

EMILY DICKINSON'S FASCICLES:
A STUDY OF HER PSYCHODYNAMIC POETRY

A Thesis

Presented to

the Graduate Faculty of the Department of English
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Alicia T. Tibbals
August, 1972

FOREWORD

I wish to thank Dr. Thomas W. Ford for introducing me to Emily Dickinson's fascicles and for directing my work. My gratitude also goes to Dr. John Q. Anderson and Dr. John B. Siegfried for promptly reading and commenting upon the text. Further, I thank my friends in Leicester, England, and Glasgow, Scotland, who graciously relieved me in typing and in home duties. But my warmest thanks I give to my husband, Fred Tibbals, for his sustaining inspiration.

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The fascicle is Emily Dickinson's highly original poetic creation which acts as a psychodynamic poem. In each of her mature fascicles composed after 1861 Dickinson presents a unified psychological experience by selecting and arranging disparate poems into mental progressions. Each poem within a particular fascicle presents a mental state, psychic situation, or tentative belief momentarily held by the poetic speaker of the gathering, and each provokes a further psychological situation or commentary; the subsequent poem then portrays the ensuing mental response of the speaker. In this manner Dickinson endows the gathering of diverse poems with psychological cohesion and self-propelling mental movement in a purposeful direction whereby the fascicle portrays a unified experience within the consciousness of the poetic "I." Thus, by means of fascicle structure she simulates the mental activity of the fictive speaker in the fascicle.

This acute interest in psychodynamics apparent in fascicle construction is obtrusively reflected as well in Dickinson's methods of organization, employment of image series, and choice of content. In essence, Emily Dickinson develops and refines the fascicle as her poetic mode of expressing the subject she most values in life and art: man's profound psychological struggle to find meaning and purpose in life.

CONTENTS

	Page
FOREWORD	iii
I. BACKGROUND OF FASCICLES	1
II. FASCICLE 81	8
III. FASCICLE UNITY THROUGH ORGANIZATION AND IMAGERY .	48
IV. IDEAS AND ATTITUDES EXPRESSED	73
V. CONCLUSION	93
APPENDICES	102
APPENDIX I: FASCICLES STUDIED	102
APPENDIX II: POEMS IN FASCICLE 81	103
APPENDIX III: FASCICLES DISCUSSED IN TEXT	111
BIBLIOGRAPHY	118

I. THE FASCICLES

Since Emily Dickinson's poetry was first unveiled to the world, scholars have found a mystifying and baffling elusiveness about her poetic creations, mainly because of the manner of expression and the manuscript complexities. Many approaches toward understanding and evaluating the poetry have been attempted, but at least one very significant, long-neglected avenue toward the meaning and intention of the poet remains: the study of the fascicles (sewn gatherings of poems) which the poet herself carefully prepared and preserved. A cursory history of the fascicles indicates the scholarly neglect of them and the manuscript problems involved.

During the years from 1858 to 1865 Emily Dickinson assembled approximately nine hundred poems into sewn gatherings or fascicles.¹ Each fascicle is composed of four to six sheets of paper, usually folded but occasionally single, which are bound into booklets by two stitches of thread sewn into the spine at points equidistant from the upper and lower

¹ Thomas H. Johnson (ed.), The Poems of Emily Dickinson, I (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), xxxiii. Hereafter this source will be referred to as Poems. Throughout this study the term "fascicle" refers only to gatherings of poems actually sewn by the poet; Fascicles 33, 35, 36 and 38 are the only exceptions to this rule, these booklets being secured by brass fasteners rather than by stitches. All other unsewn gatherings or groupings will be called "packets."

edges.² The poems therein transcribed are either finished copies or semi-final drafts with alternative words and phrases; whatever the stage of completion, the poems are invariably neatly copied in ink with a line or, less frequently, a blank space separating one poem from another.³

Usually about twenty poems are thus transcribed into each fascicle without a conventional mode of organization, such as order by date of composition, by subject matter, by mood, or by person to whom the poems are sent. This apparent lack of order is probably responsible for the subsequent neglect and abuse of the gatherings; the value of the fascicles, however, ironically arises from the careful, though subtle, unobtrusive, and unconventional organization of the poems within the gatherings.

After Emily Dickinson died on May 15, 1886, leaving an ebony box containing thirty-nine threaded fascicles, four unthreaded fascicles, and ten packets of unbound manuscript sheets, the gatherings fell into the hands of family members and of various editors and scholars.⁴ During the years of early editing, though probably after the initial editing from 1886 to 1891, many of the sewn booklets numbered 1 through 40 (according to Todd's numbering system) were disassembled and the manuscript sheets dispersed.⁵ Mrs. Mabel Loomis Todd, the friend and neighbor of the

² Johnson, I, xviii.

³ Ruth Miller, The Poetry of Emily Dickinson (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1968), p. 247.

⁴ Miller, p. 6.

⁵ R. W. Franklin, The Editing of Emily Dickinson: A Reconsideration (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), pp. 333-34.

Dickinson family who assisted Thomas Wentworth Higginson in preparing the poetry for publication, made transcripts of Fascicles 1-40. The fascicles then were returned to Lavinia Dickinson; later they became the property of Susan Dickinson, thereafter of her daughter Martha Dickinson Bianchi, and eventually of Alfred Leete Hampson. These manuscripts, which have been greatly disordered by the separation and shuffling of sheets, now reside in the Houghton Library of Harvard University. As the assistant editor of the 1955 edition of The Poems of Emily Dickinson, Mrs. Theodora Ward was responsible for the reconstruction of Fascicles 1-40 through analyses of stationery, watermarks, pinholes made by stitching, and handwriting.

Six other fascicles, 80-85, remained in the possession of Mrs. Todd. The lapse in fascicle numbering between 40 and 80 was entirely arbitrary and represents no missing group of booklets. In fact, the Todd assignment of numbers was completely arbitrary and indicated neither chronological order of fascicle creation nor of editorial transcription.⁶ These fascicles and the packets which were never bound, numbered 86-98, rested undisturbed in Mrs. Todd's chest for years and, when removed, were meticulously handled. They subsequently were inherited by Mrs. Todd's daughter, Millicent Todd Bingham, and finally were deposited in the Bingham Collection of the Frost Library in Amherst. Having escaped mutilation, these sheets arrived at the library in good order and were assigned manuscript numbers by Jay Leyda.⁷

⁶ Franklin, pp. 36-37.

⁷ Franklin, p. 67.

The fascicle examination undertaken by the Johnson team, with the resulting publication of the reconstructed order in The Poems of Emily Dickinson, was the first scholarly consideration of the fascicles. Thereafter, R. W. Franklin reviewed the conclusions presented in Poems and extensively supplemented factual information available on the booklets. He recommended several major changes in the reconstructed order of the fascicles after completing a thorough investigation of the transcribing and editorial procedures, inspection of Mrs. Todd's 1891 notebook (which catalogues Dickinson's poems and identifies their placement in the booklets in 1891), and scientific analyses of the characteristics of the paper, ink, sewing holes, and handwriting. His painstaking methods, evidence, and conclusions are recorded in detail in his book The Editing of Emily Dickinson: A Reconsideration.

Briefly, his changes involve the rearrangement of poems in seventeen gatherings housed in the Houghton Library and the rearrangement of one gathering in the Frost Library. He concludes that the fascicles now numbered 10 and 39 are not gatherings assembled by the poet and that Fascicles 2 and 3 should be one gathering rather than two separate ones.⁸ Moreover, he establishes the original state of the manuscripts, basing his conclusions upon the research of other scholars and upon his own intensive analyses. Emily Dickinson prepared and threaded Fascicles 1-9, 11-13, 15-32, 34, 37, 40, and 80-85. She also prepared gatherings 33, 35, 36, and 38 as she prepared the other fascicles but, since she failed to sew

⁸ Franklin, pp. 50-51 and 54-57.

the sheets, a later editor or family member bound the sheets with brass fasteners. Packets 86-95 are unthreaded proto-fascicles whose ordering can never be reconstructed with certainty because they were never bound. And the groupings numbered 96-110 were arbitrarily placed in envelopes by Mrs. Todd and were not organized by the poet.⁹

Since future examination of the fascicles can probably establish no more exactly the original ordering and since many of the fascicles are reconstructed with unquestionable accuracy, the fascicles now deserve consideration for their poetic value. Ruth Miller in the chapter "The Fascicles" of her book The Poetry of Emily Dickinson presents the only consideration hitherto undertaken of the poetic content of the fascicles. In that chapter Miller contends that the fascicles manifest a dramatic narrative structure and supports her view with a brief study of Fascicle 12 and Fascicle 32. In addition, she supplies an appendix summarizing crucial information on the fascicle ordering: manuscript numbers of sheets composing each fascicle as reconstructed by Johnson and Ward or by Leyda and, when at variance, by Franklin; and number and first lines of poems on each sheet.

Examining the primary material and utilizing the three sources of information on the booklets, the work of the Johnson team, Franklin, and Miller, I shall study the fascicle as a poetic unit consciously created by the artist. To eliminate elements of uncertainty, however, I shall limit my examination to the fascicles whose orderings have been undisputedly

⁹ Franklin, pp. 35-36 and 59-66.

established and agreed upon by all scholars involved: the Houghton Library archivists, the Johnson team, Jay Leyda, and R. W. Franklin. The study of the fascicle as an artistic unit should facilitate valuable insight into the poet's mind and art for several reasons. The greater scope of the fascicle-poem, as compared to the more limited scope of the individual poem, enables one to analyze and evaluate Dickinson's poetic techniques from a new and much broader perspective. In addition, elucidation of an individual poem in a fascicle is aided by consideration of the fascicle as a whole, since in the gatherings the poet herself has placed each poem in context and has thereby provided clues to her intended meaning. Moreover, the fascicle unit appears to record the poet's over-all attitudes and convictions rather than to record merely fleeting impressions, feelings, and thoughts as do individual poems; consequently, consideration of the fascicles makes possible a more comprehensive and penetrating view into the poet's mind.

