see 252, 350, 481, and 862. For Dickinson's paradoxical God, see 376, 564, 621, 744, 820, 871, 882, 885, 1145, 1260, 1461, 1487, 1718, and 1719.

¹⁹Christian Existentialism: A Berdyaev Synthesis, selected and translated by Donald A. Lowrie, 43.

²⁰I have borrowed the phrases "holier love," and "wheel of fire" from Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey Lines," 155, and Shakespeare's King Lear (Act IV, Sc. VII, 47) respectively.

²¹The quotation is from L873.

²²See The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana, trans. Sir Richard Burton and F. F. Arbuthnot. K. M. Panikkar, in his Introduction to this work, tells us (21): "In the Chandogya Upanishad, the sexual act is compared to a sacred sacrifice. There it is stated, 'The woman is the fire, the womb the fuel, the invitation of man the smoke. The door is the flame, entering the ember, pleasure the spark. In this fire gods form the offering. From this offering springs forth the child.'" The images of "fuel," "flame," "fire," and "spark" clearly indicate the process of dying. But this is not the end. From the "fire" "springs forth the child," symbolizing man's rebirth and continuity. Life and death are eternally present in the "womb."

²³On the issue of psychedelic drugs and their ultimate ineffectiveness in achieving the centre of Consciousness, see my article, "Hinduism and Hippies," Pluck, Vol. I, No. 1 (January, 1968), 29-32. Pluck is a literary magazine published by the Graduate Students of the Department of English at The University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada.

REFERENCES FOR CHAPTER V: DEATH: THE COSMIC DANCE

¹See Chapter I: 9, 11, 12, 14-17, 34, 47, 49; Chapter II: 61, 69, 83, 90-95; Chapter III: 102-103, 120, 134, 139, 144; Chapter IV: 195-206.

²Selected Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke, ed. Harry T. Moore, 387. These words are taken from Rilke's letter to Witold Von Hulewicz, postmarked Sierre, 13 November 1925.

³See Tragic Sense of Life, 36 and 37. In Chapter III: "The Hunger of Immortality," Unamuno writes (38): "It is impossible for us, in effect, to conceive of ourselves as not existing, and no effort is

capable of enabling consciousness to realize absolute unconsciousness, its own annihilation. Try, reader, to imagine to yourself, when you are wide awake, the condition of your soul when you are in deep sleep; try to fill your consciousness with the representation of no-consciousness, and you will see the impossibility of it. The effort to comprehend it causes the most tormenting dizziness. We cannot conceive ourselves as not existing." He further writes (38-39): "I want to be myself, and yet without ceasing to be myself to be others as well, to merge myself into the totality of things visible and invisible, to extend myself into the illimitable of space and to prolong myself into the infinite of time. Not to be all and for ever is as if not to be - at least, let me be my whole self, and be so for ever and ever." The cry for personal immortality is rooted in the religious imagination of almost all lands. But, in the context of Dickinson's poetry, I hope to show that for the creative artist, immortality realized through the creative process and in the very now and here of Existence is more effective and plausible than the one sanctioned by the religious tradition.

⁴Unamuno, Tragic Sense of Life, 37.

⁵See Jose Ferrater Mora, Being and Death: An Outline of Integrationist Philosophy, translated from the Spanish with Extensive Revisions by the Author. On the inside-outside of death, Ferrater Mora writes (172): "The expression 'the interiority of death' is meant to describe the following state of affairs: death is not simply the end of life but an event which shapes and constitutes life. Correspondingly, the expression 'the exteriority of death' is meant to designate the fact that death falls outside the scope of life. Now then, it is my opinion that no matter how much death may belong to man as his 'property,' it is never completely interior (or, as we shall also say, 'internal') to man's life. If such were the case, man's life would be explicable solely in terms of his death. On the other hand, I maintain that a complete exteriority of death with respect to life is most improbable and, indeed, inconceivable, for in this case human death would be an entirely meaningless event. We must assume, then, that death is partly internal, and partly external, to human life. The question is now, to what degree does the interiority of death noticeably prevail over its exteriority in human beings? The answer is, to a considerable degree." At this stage in our discussion, Ferrater Mora's observation, though significant in itself, has a limited relevance. It explains the character of death as being both within and beyond man, but it does not answer the predicament of man in the face of "death," formulating to himself the questions which will never receive any answer, and the answers which will never have any questions.