Of particular significance is the illumination of the poet's values resulting from such study of the booklets. I hope to demonstrate that the fascicle, acting as a unified poem in itself, expresses through organization, imagery, content, manner of construction, and poetic technique Emily Dickinson's fascination for and devotion to the psychological processes involved in a search for belief. In fact, the fascicle is Dickinson's poetic mode for portraying the human struggle for truth and certainty with its ceaseless mental operations, e.g. experiencing conflict of loyalties, questioning human suffering and death, transforming agony into happiness, and oscillating between pain and joy, doubt and faith.

Moreover, I shall show that in the fascicle-poems Dickinson places major importance on the pursuit of truth rather than on the ultimate truth or reality which is sought. In essence, as a poetic artist creating fascicle-poems, Emily Dickinson places final value not on certainty in God or heaven or in any other truth, but on the profound human struggle within the mind to find a meaning in life.

II. FASCICLE 81

Consideration of the content of the fascicles will always involve a small degree of uncertainty since many manuscripts had to be reconstructed, but the study of all aspects of Dickinson's work is weakened by uncertainties which frequently are far more disputable and disruptive than those associated with the reconstructed gatherings. Moreover, the intensive analyses of the fascicle manuscripts by previous scholars have greatly reduced this indefinite factor in the gatherings and have, in many cases, removed it as far as is humanly possible. To eliminate all speculative material, I shall present conclusions based on the twenty-three fascicles which have been reconstructed with complete certainty by all scholars involved (see Appendix I).

One fascicle whose order is undisputedly established is Fascicle 81, and for several reasons this gathering is particularly appropriate for illustrating Emily Dickinson's poetic use of the fascicle. This gathering was prepared and sewn by the poet herself and retains its original ordering, a fact established and verified by Jay Leyda, Johnson and Ward, and Franklin. In addition, Fascicle 81 is representative of all the gatherings in that it contains a typical number of poems which exhibit a wide assortment of topics, viewpoints, and moods. As will be more extensively discussed in Chapter IV, the fascicles tend to reiterate a set of ideas, and Fascicle 81 presents almost all of these

favorite ideas; thus, this gathering seems typical of the others in content. It appears that Fascicle 81 itself and the poems within it were all created during 1863,¹ one of Dickinson's "flood" years of poetic activity; consequently, this fascicle has the advantage of being a product of the mature poet during her most creative period. And since it was one of the last gatherings prepared, in this fascicle the tendencies of earlier ones are more easily perceived and her poetic intentions more successfully realized than in many earlier gatherings. Moreover, Fascicle 81 is of special interest because it seems to be her most nearly perfect unification of idea and form.

This fascicle is organized around one of Emily Dickinson's favorite themes, the interdependence of pain and happiness. On the first and last manuscripts appear declarations of the interdependence, and between these statements of the theme is a series of poems which records the psychological progress occurring within the poet's mind.²

The initial poems present the poet's personal encounter with pain and deprivation and her transformation of pain into a kind of happi-

¹ "Appendix VI," Poems, III, 1205. Johnson also notes that Dickinson appears to have composed the poems in a particular fascicle at the same time she prepared the fascicle itself (Poems, I, xviii).

² The term manuscript refers to a single sheet of stationery which is usually folded in half, making four separate pages when sewn into booklet-form. Occasionally a manuscript is an unfolded piece of paper which provides only two pages. Manuscript 1 of Fascicle 81 is such an unfolded manuscript. Hereafter sheet will refer to one side or one-half of a folded manuscript; a manuscript, then, makes two sheets and four pages in most cases.

ness.³ The central poems concern her recognition of several dichotomies which are variously related to human existence. The first dichotomy is as follows: man's life is composed of both agony and joy. The two sides of the other dualities vary, but in general they represent concrete human life characterized by movement as opposed to heaven and death. After considering both sides she concludes that the far-away, immobile ideal of heaven is alluring and worthy of one's devotion if true, but dedication to such an unproved supposition (the existence of heaven) is abhorrent to one's human love of earthly life.

The final poems record insights and resolutions. The poet resolves to live fully now in the manner she feels is best for herself, which is living an internally abundant life characterized by poetic creation. After attempting to escape the memory of death, she realizes that death is responsible for the beauty of flowers and all earthly life and that affliction is an integral part of human existence. And finally she vows to live fully now rather than to postpone joy to a later eternal existence.

A more detailed examination reveals the unique manner through which Dickinson conveys the life philosophy held by the poetic "I" of this fascicle-poem. But two admonitions must precede a closer study. First, the speaker in all fascicle-poems, Dickinson's poetic "I," must be dis-

³ See Appendix II for a more detailed listing of the poems appearing in Fascicle 81. The initial poems are as follows: 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, and 677. Central poems include 777, 676, 778, 779, 718, 780, 719, 781. And the concluding poems are the following: 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 682, 787.

tinguished from Emily Dickinson, for the views of the fictive voice are not necessarily those of the Amherst creator.⁴ For clarity, the terms poet, speaker, and poetic "I" will signify this fictive speaker. The second caution concerns the classification of poems in Fascicle 81. The categorization and many of the generalities concerning groups of poems are intended to suggest the general direction in which the poems are moving rather than to be absolute. The psychological order binding these poems eludes orderly description, and this analysis attempts to superimpose a structure on Emily Dickinson's flow of ideas so that Dickinson's more fluid organization can be clearly recognized and better understood.

Dickinson records on the first manuscript two poems which establish the general cyclical relationship between sadness and happiness. Not at all independent entities, pain and happiness are intimately dependent upon each other.⁵

⁴ In a letter (No. 268) sent to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Dickinson explained the distinction in this way: "When I state myself, as the Representative of the Verse--it does not mean--me--but a supposed person." Emily Dickinson, The Letters of Emily Dickinson, ed. Thomas H. Johnson and Theodora Ward (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1958), hereafter called Letters.

⁵ The poems cited throughout the text come from Poems and are indicated by Johnson's numbers. Jay Leyda's assignment of manuscript numbers to the sheets in Fascicle 81 has been validated by both Johnson and Franklin. The present study is based on this ordering of the poems as recorded in "Appendix I: The Fascicle Numbering" of Ruth Miller's The Poetry of Emily Dickinson, pp. 320-321. In this appendix Miller supplies the first lines and Johnson's number of poems appearing on each manuscript of all of Dickinson's fascicles.

None can experience stint
 Who Bounty--have not known--
 The fact of Famine--could not be
 Except for Fact of Corn--

Want--is a meager Art
 Acquired by Reverse--
 The Poverty that was not Wealth--
 Cannot be Indigence

Poem 771

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--

Poem 772

In "None can experience stint" she presents the first half of this interrelatedness: Happiness or possession must be experienced before one can fully feel or apprehend agony and loss. Here she suggests that the realization of deprivation requires a talent or skill (line 5). Reiterating the main theme, the poet ends the poem by asserting that possessing wealth is a prerequisite of true apprehension of destitution.

To this fact about deprivation she adds another in "The hallowing of Pain." Pain is not valueless but, on the contrary, can be instrumental in the attainment of one's utmost goal or of some supreme good. Very significantly, the poet compares the hallowing of heaven to the making holy of pain; both require a material or physical price and both

necessitate one's unrestrained exertion. Only after all effort, all energy, and all life are given will "All" be the reward. Intentionally the poet only vaguely denotes the goal of the one who attempts to hallow pain. By her word choice in saying that "He who achieves the Top" is given "All," she suggests a somewhat mystical union or communion with deity.

However, Dickinson sometimes identifies the term all with the self, as Albert J. Gelpi notes in his discussion of her consignment to the analysis of the self or consciousness.⁶ In these lines of an early poem, for instance, the speaker's realization that her own limited consciousness is her "all" causes her to deem it all-significant:

She knows herself an incense small--
Yet small--she sighs--if All--is All--
How larger--be?

Poem 284

A later poem suggests that the self is not significant simply because it is all that an individual has, but because the self "could contain the All, be the All, displace the All":⁷

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"!

⁶ Albert J. Gelpi, Emily Dickinson: The Mind of the Poet (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 97.

⁷ Gelpi, p. 97.

The Sea said "Go" to the Sea--
 The Sea said "I am he
 You cherished"--"Learned Waters--
 Wisdom is stale--to Me"

Poem 1210

In view of such uses of the term all, the final line of "The hallowing of Pain" (Poem 772) could be a similar identification of the All with the self. The second poem of Fascicle 81, then, could be an assertion that the transformation of a tragic human state to a meaningful and holy state requires total commitment to self-inspection at the expense of certain physical pleasures; furthermore, the poem seems to maintain that relentless self-analysis leads one to view the human consciousness as the hallowed All. The thesis of this poem, in fact, seems rather close to a prose statement of Emily Dickinson: "Paradise is no Journey because it is within--but for that very cause though--it is the most Arduous of Journeys."⁸

Dickinson purposefully declines to reveal the precise significance of "All" in this poem, but the recurring emphasis on human consciousness and the self in the rest of the fascicle suggests that the poet here sees an introspective life as a sacred thing equal in significance to a more ethereal All. In any case, the poet is maintaining that the ability to see meaning, beauty, and holiness in a painful experience is all-important

⁸ "Prose Fragments," printed as an appendix to Letters, PF99.

and is comparable to having a kind of divineness reside at least momentarily within the individual. And the sacred attribute of the experience is reinforced by the religious imagery of the next poem (Poem 773).

On the following folded manuscript are a description of the transformation of scarcity to plenty; a portrayal of the sacred, blissful, yet painful experience of receiving inspiration; and a plea for tolerance if her way of life is wrong. Having already stated that the transformation of agony to some ultimate good or joy is comparable to a spiritual achievement (Poem 772), in "Deprived of other Banquet" Dickinson endows this transformation with additional overtones of holiness by use of Eucharistic imagery:

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

A Robin's famine able--
Red Pilgrim, He and I--
A berry from our table
Reserve--for charity--

Poem 773

The bread and wine images appearing in lines 4 and 11 suggest a rough analogy between the poet whose nourishment is herself and Christ whose body symbolically nourished his disciples and himself. The poet's loaf,

like Christ's at the Last Supper, is the poet's person. Again, somewhat like Jesus Christ who gave his blood (symbolized by the fruit of the vine served at the supper), the poet sacrificially gives charity a berry from her table.

Through the association of herself with the red-breasted robin, the poet implies that both of them take but meager sustenance and produce a beautiful fruit--a song in his case and poetry in hers. Moreover, by merely claiming a kinship to the robin the poet adopts for herself several traditional significances of Robin Redbreast. Her role as one enduring the severities of the winter season, for instance, is re-emphasized by her association with the robin who traditionally suffers from cold and hunger in winter.⁹ Furthermore, by means of this kinship the poet is reasserting the sacred and sacrificial aspects of her pain, for Robin Redbreast suffered most severely when he aided Christ on the cross. Again calling on folk beliefs, the poet portrays the robin and herself as being sympathetic and charitable to mankind, the former cheering men with his tunes and the latter with her poetic singing. A final significance arising from the comparison with the robin involves his ancient identification with lightning and fire and his role as fire-bringer.¹⁰ These connotations suggest that the poetic speaker, as the robin's kindred

⁹ Charles Swainson, "Redbreast," English Dialect Society: Provincial Names and Folklore of British Birds (London: Trubner and Co., 1885), p. 17.

¹⁰ Swainson, pp. 15-17.

spirit, is endued with fire-like inspiration and is capable of bringing fire or inspiration to others. In summary, the poet in "Deprived of other Banquet" compares her existence to that of Christ and to that of the traditional Robin Redbreast, thereby associating her lifestyle with Christian sacrifice and with the creative process.

Overtones of holiness likewise reverberate in "It is a lonesome Glee":

It is a lonesome Glee--
 Yet sanctifies the Mind--
 With fair association--
 Afar upon the Wind

A bird to overhear
 Delight without a Cause--
 Arrestless as invisible--
 A matter of the Skies.

Poem 774

The process illustrated earlier of hallowing pain by finding internal abundance is here portrayed as a purifying occurrence. Christ had experiences similar to those the poet describes in Poems 772 and 773; specifically, Christ made holy a painful experience and he sacrificially became a source of nourishment. Because of the parallel between the two persons, the speaker is identifying herself with Christ in line 3, "With fair association."

Since the term glee is associated with singing and minstrelsy as well as with joy, Dickinson apparently refers to her solitary occupation of creating poetry (singing) which is her means of transmuting pain into

joy.¹¹ The subject of both stanzas appears in line 5, and the poem loosely reads as follows: to witness a bird joyously singing without a cause (lines 5-6) brings a lonely joy (line 1) and inspired poetic creation.¹² The spontaneous bird which the poet hears symbolizes both the Holy Spirit and poetic inspiration.¹³ Restating the kinship of spiritual matters and the creative process which is presented in the previous poem, this poem links the religious experience of receiving the Holy Spirit with the creative act of receiving poetic inspiration (line 4 especially). Two poems later the poet reveals that her own feelings are comparable to the inner delight of the bird from whom a song issues forth without exterior cause (Poem 677), but this idea of spontaneous creative outpour from the speaker is not necessarily conveyed in "It is a lonesome Glee."

In these two poems (773 and 774) the poetic "I" reveals what

¹¹ As Charles R. Anderson notes in his book Emily Dickinson's Poetry: Stairway of Surprise (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1960), p. 23, Dickinson's dictionary preserved the old meaning of glee: "music or minstrelsy generally."

¹² Since two subsequent poems in the fascicle describe ecstasy without cause (Poem 783, which concerns the delight of singing birds, and Poem 677), lines 4 and 5 of Poem 744 seem to be a unit conveying the image of a singing bird which delights without external cause.

¹³ See Albert J. Gelpi's discussion of Dickinson's recurrent use of the wind as a symbol of animating spirit, inspiration, God, or other denotations (Gelpi, pp. 82-83).

transpires within herself as she embraces and utilizes her lot of seeming affliction or deprivation. Though omitting the precise details about her existence, the speaker explains that she fully accepts her state of deprivation and, by intense concentration upon her inner experience and by creating poems, discovers a sanctifying, though solitary, happiness.

Thus far the poet is expressing ideas not unlike those professed by her Puritan ancestors: an evil can bring an advantage to the sufferer, and man should cultivate "inward awarenesses" which are more real than tangible objects and require a more intense scrutiny.¹⁴ Although Dickinson implies that acceptance of pain brings some kind of ethereal or spiritual gain (Poem 772) to the poetic speaker, the benefit so reaped is not the Puritan's paradisaic afterlife, but seems to be a more immediate reward. And this reward appears to be related to the rapturous exhilaration which comes from artistic creation: in her delight in the poetic process rather than for a moral teaching therein to be conveyed, the poet again deserts the Puritan tradition.

In "If Blame be my side--forfeit Me" the speaker admits that her way of living as described in the preceding poems may be wrong; but if that be so, she asks that she not be forced to give up her muse-like source of inspiration which she identifies with God or the Holy Ghost. To forfeit her poetic inspiration would be to lose religious belief:

¹⁴ George Frisbie Whicher, This Was a Poet: A Critical Biography of Emily Dickinson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957), p. 161

If Blame be my side--forfeit Me--
 But doom me not to forfeit Thee--
 To forfeit Thee? The very name
 Is sentence from Belief--and Home--
 Poem 775

The way of life which the poetic "I" has thus far developed is portrayed in Poem 776 in terms of the purple attribute of a queen:

Purple--
 The Color of a Queen, is this--
 The Color of A Sun
 At setting--this and Amber--
 Beryl--and this, at Noon--
 And when at night--Auroran widths
 Fling suddenly on men--
 'Tis this--and Witchcraft--nature keeps
 A Rank--for Iodine--
 Poem 776

Although concrete statement of the poet's lifestyle is certainly absent, this poem offers a complex, impressionistic description which resounds with connotative undertones. The matrix of undertones becomes more comprehensible when the key colors of the poem are studied in relation to Dickinson's use of them in other poems and in relation to certain traditional ideas. For instance, the chief color of the poem which the poet chose as the title evokes several connotations when considered in light of Dickinson's corpus. In her poems as a whole she primarily associates the color purple with the brief, beautiful moments at the end of the day.¹⁵ Among the many poems

¹⁵ This association between purple and the sunset appears in at least thirteen other poems: Poems 60, 219, 228, 262, 265, 266, 268, 318, 667, 716, 1016, 1622, 1650.

containing this association is "So has a Daisy vanished" where these lines occur:

Oozed so in crimson bubbles
 Day's departing tide--
 Blooming--tripping--flowing--
 Are ye then with God?

Poem 28

As in this passage, Dickinson recurrently identifies purple tones with the extremely lovely moments of fluidity before the light of day is extinguished. Thus, it seems that the queen in Poem 776 (whose attribute is purple) experiences these "Blooming--tripping--flowing" moments. Furthermore, one might surmise that the queen is acutely sensitive to the beauty and transience of her mature years and, though charmed by their loveliness, she knows at all times that her existence is soon to be absorbed by death.

In at least two other poems Dickinson links purple with human suffering or death,¹⁶ a traditional significance arising from the purple-red color of blood. By modulating the red tone employed earlier in the fascicle (Poem 773) and using the color purple, she retains the connotation of affliction developed in the previous poems, yet gives a regal air to the lifestyle of the queen or the speaker. This technique of denoting a royal status or even a spiritual rank by applying the color purple occurs in various other poems.¹⁷

¹⁶ Poem 144 links purple with suffering, but more frequently Dickinson relates the color red to pain or death, as in Poems 120, 182, 236, and 1059.

¹⁷ For instance, Poems 67, 98, 117, and 171.

The second color appearing in Poem 776 is amber, and Dickinson's use of this color in other poems suggests a significant implication for the poem in question. Specifically, Dickinson associates amber with a region or state separating earthly life from heaven.¹⁸ Very feasibly, Dickinson is portraying the queen's existence as being on a higher level than that of most men, on a plane located psychologically above the mundane meaninglessness of the world and nearer to the ideals of beauty and love or, in other words, nearer to heaven.

Beryl is the third color attributed to the queen, but only one of four other poems by Dickinson containing the term offers possible ramifications for the lifestyle of the queen.¹⁹ Briefly, in "Through the Dark Sod--as Education" (Poem 392) Dickinson describes the lily in full-bloom as one "Swinging her Beryl Bell" with a sense of ecstasy in existence. Two points concerning the queen are suggested by this use of beryl in Poem 392. First, her portrayal of the fully matured beryl lily re-emphasizes the view of the queen which is strongly suggested by Dickinson's other uses of a purple sunset, that is to say, the idea of the queen as a person experiencing the ephemeral splendors of maturity (see above, p. 21). And secondly, the ecstatic delight in existence attributed to the lily seems characteristic of the queen as well in view of the subsequent poem in Fascicle 81, "To be alive--is Power" (Poem 677).

¹⁸ Poems 262, 552, and 572.

¹⁹ Poems 161, 392, 737, and 1397.