⁶Ibid. On the paradox of death as being "beyond life" and yet "within life," Ferrater Mora's position is worth recording here. He argues (170-171): "On the one hand, death seems to make its presence felt only 'at the other end of life'; thus, death emerges truly 'outside of,' and has little to do with, human life. To be sure, some thinkers have surmised that man is, as it were, perpetually dying, for he begins

to die from the very moment when he begins to live. Yet once a man is dead, his death is, in fact, 'beyond his life.' Death is not simply dying, but 'that which has died.' Hence to die is, as Paul Ludwig Landsberg has put it, 'to set foot into the ghostly, chilly world of absolute death'."

"From this point of view, we are able to say little, if anything at all about death. 'Death' is a name which merely designates the complete absence of life. Since the complete absence of life (or, for that matter, of anything) is nothingness, it would seem only wise to abstain from talking about it, for nothingness is not a proper subject of meaningful talk."

"On the other hand, death 'refers to' - in the senses of 'points at,' 'calls attention to' - life, even if it is only 'a life that was.' Something remains for a time after death which can be regarded as 'that which death has left behind': the 'dead one,' the corpse. Thus, it is hard to believe that death refers to nothing; as the saying goes, it 'preys upon' living beings." This argument underlies Ferrater Mora's observation recorded at Note 5. But I wish to emphasize here that whatever side of the paradox one might like to examine, discussion of "death" is inevitably bound with the discussion of "life." "Death" has no meaning outside "life." Concerning its mystery, and man's everlasting question "wherefore," there can be no philosophic or scientific solution. The solution, if there is any, lies in man's creative apprehension of the phenomenon of "death," as experienced in the depths of his own Heart. Dickinson's repeated concern with the problem of death's mystery is a pointer towards man's ultimate need to comprehend death and come to terms with it, as one comes to terms with life.

⁷In connection with the metaphor of "Prism," see 611, 1315, and 1602.

⁸The quotation is from L597.

⁹Quoted from Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, 66. The experience I am trying to describe here, comes alive in just one line from Mallarmé's "Sea-Wind," as recorded by Symons. The line is (68): "That an awakening wind bends over wrecking seas."

¹⁰The Mortal No: Death and The Modern Imagination, 430. Hoffman further writes (430-431): "As a general condition, mortality is of little use beyond the point of establishing the limits of human possibility; that is, the proposition 'all men are mortal' means very little. As a uniquely personal experience, the expectation of death qualifies and differentiates each self, and remains a continuous challenge to it, to make of its life (and of the ego which lives it) what it can and must. This is the major 'essence' to which all existentialisms must refer: I exist, that is, in the sense that I am a being that will some time cease to exist." Human death is of course a strictly personal event, and no one can die for the "other," except in a

very special and complex sense, in the sense in which one "dies" at the death of "the beloved" or someone whose identity is interfused with one's own being.

¹¹Emily Dickinson's Poetry: Stairway of Surprise, 258.

¹²The aesthetic implications of the word "Dream" have been explored in Chapter II. The conception of life as a "Dream" provokes response of a somewhat metaphysical nature. If "life" is a "dream," then "death" which comes to life must also be a "dream." In the Oriental thought, or more particularly, Indian thought, life-death continuum is a process of Maya or Illusion. Reality lies beyond Maya, though, paradoxically, the only way to "discover" Reality is through Maya. One cannot transcend what one has not seen. In this sense, even Maya becomes reality for the human being. For the created being, however, and from the point of view of aesthetics, transcendence of Maya is paradoxical. For the man of Imagination, transcendence must become possible within existence, that means, he can only comprehend the meaning of Maya, without ever trying to go beyond Maya. Maya is the realm of his creation. Dickinson's "Dream" can be understood within the aesthetic context. I do not think that she is raising any metaphysical question here, which, for instance, is being raised by Poe in his "A Dream Within A Dream":

I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand -
How few! yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep,
While I weep - while I weep!
O God! can I not grasp
Them with a tighter clasp?
O God! can I not save
One from the pitiless wave?
Is all that we see or seem
But a dream within a dream?