In the case of the final color appearing in "Purple," Dickinson explicitly states what the term imports to her when applied to the sunset. In "The Love a Life can show Below" (Poem 673) the iodine color in the sunset is the creation of an ineffable force or absolute which

--invites--appalls--endows--
 Flits--glimmers--proves--dissolves--
 Returns--suggests--convicts--enchants--
 Then--flings in Paradise--

Poem 673

Two significant aspects of the queen are introduced by her use of the term iodine in "Purple." First of all, the queen with her iodine-violet color is like the iodine sunset in that both are acted upon by this nameless force. One can surmise that she is afflicted yet enthralled, thus coming to long after the ever-fleeing unattainable. In fact, the same pursuit of an absolute which eludes possession occurs in a poem containing amber as a division between earth and heaven (as discussed above, p. 22):

Delight--becomes pictorial--
 When viewed through Pain--
 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--

Poem 572

The ideal nature of the goal makes the object all the more desirable simply because it transcends attainment and possession. The consequential yearning, moreover, brings a stimulating sweet sadness to the enthralled

seeker. It is noteworthy that this sweet yearning is extolled both in a poem involving amber (Poem 572) and one involving iodine (Poem 673), and it appears that Dickinson associates the queen of amber and iodine tones with the painful yet beautiful state of unfulfilled desire which appears in Poem 572 and Poem 673.²⁰

Another implication of the term iodine emerges when "Purple" is studied in relation to "The love a Life can show Below" (Poem 673). The violet tint of the sunset is not only something acted upon or, in this case, created by the divine force described in the poem; the iodine coloring is itself a reflection and manifestation of that force which invites yet appalls, proves and dissolves, enchants and disappears. And, as a manifestation of the power behind it, the iodine sunset is similarly alluring and evasive, enchanting to its viewers yet soon-dissolving. Possibly this characteristic of the "harrowing Iodine" is also characteristic of the queen, the poetic "I" of the fascicle, in that she charms through her poetry yet eludes complete rational comprehension and explication. In fact, Dickinson herself as the poet of "Purple" is exhibiting precisely this ability to charm the reader with lovely images pregnant with connotative depths, yet to slip from the reader's grasp without exposing her full meaning and method.

²⁰ The relationship between the queen and whatever transcendental absolute or goal she may seek cannot ultimately correspond to the relationship of the amber tones to the blue sky beyond or to that of the iodine sunset to the elusive, alluring force which created it; nonetheless, the basic similarity of the queen to the amber and iodine tints of Poem 572 and Poem 673 makes the association discussed in the text appear probable.

The above speculation on the connotative depths of "Purple" suggests some of the implications of this impressionistic poem concerning the existence of the queen or, in other words, the lifestyle the speaker has chosen for herself in the initial poetry series of Fascicle 81. Primarily the poetic speaker presents her life as comparable to the beautiful, ephemeral moments of sunset, the brief period of maturation and flowering before magnificence fades and ceases. Though stained by suffering and sacrifice, her existence is regal and superior to that of most men in that it is more attuned to the ideals of beauty and love or, in effect, to heaven. To the speaker, life is an endless pursuit of an unattainable ideal, and despite this fact, or very probably because of it, the speaker feels profound joy in her existence. This lifestyle slantedly conveyed in the eight lines of "Purple" is exuberantly espoused in the following poem of the fascicle, Poem 677:

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

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

Poem 677

Within "To be alive--is Power" the poet sings an exultant hymn to human existence. The message of the hymn is essentially the same idea she expressed to Thomas Wentworth Higginson: "I find ecstasy in living; the mere sense of living is joy enough."²¹ This poem purports that the

²¹ Letters, No. 342a, a letter from Higginson to his wife containing this quotation from Dickinson's conversation.

achievement of the purple queen (Poem 776) and of the protagonist in Poems 772, 773, and 774 is full consciousness of being as opposed to activity with only partial apprehension. One scholar maintains that in "To be alive--is Power" the speaker "affirms life but not living" because living is suffering even though there is power behind life.²² The fascicle context of this poem, however, indicates that the speaker is emphatically affirming living, and though she believes that suffering characterizes existence, she realizes that pain can be a source of power and joy. Furthermore, she is affirming the power of the poet, as Charles R. Anderson maintains in his study of Dickinson's concept of the self. In his view, the poetic speaker is asserting that mere existence is measureless power and that man (with his capacity to "Will") can be a "Maker" like God. In addition, Anderson suggests that Poem 677 amplifies the paradoxical statement Dickinson makes in a letter to Higginson: "I thought that being a Poem one's self precluded writing Poems, but perceive the Mistake."²³ In the previous poems of the fascicle the speaker seems to consider writing poetry an essential element in her chosen lifestyle, and Anderson's interpretation of "To be alive--is Power" appears valid.

²² William R. Sherwood, Circumference and Circumstance: The Stages in the Mind and Art of Emily Dickinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 53.

²³ Charles R. Anderson, "The Conscious Self in Emily Dickinson's Poetry," American Literature, 31 (1959), 296. The quotation appears in Letters, No. 413.

Another significant point is the fact that Dickinson acknowledges God but chooses to emphasize man and finite, concrete things, a policy followed in almost every fascicle prepared after 1861. This poem concludes the first main section of the fascicle-poem by her emphasis on man and celebration of the sensitive manner of living presented in these first poems.

Subsequent to the introductory poems on the interdependence of pain and happiness and on the poet's transformation of a painful state of mind into joy and poetic productivity, Dickinson records the poet's mental struggle over the relative value of earthly existence depicted in the previous section and of heavenly bliss. The first two manuscripts in this central portion contain nine poems which present, roughly speaking, a series of dichotomies concerning human existence. Poems 777 and 676 present the first major dichotomy:

The Loneliness One dare not sound--
And would as soon surmise
As in it's grave go plumbing
To ascertain the size--

The Loneliness whose worst alarm
Is lest itself should see--
And perish from before itself
For just a scrutiny--

The Horror not to be surveyed--
But skirted in the Dark--
With Consciousness suspended--
And Being under Lock--

I fear me this--is Loneliness--
The Maker of the soul
It's Caverns and it's Corridors
Illuminate--or seal--

Poem 777

Life is composed of both agonizing and joyful experiences, and the painful side of existence is dealt with in "The Loneliness One dare not sound." Theodora Ward rightly relates this poem to another one concerning the horror of inspecting the inner self, "One need not be a Chamber to be Haunted" (Poem 670), wherein the speaker believes that one is far safer in meeting external ghost than in encountering self.²⁴ In Poem 777 of Fascicle 81, the poetic speaker maintains that man is haunted with an ineffable sense of isolation and loneliness and a dread of the negative side of the self. To most men and to the poet at times this sense is too horrifying to be accepted into the conscious mind and is therefore repressed and left to lurk in the unconscious. Intuitively grasping and uncannily reporting the nature of the human psyche, Dickinson asserts in the final stanza that the haunting sense of inner darkness and of ghastly isolation from Goodness of God can determine the nature of the soul and implement its fate. The speaker does not seem to be "bringing in the light of God" to illuminate the dark corridors of the soul, as Ward suggests,²⁵ but appears rather to be affirming the potentially desirable and wholesome result of intensive introspection. If the repressed feeling described in the first three stanzas is allowed to emerge and is examined, it is recognized to be much less dreadful than one had feared and is seen to bring light to the fearfully dark soul.

²⁴ Theodora Ward, "Ourself Behind Ourself: An Interpretation of the Crisis in the Life of Emily Dickinson," Harvard Library Bulletin, 10 (Winter 1956), 33.

²⁵ Ward, p.33

The idea in this poem of a desirable and enlightened state of mind resulting from an agonizing mental experience is recurrent in Fascicle 81, appearing in three of the early poems (Poems 772, 773, 774) and the last poem of the fascicle as well (Poem 787 "Such is the Force of Happiness"). The final poem of the gathering, in fact, resembles "The Loneliness One dare not sound" in suggesting that a painful experience can either crush the self or arouse a powerful surge of happiness (below, pp. 44-46).

In the portrayal of the speaker's transformation of pain into happiness presented in the first seven poems, the creation of poetry is an essential element. Similarly, in Poem 777 the poetic "I" suggests by use of a pun in the first line that she not only explores her inner depths but also "sounds" or poetically voices her exploration. The following poem on the making of honey seems to continue the subject of poetic creation.

Least Bee that brew--
 A Honey's Weight
 The Summer multiply--
 Content Her smallest fraction help
 The Amber Quality--

Poem 676

The least significant person who produces will find his product greatly increased. In terms of the fascicle the speaker is saying that she will find her labors exceedingly rewarded if she fulfills her occupation of sustaining the painful yet beautiful style of life which involves the writing of poems. As in the earlier poem "Deprived of other Banquet" the speaker finds that her mental experiences and her artistic portrayal of them not only sustain her but become a sumptuous nutriment.

Following this record of the two experiences which make up her existence--a horrifying consciousness of human frailty and a pleasure in living and in creating poems--are several dichotomies which represent concrete human life, of which activity is a characteristic, as opposed to a more abstract and static place or quality related to heaven and death. These poems represent the speaker's quest for answers to certain questions about the value of human life as she lives it: Is life worth the pain one must endure? If so, why? Because of some subsequent reward or by merit of the experiences themselves?

The "Silver Reticence" of a dead person portrayed in the following poem contrasts with the two kinds of human activity previously described, experiencing loneliness and composing poems.

This that would greet--an hour ago--
Is quaintest Distance--now--
Had it a Guest from Paradise--
Nor glow, would it, nor bow--

Had it a notice from the Noon
Nor beam would it nor warm
Match me the Silver Reticence--
Match me the Solid Calm--

Poem 778

Death is represented by the absence of warmth, color, feeling, and movement. To Dickinson motion is the important characteristic of living matter,²⁶ and she here chooses to convey death by portraying absolute immobility. Again contrasting human activity with the immobility of the dead, the

²⁶ Anderson, Emily Dickinson's Poetry, xiii and Chapter 8, "Process," where he discusses the idea of movement in specific poems (pp. 131-162); Richard Chase in Emily Dickinson (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1951), p. 233, notes Dickinson's strong inclination to associate death with stillness and immobility.

poet juxtaposes the diligent activity of a living person in "The Service without Hope--" with the "Silver Reticence" of death:

The Service without Hope--
Is tenderest, I think--
Because 'tis unsustained
By stint--Rewarded Work--

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

Poem 779

To serve now, without assurance of or even hope for later reward, requires utmost diligence and is nobler than work for gain. In light of the preceding poem, this poem expresses the poet's assurance only of the inevitable "Solid Calm" of death and her lack of certainty in a heavenly reward for service on earth. Feeling the encroachment of death and harboring no hope for heavenly existence as a reward, the speaker still chooses to serve now.

"I meant to find Her when I came" further portrays incessant human activity which is so antithetical to the stillness of death.

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.

Poem 718

Since death is imminent, one must not postpone acting and living to a later moment. After presenting the intrusion of death on the living, the poet describes the role of the living person to wander, search, and act without pause, for only the dead rest.

Opposed to human turbulence is truth, another immobility:

The Truth--is stirless--
 Other force--may be presumed to move--
 This--then--is best for confidence--
 When oldest Cedars swerve--

And Oaks untwist their fists--
 And Mountains--feeble--lean--
 How excellent a Body, that
 Stands without a Bone--

How vigorous a Force
 That holds without a Prop--
 Truth stays Herself--and every man
 That trust Her--boldly up--

Poem 780

As the only force which does not move or change, "Truth is best for confidence." The attraction of "stirless" Truth must be considered in relation to the speaker's preoccupation thus far in Fascicle 81 with human activity and with Dickinson's own preoccupation in her early poetry with the concept of movement and flux in opposition to stillness and immobility.²⁷ In the fascicle, the poetic speaker first maintains that the human mind cyclically moves from a state of fulfillment and happiness to one of poverty and pain (Poem 771) and from sadness to happiness (Poems

²⁷ The thesis that Dickinson was preoccupied with movement and flux as opposed to immobility is presented by David T. Porter, The Art of Emily Dickinson's Early Poetry (Cambridge, Massachusetts; Harvard University Press, 1966), p.13.

772, 773, and 774). In addition she has likened the existence of the queen or poet to the momentary magnificence of the dying sun (Poem 776). And in "The Truth--is stirless" she illustrates that all earthly life is mutable by pointing to the seemingly strong and permanent entities in nature which are nonetheless subject to change (lines 4-6). Set against the restless state of man and of all life on earth, this stable force outside of nature appears very alluring. And to the restless wanderer of the preceding poem (Poem 718) immobile truth seems to be "good Health--and Safety, and the Sky," as Dickinson writes in Poem 1453.

This attraction one feels for that which is beyond the human world--truth, heaven, or any other unknown--is conveyed by analogy in "A South Wind--has a pathos."

A South Wind--has a pathos
Of individual Voice--
As One detect on Landings
An Emigrant's address.

A Hint of Ports and Peoples--
And much not understood--
The fairer--for the farness--
And for the foreignhood.

Poem 719

Something indistinctly understood has the same element of pathos which one senses in the voice of an emigrant. The impressions evoked by the south wind, the emigrant's voice, and by other things beyond one's comprehension are the same: a sense of distance and an attraction to the uncomprehended because of its mystery. As David T. Porter notes concerning the early poems of Dickinson, the poet is here using things

foreign and exotic to represent eternal and sustaining objects and qualities.²⁸

This allurements of things distant is further treated in the next poem:

To wait an Hour--is long--
 If Love be just beyond--
 To wait Eternity--is short--
 If Love reward the end--
 Poem 781

So alluring is love as an eventual reward that one is able to patiently wait an eternity for it; on the other hand, to wait even a brief time is rendered very difficult by uncertainty about the eventual reward. As she stated previously in Poem 779, the poet here maintains that assurance of reward and gain makes waiting or any task simple; but of great difficulty is the waiting and living without promise of attaining one's goal. Specifically, if one is certain of heavenly reward, life is facilely lived; with no such certainty, however, life is arduous. In Poem 779, it should be recalled, the speaker prefers the nobler existence of living and serving without hope of gain.

Through the poems on these central two manuscripts Dickinson has compared human existence with things which transcend human experience, death and heaven in particular. In effect, she is presenting the speaker's grappling with man's ancient conflict between his love for human existence and his hope for a higher subsequent existence. Heaven seems very desirable because of its distance and, moreover, would be worth waiting an

²⁸ The Art of Emily Dickinson's Early Poetry, p. 92

eternity for, "If Love reward the end." But the speaker has no assurance of heavenly reward. Such devotion to the abstract and unverified concept of heaven is only an "arid Pleasure," as the final poem on these manuscripts asserts:

There is an arid Pleasure--
 As different from Joy--
 As Frost is different from Dew--
 Like element--are they--

Yet one--rejoices Flowers--
 And one--the Flowers abhor--
 The finest Honey--curdled--
 Is worthless--to the Bee--
 Poem 782

The tension between the enticement of earthly things and the attraction of unearthly, more spiritual things culminates in this poem, for here the poet presents a value judgment and an implied commitment. Specifically, she contrasts two kinds of pleasures which are akin and yet very dissimilar. She has previously contrasted the near and the distant, the concrete earth and the unverified heaven, and in so doing has illustrated the human mind's oscillating inclinations toward each. Here she maintains that the two pleasures, one from earthly life and the other from assurance of heavenly bliss, are polar pleasures. Preoccupation with the joys of an afterlife is a dry, devitalizing pleasure, frost-like in that it is deadening to earthly life. The contrasting joy is simply an ecstasy in living and is associated with dew, a life-giving substance symbolizing fertility. Like the two forms of water, the two pleasures are subtly related--dissimilar joys which the human heart embraces. The arid pleasure so abhorrent to the flowers is comparable to the finest honey which is curdled and there-

fore worthless. By implication the poet suggests her rejection of the superior honey which is curdled for the more earthly honey (Poem 676) which is associated with her sensitive manner of living now and her composition of poems.

The poet concludes with an aphoristic summary of her main idea: no matter how superior a joy is reported to be, if, in reality, it is devitalizing at the present time and is even repugnant to man, the pleasure is worthless.²⁹ She expresses the same idea in a forthright manner in Poem 1012:

Which is best? Heaven--
Or only Heaven to come
With that old Codicil of Doubt?
I cannot help esteem

The "Bird within the Hand"
Superior to the one
The "Bush" may yield me
Or may not
Too late to choose again.

In summary, "There is an arid Pleasure" within its fascicle context asserts the speaker's verdict in favor of the near and the present moment as opposed to an unverified and distant heaven.

Having acclaimed the superiority of the joy of living now, the speaker turns in manuscript 5 to the haunting problem of the evanescence of earthly life, as if to answer her own recurring misgivings. First she reinforces her decision with a lyrical portrayal of the miraculous moment of dawn which

²⁹ Dickinson suggests repugnancy in an alternative reading for line 8: "Repells the healthy bee."

passes unnoticed by most men:

The Birds begun at Four o'clock--
 Their period for Dawn--
 A Music numerous as space--
 But neighboring as Noon--

I could not count their Force--
 Their Voices did expend
 As Brook by Brook bestows itself
 To multiply the Pond.

Their Witnesses were not--
 Except occasional man--
 In homely industry arrayed--
 To overtake the Morn--

Nor was it for applause--
 That I could ascertain--
 But independant Extasy
 Of Deity and Men--

By Six, the Flood had done--
 No Tumult there had been
 Of Dressing, or Departure--
 And yet the Band was gone--

The Sun engrossed the East--
 The Day controlled the World--
 The Miracle that introduced
 Forgotten, as fulfilled.

Poem 783

The position and content of this poem strongly suggest an analogy between the few brief, beauteous moments when the birds fill space with their auroral song and transitory human existence (which is characterized by poetic singing for this speaker). First the poet synesthetically portrays the choral experience which few are aware of by describing music (sound) in terms of space and quantity (sight). Very significantly, the activity is the spontaneous result of a causeless joy or ecstasy. This same idea of pure delight in singing or love of life untainted by extrinsic

motivation appears in three other poems occurring in the first half of the fascicle, Poems 774, 667, and 779. Perhaps the most important detail about the singing is that the meaning of the experience is in itself rather than in some exterior goal. The birds sing for internal joy, and neither applause nor acknowledgment follows. The experience is forgotten as soon as realized.

In essence, the song-experience represents the life of the singing poet, and the poem records her realization that life is intrinsically valuable without any heavenly reward and no matter what follows earthly life. The same theme appears in a poem written a year earlier in 1862, "Of Being is a Bird" (Poem 653), in which Dickinson identifies existence as she conceives it with a bird which sings his tune "For extasy--of it." As in that poem, the poet in "The Birds begun at Four o'clock" emphasizes the experience itself. Viewing the poem out of its fascicle context, William R. Sherwood sees the song of the birds to be a testament from nature of the resurgence after death of a force which is spiritual and aesthetic, the essence of the body and of the poem.³⁰ But as part of the fascicle, Poem 783 is a continuation of the speaker's dedication to the poetic existence portrayed in the early poems of the gathering and decisively embraced in the preceding poem "There is an arid Pleasure." She has chosen joy of living over the joy of a projected heaven of which she has no assurance. Her doubt about what occurs after life is reflected in the noncommittal final lines of the poem: stanza 6 says either that God and his

³⁰ Sherwood, pp. 193-94.

heaven (symbolized by the sun and the day) come after the miracle of life or that the mechanistic world continues uninterrupted after a person's unheeded death.

Even after this acceptance of life's brevity, the poet still feels intense distress over the death of friends and anxiety in general over the imminence of death.