¹³Quoted from Philip Wheelwright, Heraclitus, 90 (Fragment 108). Wheelwright observes (91-92): "The most characteristic difficulty in Heraclitus' philosophy lies in the demand which it makes upon its hearers to transcend the 'either-or' type of thinking and to recognize in each phase of experience that a relationship of 'both-and' may be present in subtle ways that escape a dulled intelligence. Heraclitus' thought moves not by exclusion but more characteristically by coalescence, and always with a sense of otherness. To him nothing is exclusively this or that; in various ways he affirms something to be both of two disparates or two contraries, leaving the reader to contemplate the paradox, the full semantic possibilities of which can never be exhausted by plain prose statements. The upward and downward ways are contrary and yet one; the human soul is destined and yet is faced with the ever-present choice between up and down; the soul originates out of fire (Fr. 28)

but it originates out of water (Fr. 44); time is eternal and yet time, like everything else, must come to a death which is also a rebirth; God is at once universal process, the intelligence that steers the process, the model by which a wise man will guide himself (Fr. 106), and a child idly moving counters in a game." What Wheelwright writes about Heraclitus' philosophy can be easily said of Emily Dickinson's poetry, because her poetry also presents the paradox which is at the heart of existence, in its ontological dimension.

¹⁴See Anderson, Emily Dickinson's Poetry. Anderson explains the metaphor of "Degreeless Noon" in these words (267-268): "When the hands of the clock have swung full circle around their three hundred and sixty degrees, at the exact moment that they point to the beginning of a new cycle they also strike the hour of 'Noon,' or midnight, which is there mathematically though not registered on the dial, and which is 'Degreeless' because the pointers are superimposed instead of separated at an angle. Twelve o'clock is zero as well as zenith, and if the clock stops then it escapes 'out of Decimals,' hence out of time." Anderson further points out that Dickinson "habitually passed over the conventional middle of the night as the zero hour, when villagers are asleep and unaware of time, preferring midday as the hour when eternity begins." I can add little to this brilliant analysis. But I should point out that in Dickinson's poetry, the image of "Midnight" is full with many subtle and paradoxical meanings. It is the hour of destruction before a new creation, the moment of frost before the Sun. It is also the moment of pure "Eclipse" and "dissolution" (236). The poet, waking at "Midnight" dreams "of the Dawn" (450). Dickinson is not afraid of the "Midnight's awful Pattern" (1171) when she writes: "all my stratagem had been/The Midnight to confirm" (786). In her Imagination, even "Midnight's - due - at Noon" (415). For other poems concerning the image of "Midnight," see: 174, 205, 347, 400, 419, 420, 425, 461, 510, 577, 670, 699, 710, 721, and 1095.

¹⁵Christian Existentialism: A Berdyaev Synthesis, 81. Berdyaev writes (81): ". . . in order fully to comprehend death and to have the right attitude toward it, extraordinary effort and spiritual enlightenment are necessary. We may say that the meaning of man's moral experience throughout his whole life lies in putting him into a position to comprehend death, in bringing him to the proper attitude toward it."

¹⁶See Thomas H. Johnson, and Theodora Ward, eds., The Letters of Emily Dickinson, II, 479. As pointed out by the editors the quotation in Dickinson's letter is from Othello (I, iii, 208). Duke of Venice concludes a part of his dialogue with Brabantio in these words: "The robb'd that smiles, steals something from the thief,/He robs himself, that spends a bootless grief" (I, iii, 208-209).

¹⁷I am using the term "terminal" only in the Western context, as Christianity propounds that man's "death" on earth is the "terminus." In the Indian context, the term "terminus" applies to man's ultimate freedom from the cycle of birth-death-rebirth, to man's entry into

Brahma who is above creation and dissolution. Dickinson's strategy of life-death continuum does not stem from any metaphysical belief in reincarnation or birth after death, or from any religious belief in man's immortality, but is rooted in the very nature of the creative process, and is realized as such in the very now and here of Existence. I do not think that she cares for the Indian "terminus" either:

No Autumn's intercepting Chill
Appalls this Tropic Breast -
But African Exuberance
And Asiatic Rest. (1516)

¹⁸The Long Shadow: Emily Dickinson's Tragic Poetry, 112.

¹⁹"The Ship? Great God, Where is the Ship?" An Editorial Critique of American Literature," The English Teacher, Vol. 2, No. 1 (February, 1962), 16.

²⁰Psychological Reflections: Selections, ed. Jolande Jacobi, 294. Jung continues (294-295): "This image was the first to become - and with the most profound justification - the symbolic bearer of human destiny: in the morning of life, man painfully tears himself away from the mother, from the home-hearth, and fights his way up to his full heights, not seeing his worst enemy before him but carrying him within him as a deadly longing for his own abyss, a yearning to drown in his own source, to be engulfed in the mother. His life is a constant battle with death, a violent and transitory liberation from the ever-threatening night. This death is no outer enemy, but his own inner longing for the silence and deep peace of non-existence, that dreamless sleep in the sea of all birth and death."

²¹For the conception of "Duplicate divine," the God who is the Creator and Destroyer, see Alan W. Watts, The Two Hands of God: The Myths of Polarity (New York: 1963). For the idea of "the eternal return," see Mircea Eliade, The Myth of The Eternal Return (New York: 1954).

REFERENCES FOR CHAPTER VI: SELF: THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY

¹The Inclusive Flame: Studies in American Poetry, 49.

²See Richard B. Sewall, The Vision of Tragedy. Sewall points out (155: Note 45): "Though the affirmation that suffering brings knowledge seems clearly one of the constants of tragedy, it is by no means true of life in general. All suffering does not lead to knowledge. Suffering leads often to a complete collapse of personality; it can degrade and benumb." I entirely agree with this observation. But Dickinson's sense of "suffering" does not belong to the category of

"life in general." Her sense of "suffering" is integral with her poetic psychology of Being; it is the essence by which she defines existence in its ontological dimension. This is a special kind of "suffering." To a very great degree of accuracy, this "suffering" can be defined in the words of Sewall: "This kind of suffering presupposes man's ability to understand the full context and implications of his action, and thus it is suffering beyond the reach of the immature or brutish, the confirmed optimist or pessimist, or the merely indifferent. To the Greek tragedians, as to the Poet of Job, only the strongest natures could endure this kind of suffering - persisting in their purpose in spite of doubts, fears, advice of friends, and sense of guilt - and hence to the Greeks it became the mark of the hero. Only the hero suffers in this peculiar, ultimate way" (47).

³The ultimate Reality or Identity for the Hindus is the Parmatman or Brahman which permeates all and is above all. The Hindu Atman or "awakened soul" is not antagonistic to a created self or ego, but it is the source of the latter's freedom from earthliness and sheer bondage. The human ego seeks relation with the "enlightened Self" or Atman in order to expand towards its roots. In the quest for "identity," Dickinson touches the realm of the Atman or the Spiritual Centre of her own Being. There is no struggle for the Parmatman or some other transcendent God in her poetry. She visualizes God in several forms and sees them as she creates them. For Dickinson, the ultimate truth or Brahman is her own creation and the "Centre" from which it springs. In the final sense, if there is any finality about things, I think, Dickinson's gods should not be confused with the gods of theology or institutionalized religion, because her gods primarily belong to her creativity and Imagination, and they are realized in concreto only in the structure of her Imagination.

⁴Faust/(Part Two), translated with an Introduction by Philip Wayne, 269 (Act V).

⁵The Portable Nietzsche, newly translated, edited, and with a critical introduction and notes, by Walter Kaufmann, 400. The quotation is from Thus Spoke Zarathustra (Fourth Part). Nietzsche writes further (400): "Cold souls, mules, the blind, and the drunken I do not call brave. Brave is he who knows fear but conquers fear, who sees the abyss, but with pride. Who sees the abyss but with the eyes of an eagle; who grasps the abyss with the talons of an eagle - that man has courage."

⁶See Henry David Thoreau, A Week on The Concord and Merrimack Rivers. On the Infinite nature of "Silence," and the human inadequacy to fully interpret it, Thoreau has this to say (435-436): "It were vain for me to endeavor to interpret the Silence. She cannot be done into English. For six thousand years men have translated her with what fidelity belonged to each, and still she is little better than a sealed book. A man may run on confidently for a time, thinking he has her under his thumb, and shall one day exhaust her, but he too must at last

be silent, and men remark only how brave a beginning he made; for when he at length dives into her, so vast is the disproportion of the told to the untold that the former will seem but the bubble on the surface where he disappeared." However, the paradoxical character of Silence can be expounded in more ways than one. It can be stated that Silence (Shantam) is the basis of all speech and communication; that Silence and speech are essentially one and it is to Silence that all sound returns; that Silence is Self or Soul; and that Silence is Brahman or the transcendent God.