Bereaved of all, I went abroad--
No less bereaved was I
Upon a New Peninsula--
The Grave preceded me--

Obtained my Lodgings, ere myself--
And when I sought my Bed--
The Grave it was reposed upon
The Pillow for my Head--

I waked, to find it first awake--
I rose--It followed me--
I tried to drop it in the Crowd--
To lose it in the Sea--

In Cups of artificial Drowse
To steep it's shape away
The Grave--was finished--but the Spade
Remained in Memory--

Poem 784

"Bereaved of all, I went abroad" records the poet's attempt to forget one specific death, but it likewise conveys a keen awareness that death looms relentlessly above all living things. In two earlier poems of the fascicle the speaker maintains that a painful experience can be the source of joy (Poems 772 and 773). Similarly, this poem, when taken in conjunction with the subsequent one (Poem 785), is a further, though less direct, assertion that a seemingly sorrowful side of life can be valuable. Here a state of painful anxiety arises from the speaker's inescapable sense of death's imminence, but in the following poem she has come to perceive a

beautiful and desirable aspect in the act of dying.

They have a little Odor--that to me
Is metre--nay--'tis melody--
And spiciest at fading--indicate--
A Habit--of a Laureate--

Poem 785

In this brief poem the speaker explains on the literal level that flowers have an odor which, like melody, is the most appealing when it is fading; and this fact about flowers, she adds, betokens the practice of the poet. By implication she maintains that the best poetry is that which seems on the verge of moving or fleeing, poetry that records the evanescent moment. Her idea is reminiscent of Emerson's concept of all beauty as recorded in his essay "Beauty." There he describes beauty as the "moment of transition, as if the form were just ready to flow into other forms."³¹ Further, the poet implies that poets realize that the process of fading is responsible for the beauty and significance of floral perfume and of all life and that man values only that which escapes him. Like Edgar Allan Poe of her century and the modern poet Wallace Stevens, the poet-speaker in this fascicle believes that "Death is the mother of beauty."³²

³¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Beauty," Conduct of Life, Vol. 6 of The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Riverside Edition; London: The Waverly Book Co. Ltd., n.d.), p. 271

³² Poe, for instance, very frequently portrays the unattainable and usually dead female as the essence of beauty, as in "To Helen," "Annabel Lee," "To Lenore," and "The Raven," Poems, Vol. 1 of Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. Thomas Olive Mabbott (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969). This motif of the beautiful, aloof woman is discussed by Edward H. Davidson, Poe: A Critical Study (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 111. The quotation comes from Wallace Stevens' extensive treatment of this idea in his poem "Sunday Morning," line 63, Modern American Poetry, ed. Louis Untermeyer (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1958), p. 243.

Manuscript 5 concludes, then, with the implied realization that frail things subject to fading and mortality are more lovely than the undying and the static; this same conviction is implicit in "Purple" and is asserted explicitly in a subsequent poem (Poem 682).

In the final manuscript of the fascicle the speaker returns to the initial topic of the gathering, the interdependence of joy and agony. Agony, which can enable one to feel joy intensely, is an intrinsic part of life, and no one, including the speaker, is able to avoid it:

Severer Service of myself
I--hastened to demand
To fill the awful Vacuum
Your life had left behind--

I worried Nature with my Wheels
When Her's had ceased to run--
When she had put away Her Work
My own had just begun.

I strove to weary Brain and Bone--
To harass to fatigue
The glittering Retinue of nerves--
Vitality to clog

To some dull comfort Those obtain
Who put a Head away
They knew the Hair to--
And forget the color of the Day--

Affliction would not be appeased--
The Darkness braced as firm
As all my strategem had been
The Midnight to confirm--

No Drug for Consciousness--can be--
Alternative to die
Is Nature's only Pharmacy
For Being's Malady--

Poem 786

The first three stanzas of "Severer Service of myself" concern the poet's

effort to fill the vacancy caused by a death. By relentlessly working late into the night when Nature has put away her daywork, she attempts to weary her nervous system, dull her vitality, and end her insomnia. In the fourth stanza the speaker leaps without transition from this description of her own attempt to ease her hyperactive mental state to a brief portrayal of the dull comfort of persons who are able to forget death. The speaker herself, however, is not capable of easing the affliction of death, and only at her own death, when mental activity ceases, will she find a soporific to dull "Being's Malady," the painful sense of death which is an inherent aspect of the conscious self.³³ Though the speaker does not so indicate, this acute awareness of death and concern over its imminence and inevitability seems in fact to be the psychogenerating force which instigates and propels the mental flow of ideas which Fascicle 81 records.³⁴

Even after realistically viewing man's imperfect and transient existence, the poet still chooses to live intensely now in her own way, to value life rather than to postpone living until she finds perfection

³³ This explication roughly comes from Ruth Miller's discussion of Poem 786 in The Poetry of Emily Dickinson, pp. 207-209.

³⁴ Furthermore, it seems likely that Dickinson's profound concern over the "problem" of death was the single most significant motivation turning her to poetic composition, a thesis upheld by Thomas W. Ford in Heaven Beguiles the Tired: Death in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1968), p. 178.

in an eternal existence:

'Twould ease--a Butterfly--
 Elate--a Bee--
 Thou'rt neither--
 Neither--thy capacity--

But, Blossom, were I,
 I would rather be
 Thy moment
 Than a Bee's Eternity--

Content of fading
 Is Enough for me--
 Fade I unto Divinity--

And Dying--Lifetime--
 Ample as the Eye--
 Her least attention raise on me--
 Poem 682

After accepting the inevitability of pain and death in the preceding poem, the speaker gives her commitment to fleeting earthly existence in "'Twould ease--a Butterfly." In this poem the poetic "I" addresses a flower. You, Blossom, would ease a butterfly and delight the bee, though you are not capable of being like either. Nonetheless, I choose your brief existence as a blossom over the eternity of the bee, for the contentment I feel in "fading" or dying is all I desire if I fade unto God or some Divinity. Dying, which is but the process of living, is fully adequate for me and has, moreover, vast potentiality.

The poet here chooses the present, the earthly moment and wholeheartedly accepts human mortality. Her use of the word fading is notable, for only two poems earlier she employs this term to represent the state of existence she considers the most beautiful (Poem 785). Although she chooses to live internally an abundant and creative life now, the poetic

speaker does not reject the idea of human life concluding with a reunion with deity. In line 11 she unobtrusively interjects a condition to her contentment with the process of living while dying: "Fade I unto Divinity"; nevertheless, the whole emphasis of the poem itself is entirely on the present rather than on a future union. Unlike the Puritan tendency to see sharply defined dualities, the speaker's view in this poem finds no conflict between emphasis on this life for its own sake and hope for a spiritual heaven. And the "Divinity" of line 11 does not necessarily designate the Christian God, for it could signify an all-engulfing reality like Emerson's Brahma-like Over-soul or could even signify poetic immortality. But whatever the word refers to, the poem maintains that for the poetic "I" the joy of the brief moments of physical existence is absolutely sufficient.

In the final poem the poet returns to her general theme, the relationship of pain and happiness, and summarizes the meaning of the fascicle-poem.

Such is the Force of Happiness--
The Least--can lift a Ton
Assisted by it's stimulus--

Who Misery--sustain--
No Sinew can afford--
The Cargo of Themselves--
Too infinite for Consciousness'
Slow capabilities.

Poem 787

Like many of Dickinson's poems, this one has no single, definitive reading, but the meaning of the fascicle as a whole illuminates the poet's intent in Poem 787. Within the context of the fascicle-poem, the following inter-

pretation of "Such is the Force of Happiness" seems the most logical.

So tremendous is the power of happiness that the least portion of happiness can move mountains or, in Dickinson's colloquial expression, "lift a Ton." This power, however, must be assisted by pain which is the source of stimulus evoking happiness according to the rest of the fascicle. Of course the term least (line 2) could refer to the least significant or smallest person who is assisted by the stimulus of happiness, but the context of the poem within the fascicle strongly recommends the former interpretation because that reading summarizes the theme of pain-joy interdependence which pervades the gathering.

The second stanza likewise is related to the meaning of the entire fascicle. "Who Misery--sustain" refers to persons who are nourished on pain, that is, who exist in an environment characterized by deprivation, suffering, and sadness. To these persons the weight of the self is overwhelming. But by the very fact of their deprived state these persons are intensely sensitive to the least degree of beauty and goodness. In other words, the speaker maintains that her life is in some senses full of misery, as she has but meager sustenance by worldly standards and she is burdened by her acute sensitivity to human suffering and impending death. Yet this seemingly impoverished existence is the very reason she can experience pure ecstasy in the simplest things. Her austere manner of existing enables her to truthfully say, "I find ecstasy in living; the mere sense of living is joy enough."³⁵ And her keen sense

³⁵ Letters, No. 342a, a letter from Higginson to his wife containing this quotation from Dickinson's conversation.

of the reality and nearness of death intensifies her joy in life and her determination to live fully the kind of life she has chosen.³⁶ Because she realizes that her human existence is fading, she values the brief moments of mortal bloom as something infinitely precious and beautiful; as she wrote in another poem composed during this same period, "Danger-- Deepens Sun" (Poem 807).

In conclusion, Fascicle 81 serves as one extended poem which reveals the psychological progress through which the poet learns to accept and to value agony, human frailty and death and through which she resolves her inner conflict between her desire for immaterial heaven and her love for the concrete earth. Like the other fascicles, this one is a gathering of diverse poems so organized as to form a larger single poetic expression or fascicle-poem. And once the poems are bound together into a continuous flow of the speaker's thoughts, each of the individual poem-units takes on new depths and frequently different meanings.³⁷

Though Fascicle 81 exhibits a kind of organic unity, the fascicle has no single viewpoint or specific subject matter; to the contrary, each of the twenty-two poems within it has its particular subject and setting,

³⁶ Ford presents this view that Dickinson's preoccupation with death was a vitalizing characteristic which motivates her to compose poetry and to live fully in the manner she thinks best, pp. 126 and 178.

³⁷ For example, when Sherwood (p. 159) views "None can experience stint" (Poem 771) out of its fascicle context, he believes that the poet is writing about "the poverty of the mortal life" as compared to the "bounty of immortality" which she has momentarily experienced. The flow of ideas in Fascicle 81, however, indicates that the poet's concern in Poem 771 is the emotional extremes in one's mortal existence without regard to any future heaven.

poetic voice, rhythm and rhyme scheme, and purpose. By this very change of circumstance and viewpoint Dickinson simulates the human mind's movement from experience to experience in its progress toward some end or resolution. Each poem expresses a momentary experience or an idea tentatively held for that present moment. But being one element in a carefully constructed series, each poem represents a step in the poet's digressive but steady mental journey. Moreover, Dickinson's manner of assembling the disparate poems (each a complete entity itself) into a unified, meaningful larger "poem" beautifully reflects the meaning of this fascicle-poem, the Weltanschauung which presupposes that individual moments, if intensely embraced, make--and are the essential substance of--a meaningful life.

III. FASCICLE UNITY THROUGH ORGANIZATION AND IMAGERY

As a mature product of the poet, Fascicle 81 exhibits the sophistication of organization characteristic only of the later fascicles, especially of the gatherings prepared in 1862 and 1863. Since the preceding examination of Fascicle 81 has illustrated in a specific case Dickinson's manner of joining unrelated poems into a meaningful whole or fascicle-poem, we may now be concerned with the general methods of organization and unification which she employed in the fascicles as a group.

Before generalizing, however, I shall outline my procedure of investigation to clarify the basis of my conclusions. As explained earlier, I limited the study to the twenty-three fascicles whose internal ordering has been undisputedly established. Working with a single gathering at a time, I reassembled the fascicle by copying its poems from Johnson's edition of the Poems. By allowing one sheet for each of Emily Dickinson's manuscripts or folded sheets of stationery, I grouped all her poems which appear on a single manuscript into easily examined units. Next, I summarized the main idea of each poem, the relationship between poems, and the general movement or progression of ideas in the fascicle. After determining the relationship of each poem to the neighboring poems and to the fascicle as a whole, I outlined the gathering, manuscript by manuscript; subsequently I recorded the organizational pattern of the fascicle, noting the general purpose of each section (such as statement

of main idea, dramatic presentation of conflict, etc.) and the specific substance of each part (such as the concept of pain bringing joy). And in a later review of the fascicle, I examined more carefully the poet's use of imagery.

Distinctions between early fascicles written from 1858 through 1861 and those written later are clearly discernible; consequently, consideration of organization according to these two divisions of time is convenient and valuable as well, since it reveals a degree of poetic maturation in fascicle construction. The chronology utilized in the following discussion and throughout the paper is that resulting from Thomas H. Johnson's extensive research.¹

As a group the fascicles compiled before 1862 contain looser, more static organization, though the organization of the last fascicle of this period is much less so. For example, Fascicle 82, prepared in 1858 and apparently the earliest of the gatherings, exhibits interrelationships between the six or so poems transcribed onto each sheet of folded stationery, but the gathering as a whole lacks organic unity and meanders among several weakly connected topics. Although the fascicle moves from the idea of loss bringing gain (Poems 21 and 22 specifically) and concludes with the speaker's dedication to God (Poem 35), the gathering manifests neither purposeful progression toward the final dedication nor mounting momentum which links one poem to the next and which culminates in a resolution. In fact, between the loss-gain motif and the statement

¹ "Appendix 5," The Poems of Emily Dickinson, III, 1202-1203.

of faith (Poem 4) and dedication (Poem 35), the speaker mentions in passing with only weak connectives a number of subjects including her momentary resentment of loss (Poem 23), the correspondence between the natural phenomenon of cyclical regeneration and the idea of spiritual rebirth (Poems 25 and 7), and her belief that her flowers or poems will continue to bring happiness after her own death (Poems 32 and 31).²

Quite unlike the mature fascicles exemplified by Fascicle 81, the booklets prepared from 1858 to 1861 portray little of the psychological development of the speaker whereby her train of thoughts and impressions constitutes a mental narrative. They record little mental conflict and only brief, infrequent utterances of doubt. In effect, these earliest gatherings are little more than collections of ideas.

The degree of organic unity and psychological cohesion is uneven within the gatherings of this early period, but by 1861 when she compiled Fascicle 20 Dickinson was able to create a true fascicle-poem unit by means of a purposeful psychological progression. Although Fascicle 20 is overly loose in organization and even obscure in parts, as a whole it presents a self-propelling mental movement lacked by the earlier booklets. Initially in the gathering the speaker is determined to ascertain whether God exists and whether human misery has a purpose:

² The poems in Fascicle 82 and in other gatherings discussed throughout the text are listed by first line and grouped by manuscript in Appendix III.

My Business, with the Cloud,
 If any Power behind it, be,
 Not subject to Despair--
 It care, in some remoter way,
 For so minute affair
 As Misery--
 Itself, too great, for interrupting--more--
 Poem 293

The mental pilgrimage is thus launched and the speaker eventually finds that for her, pain makes possible her own earthly heaven characterized by moments of insurging spirit or poetic inspiration (Poems 296, 297, and 298). But although Fascicle 20 presents a psychological narrative, this gathering, like the others prepared from 1858 to 1861, lacks clear organization.

As opposed to the earlier fascicles the many booklets prepared during 1862 and 1863 and the few compiled thereafter tend to have a tight, highly refined organization. Most of these fascicles manifest a dramatic mode of organization which creates a total experience out of the dissimilar poems. In general, each poem presents a mental state, a psychic situation, or a tentative belief held by the poetic speaker, and each thereby provokes a further psychological situation or a commentary. Thus the subsequent poem represents the ensuing responsive attitude, whether a reactionary revision or simply an amplification of the previously portrayed feeling or conviction.

Typically three stages compose the dramatic pattern.

- (1) Overview, presenting the main idea or central problem
- (2) Conflict or drama, illustrating the main idea

- (3) Resolution, containing realizations and acceptance of or dedication to a specified role

Fascicle 81 discussed extensively in Chapter II clearly follows this pattern. On the first manuscript appears the poet's statement of the interdependence of pain and joy. The second, third, and fourth manuscripts record the drama of her transformation of pain to happiness and the mental conflict in which she manifests oscillating attitudes, hopes, and doubts regarding fleeting human life and immobile spiritual realities. And the last manuscript presents the resolution, the poet's final espousal of a highly sensitive and seemingly painful manner of living during her brief mortal life whereby she experiences the ecstasy of mere existence (see Appendix II).

Similar to Fascicle 81, Fascicle 85 is a gathering prepared in 1862 which utilizes the dramatic mode of organization, but in this particular booklet Dickinson molds the dramatic scheme to the physical structure of the gathering and thus creates a fascicle which is organic in an unusual sense. Specifically, in the overview the speaker establishes her passion for process and particularly for the divine creative and regenerative cycle of which she herself is a part:

I would not paint--a picture--
I'd rather be the One
It's bright impossibility
To dwell--delicious--on--
Poem 505

The subsequent poems of the booklet record her own particular process, that is, her mental oscillation between faith and doubt. Significantly, the poet visually re-emphasizes these mental fluctuations of attitude by

symmetrically positioning the opposing experiences upon the manuscript sheets.³ The following representation of Fascicle 85 suggests the functional role of the layout of the booklet in conveying the speaker's fluctuating attitudes:

<u>Manuscript 1</u> (Overview)		
Sheet 1:	Preference for process rather than achievement and fulfilment	2 poems
<u>Manuscript 2</u>		
Sheet 1:	Certainty	2 poems
Sheet 2:	Doubt	2 poems
<u>Manuscript 3</u>		
Sheet 1:	Certainty	1 poem
Sheet 2:	Loss	1 poem
<u>Manuscript 4</u>		
Sheet 1:	Doubt	1 poem
Sheet 2:	Doubt	1 poem
<u>Manuscript 5</u>		
Sheet 1:	Transition from doubt	2 poems
Sheet 2:	to faith	1 poem
<u>Manuscript 6</u> (Resolution)		
Sheet 1:	Inevitability of soul's oscillations	1 poem
Sheet 2:	Attainment of heaven follows doubt	1 poem

After her overview Dickinson places the speaker's alternating attitudes on alternating sheets of a manuscript; thus, on the first sheet of manuscript 2 she transcribes poems conveying her inviolate certainty, but on the second sheet she admits that her assurance has dissolved. Similarly, manuscript 3 contains one sheet on certainty and one sheet on loss of an

³ As noted above (p. 9, note 2), the term manuscript signifies each piece of paper used in the construction of a fascicle. A manuscript is generally folded once and each of its halves is called a sheet, the recto and verso sides being pages. Each fascicle has approximately 4, 5, or 6 manuscripts; a manuscript usually has 2 sheets and 4 pages.

intimate friend (a loss frequently associated with her skeptical and doubting state of mind). Manuscript 4 continues the idea of loss by presenting the poet's loss of faith, and manuscript 5 records the transition back from doubt to faith in immortality. And in the final summarizing manuscript the poet expresses her belief that fluctuation is an inherent part of the mind and that immortality follows a life of doubt (see Appendix III). This final conviction in immortality, however, is in fact rendered invalid by the significance of the fascicle-poem as a whole, for the fascicle itself conveys the idea that the speaker is fated to oscillate between certainty and doubt concerning immortality, and the concluding belief in immortality is soon to be superseded by disbelief.⁴ The movement in Fascicle 85 here outlined is representative of the general movement in numerous other fascicles which utilize the dramatic organization and which present overview, a drama of oscillation, and a final acceptance of the incessant process of believing and doubting.