⁷ The Upanishads: Breath of The Eternal, the principal texts selected and translated from the original Sanskrit by Swami Prabhavananda and Frederick Manchester, 28. The gist of the Isha Upanishad is rendered in these words (26): "LIFE in the world and life in the spirit are not incompatible. Work, or action, is not contrary to knowledge of God, but indeed, if performed without attachment, is a means to it. On the other hand, renunciation is renunciation of the ego, of selfishness - not of life. The end, both of work and of renunciation, is to know the Self within and Brahman without, and to realize their identity. The Self is Brahman, and Brahman is all." Brahman is the Being of Transcendence toward which the Being of Existence eternally moves. The "world" is the "body" which embodies the Self of the existential being. The "body" in itself is not absolute but it is indispensable as a medium of Self-realization. Dickinson's sense of the "Body" should be understood as a mode of the Self and not the Self. Dickinson's Self of Existence is interfused with the Self of Transcendence. For her, there is no transcendental Self beyond the one which permeates and is permeated by the Creative Process. In the context of her poetry, Brahman can be used only as a "type" of the Creator-Artist for whom the creative Self is the ultimate Self.

⁸ I borrow the expression: "to illuminate endlessly the interior life" from Charles R. Anderson, "The Conscious Self in Emily Dickinson's Poetry," American Literature, XXXI (1959), 303.

⁹ See Hyatt H. Waggoner, "Emily Dickinson: The Transcendent Self," Criticism, VII (September, 1965), 297-334. Waggoner seems to me to be over emphasizing Dickinson's debt to Emerson or the Emersonian ideas. He writes (305): "What Emerson meant to her is apparent not so much in the number of her references to him, despite his position in this respect right after the Bible and Shakespeare, as in the nature of them--in their tone, in the contexts in which they appear, and in the uses to which they are put. For the most part, she didn't need to quote him: he had been too thoroughly digested for that. But when she did quote, it was from memory, inaccurately, and in a kind of private short-hand language. Even without considering, for the moment, the poems, which provide all the evidence one would need to show that Emerson was essential to her, we can find in the letters alone very strong evidence that Emerson meant very much more to her than any of the writers or works she named to Higginson except the Bible." I am fully aware of Dickinson's admiration of Emerson. It is true that she

calls Emerson's Representative Men "a little Granite Book" (L481); that she feels that Emerson "touched the secret Spring" (L750) in her; that she shows fascination for Emerson's phrase "Tumultuous privacy of Storm" (PF116); and that she thinks "as if he [Emerson] had come from where dreams are born" (PF10). But I find it hard to accept "that Emerson meant very much more to her than any of the writers or works she named to Higginson except the Bible." Higginson records that "After long disuse of her eyes she read Shakespeare and thought why is any other book needed" (L342b). It is also on record that she admired several other writers equally intensely or with equal intensity of tone and manner and context. But that does not interest me here. My point is that Dickinson thoroughly believes that "each Mind is itself, like a distinct Bird" (L457), and that "there is always one thing to be grateful for - that one is one's self and not somebody else" (Note to L405). In these notions, or many others, if Dickinson happens to resemble Emerson, it does not mean that she is under the "influence" of Emerson. Nor does it mean that Emerson has a monopoly over these ideas. Emerson himself does not claim that. In his Essay on "Self-Reliance," Emerson makes it clear that "Every great man is a unique." Whether Emerson himself is influenced by "the German transcendental philosophers" or the Orientalists, or both, does not concern us in so far as we intend to establish the relationship of his ideas with those of Dickinson. For a balanced view of the relationship between the ideas of Emerson and Dickinson, as well as between the ideas of Thoreau and Dickinson, see Glauco Cambon, "Emily Dickinson and the Crisis of Self-Reliance," Transcendentalism And Its Legacy, ed. Myron Simon and Thornton H. Parsons (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), 123-133.

¹⁰ For reference to Eckhart and Shankara, see Alan W. Watts, The Supreme Identity: An Essay on Oriental Metaphysics and the Christian Religion (Sixth Printing; New York: The Noonday Press, 1966).

¹¹ Man's Search For Himself, 120.

¹² Concluding Unscientific Postscript, 176. The context in which Kierkegaard uses the word "passion" is quite relevant to my discussion of Dickinson's Self, though Dickinson has no advanced polemic to offer on the subject of Subjectivity. Dickinson's Self is her creative Subjectivity, and is realized as such in terms of the existential Being. Excerpts from Kierkegaard's discussion of Subjectivity can, I think, serve as a link between Dickinson's poetry and the tendency that is so essential to Existential Thought. Kierkegaard writes (176): "The I-am-I is a mathematical point which does not exist, and in so far there is nothing to prevent everyone from occupying this standpoint; the one will not be in the way of the other. It is only momentarily that the particular individual is able to realize existentially a unity of the infinite and the finite which transcends existence. This unity is realized in the moment of passion. . . . But the scribbling modern philosophy holds passion in contempt; and yet passion is the culmination of existence for an existing individual - and we are all of us existing individuals. In passion the existing subject is rendered infinite in

the eternity of the imaginative representation, and yet he is at the same time most definitely himself." Kierkegaard continues (176-177): "All essential knowledge relates to existence, or only such knowledge as has an essential relationship to existence is essential knowledge. All knowledge which does not inwardly relate itself to existence, in the reflection of inwardness, is, essentially viewed, accidental knowledge; its degree and scope is essentially indifferent." For Dickinson's poetry, Kierkegaard's "passion" may be understood as "creativity." In this sense, the meaning of the statement: "In passion the existing subject is rendered infinite in the eternity of the imaginative representation" becomes crystal clear. Of course, Dickinson knows no other infinity or "eternity" than the one she creates for herself through and in her own "imaginative representation."

¹³Essays (First and Second Series), with an introduction by Shiv Kumar, 30. In the opening paragraph of his essay, Emerson observes (27): "To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men - that is genius. Speak your latent conviction, and it shall be the universal sense; for the inmost in due time becomes the utmost, and our first thought is rendered back to us by the trumpets of the Last Judgment. . . . A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages." In this "revolutionary" document, Emerson further notes (32): "What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the harder because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude."

¹⁴I borrow this phrase from Perry D. Westbrook, The Greatness of Man: An Essay on Dostoyevsky and Whitman. In the "Preface" to this brilliant study, Westbrook observes (9): "The subject of all great thought, all great art and literature, is the greatness of man. Man attains true greatness in his mind and in his spirit. Art and literature are the records of man's pondering on his greatness, marveling at it more rapturously than on even the sublimest works of mere physical nature."

¹⁵The Continuity of American Poetry, 179. Pearce concludes this remark in these words (179-180): "The great conglomeration of Emily Dickinson's poetry is indeed a kind of Moby Dick. Her poetry has its own kind of proliferation and plenitude, and likewise its own kind of incompleteness; for the very lack of 'system' in the poetry, the open-endedness of its conception of the creating self, is such that there is, properly speaking, no end and no beginning - simply life being made as it is being lived through."

¹⁶ A Study of English Romanticism, 164. For a full-length treatment of the idea of "concern," see Northrop Frye, "The Knowledge of Good and Evil," The Morality of Scholarship, ed. Max Black (Ithaca, New York: 1967).

¹⁷ Emerson, "Self-Reliance," Essays, 51.

¹⁸ For a detailed study of the Snake symbolism, see Joseph L. Handerson and Maud Oakes, The Wisdom of the Serpent: The Myths of Death, Rebirth, and Resurrection (New York: 1963).

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¹ For Dickinson's "poetic techniques," see Gay Wilson Allen, "Emily Dickinson," American Prosody, 307-321; and Thomas H. Johnson, "The Poet and The Muse: Poetry as Art," Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Richard B. Sewall, 70-77. Johnson observes: "Her writing techniques were self-taught. She did not follow traditional theories, but developed her own along highly original lines" (70).

² Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, The Voice of the Poet: Aspects of Style in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson, 10.

³ "Introduction," Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays, 8. Concerning Dickinson's literary status, Sewall observes (4): "There is now little dispute about her stature - we can hardly miss its dimensions - and, given the size of her achievement, there is less inclination to complain about her unevenness." In this context, also see Douglas Duncan, Emily Dickinson (London: 1965). Duncan concludes his book with this remark: "We may or may not like the voice we hear, just as we may or may not be able to sympathise with the whole inward direction of her life. But we cannot miss in her the disturbing presence of genius, or fail to be moved by the thought of the strange guises in which it has walked the earth" (106).

⁴ Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays, 5.

⁵ Art and Existentialism, 155.

⁶ The phrase "literalists of the imagination" is from Marianne Moore, "Poetry," Collected Poems, 41.

⁷ See "Emily Dickinson and the Limits of Judgment," Maule's Curse: Seven Studies in the History of American Obscurantism, 149-165. For the images and metaphors of "scarlet gown," "Scarlet Freight," "Scarlet Rain," and "scarlet log," see poems 12, 404, 656, and 1693 respectively.

⁸ Emily Dickinson, 101. Also see Archibald MacLeish, Louise Bogan and Richard Wilbur, Emily Dickinson: Three Views (Amherst: 1960).

⁹ Quoted in Richard B. Sewall, The Vision of Tragedy, 169 (Note 100).

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