The second distinct organizational pattern found in the later fascicles is expository in nature. This form typically has two parts:

- (1) Presentation of theme or an overview of what the poet will do in the fascicle
- (2) Logical series of thoughts concerning the main idea

Fascicle 31, formed about the middle of 1863, well illustrates the expository pattern. In this gathering the poet explains her intention:

⁴ Fascicle 85 is discussed further in Chapter IV, pp. 86-87.

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--

Poem 713

And thereafter she presents a series of ideas which convince her that her way of life is justified. First she notes the difficulty of enduring a painful and seemingly meaningless existence when one has neither assurance of reward nor knowledge of what comes after life (manuscript 2). Next she maintains that loss, especially if preceded by hope, teaches man to depend upon God (manuscript 3); subsequently she proclaims her complete faith in God and dedicates herself to ministering to the suffering and dying (manuscript 4). The two poems in manuscript 5 concern a faith-despair cycle; after tracing her personal experiences with hope, fear, and despair, she concludes that the state of the human mind is unpredictable and mutable. And in the final manuscript the poet generalizes that a state of dread and uncertainty (about the existence of immortality) is preferable to any other state of mind:

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

Poem 770

In other fascicles the dramatic and expository patterns are fused, making a third pattern. In this organizational plan ideas are logically presented and then dramatically amplified or illustrated. For instance,

Fascicle 22 prepared early in 1863 records several generalizations about the phenomenological entity and the noumenon, that is, the concrete lake as opposed to the abstract idea of beauty, or a flower as opposed to the invisible spirit lurking within it. The third poem of the fascicle, for example, presents the generalization that spirit cloaks itself with the earthly attire of concrete, physical entities and that man can sense the presence of the indwelling spirit.

The Heaven vests for Each
In that small Deity
It craved the grace to worship
Some bashful Summer's Day--

Half shrinking from the Glory
It importuned to see
Till these faint Tabernacles drop
In full Eternity--

How imminent the Venture--
As one should sue a Star--
For His mean sake to leave the Row
And entertain Despair--

A Clemency so common--
We almost cease to fear--
Enabling the minutest--
And furthest--to adore--

Poem 694

After such generalizations concerning the particular and the universal, Dickinson embodies in dramatic form the speaker's inner conflict regarding the relative value of concrete reality or earthly life and immaterial ideals such as the concept of heaven (see manuscripts 4-7 in Appendix III). At one moment the poetic "I" prefers concreteness over supposition:

Their Hight in Heaven comforts not--
 Their Glory--nought to me--
 'Twas best imperfect--as it was--
 I'm finite--I cant see--

The House of Supposition--
 The Glimmering Frontier that
 Skirts the Acres of Perhaps
 To Me--shows insecure--

The Wealth I had--contented me--
 If 'twas a meaner size--
 Then I had counted it until
 It pleased my narrow Eyes--

Better than larger values--
 That show however true--
 This timid life of Evidence
 Keeps pleading--"I dont know."

Poem 696

Nonetheless, the immaterial noumenon which transcends apprehension is very enticing:

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

Poem 673

Yet the appealing abstractions, ungraspable ideas, are elusive and ever-fleeing, and the poet is destined to oscillate as she does in Fascicle 81 and Fascicle 85 between faith and doubt, desire for the immaterial and love for the concrete.

The gatherings of the year 1862 and thereafter vary slightly in their employment of these three organizational plans and to a larger extent in the excellence of execution of these unifying patterns, but in general these fascicles manifest a carefully planned, tight organization of one of the above patterns and thereby unite a series of diverse ideas and experiences into a mental or psychological progression. As Dickinson had

achieved poetic competence and excellence in individual poems by her "flood" years of 1862 through 1865, so had she gained skill and maturity in the composition of fascicle-poems during the first two years of this period. Whereas the earliest gatherings tended to be somewhat static, aimless and obscurely organized, the mature fascicles are dynamic, refined, and skillfully organized.

The chief unifying technique other than the employment of organizational pattern is Dickinson's use of imagery. As with organization, imagery is more skillfully and sensitively handled as the poet gains experience in creating fascicle-poems. In the earliest ones she simply repeats images without attempting any new depth of meaning as a consequence of the reiteration. For example, in Fascicle 82, which appears to be the first gathering compiled, the following images occur two or more times: Gentian, Seraphim, snow, Rose, and feet. In addition, the bee-butterfly-breeze trinity occurs in both the initial and final poems of the gathering. Yet these uses of images neither clarify nor intensify the import of the fascicle-poem (see Appendix III). This repetitive use of images without benefit to overall meaning was a naive attempt at unification which the poet soon modified and polished. As a whole, the imagery of the early fascicles written prior to 1862 was only awkwardly and unsubtly unifying and, like the organization of this period, was static.

As she matured into a poetic craftsman Dickinson ceased to hinge her poems loosely together with recurring images and began to compose fascicles with intrinsic unity resulting from the manner of construction itself. Rather than employing a static image twice or thrice within a

gathering, Dickinson learned to develop a series of related images, each an intrinsic part of the fascicle as well as of a particular poem, and thereby to amplify and intensify the meaning of the fascicle-poem. Image series in Fascicle 84 and Fascicle 25 are among the poet's most sophisticated utilizations of imagery.

The imagery of Fascicle 84 illustrates Dickinson's sensitive use of images as unifying devices which themselves are essential elements of the fascicle meaning. Upon the first three manuscripts of this gathering and within six separate poems Emily Dickinson creates an intricate system of imagery associated with the color blue and with the ocean or the sea (see Appendix III). In the first manuscript the poetic speaker maintains that the Unknown--heaven, ultimate reality, the ideal or whatever designation one chooses to give it--is beyond human apprehension. The first images of concern represent this unknown. In Poem 628 "They called me to the Window, for" the poet is beckoned by friends to gaze at cloud formations, and having acquiesced she witnesses visions of the sea, of the Mediterranean, and of other scenes. But the visions soon vanish for God the Showman quickly erases them. In other words, man is granted no more than momentary glimpses of the Unknown, for God disallows human apprehension.

Unlike those who are preoccupied with the speculative realm of imperceivables, the poet-speaker is fascinated by her own physical and mental reality. Thus, in the next poem she states her preference:

No Romance sold unto
 Could so enthrall a Man
 As the perusal of
 His Individual One--
 Poem 669

Turning her attention, then, to human realities as opposed to the spiritual unknowns, the poet describes physical death in the third poem and therein associates blue with the human drama of living and dying.

I heard a Fly buzz--when I died--
 The Stillness in the Room
 Was like the Stillness in the Air--
 Between the Heaves of Storm--

The Eyes around--had wrung them dry--
 And Breaths were gathering firm
 For that last Onset--when the King
 Be witnessed--in the Room--

I willed my Keepsakes--Signed away
 What portion of me be
 Assignable--and then it was
 There interposed a Fly--

With Blue--uncertain stumbling Buzz--
 Between the light--and me--
 And then the Windows failed--and then
 I could not see to see--

Poem 465

As Anderson suggests, the traditional vision of the dead meeting Christ, "--when the King / Be witnessed--in the Room" is ironically reduced to a fly buzzing near the dying person; physical death, not God, is the only King the onviewers witness.⁵ The fly image seems to belie any hope for immortality.⁶ In addition to its association with death and decay,

⁵ Anderson, Emily Dickinson's Poetry, p. 232.

⁶ Two critics holding this view are Clark Griffith in The Long Shadow: Emily Dickinson's Tragic Poetry (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 135-37, and Gerhard Friedrich in "Dickinson's 'I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died'," Explicator, 13 (1955), Item 35.

however, the fly represents life. As Clark Griffith expresses the fly's significance, "Dipping, buzzing, vibrantly on the move, it remains the only animate object in a poem which moves steadily toward inanimation."⁷ The ethereal blue cast of the initial poem is replaced in this poem by the blue attribute of the earthly bluebottle fly,⁸ and from this change of focus emerges the speaker's conviction that ultimate reality is found in the mortal state of man rather than in some exterior and distant reality. Standing alone, the poem "I heard a Fly buzz--when I died" might be viewed as merely a skeptical denial of human immortality, but within its fascicle context the poem is an assertion that one must search for meaning in one's mortal life, however distasteful aspects of life may be, rather than in some other worldly sphere.

The following and final poem on the first manuscript records the speaker's reliance on the self with its singular guest for ultimate meaning rather than on something outside of the self.

The Soul that hath a Guest
Doth seldom go abroad--
Diviner Crowd at Home--
Obliterate the need--

⁷ Griffith, p. 236. Similarly, Benjamin T. Spencer in "Criticism: Centrifugal and Centripetal," Criticism, 8 (1966), 142, asks whether the poem is "a valedictory apostrophe to mere life itself, however small and stumbling and despicable it may normally be."

⁸ In as much as Dickinson's fly hovers about the deathbed, the blue insect portrayed is most likely the bluebottle fly whose larvae live in carrion or living flesh. Brita Lindberg-Seyersted so assumes in The Voice of the Poet: Aspects of Style in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson (Almqvist and Wiksells Boktryckeri AB: Uppsala, Sweden, 1968), p. 190.

And Courtesy forbid
 A Host's departure when
 Upon Himself be visiting
 The Emperor of Men--
 Poem 674

The important point here is not the identification of the soul's guest, whether it be God,⁹ poetic inspiration, or whatever. The significance of this poem which immediately follows "I heard a Fly buzz--when I died" lies in the speaker's assurance that the life of the self during her earthly existence is all-important. When read as a unit, then, the first manuscript of Fascicle 84 says that the poetic "I" is casting aside the soon-vanishing Blue visions of heaven and is choosing the earthly realm of the fly's "Blue, uncertain stumbling Buzz." Inherent in her choice is the acceptance of the less desirable aspects of life suggested by the fly--frailty, imminent death and decay, and even filthiness. But despite the negative elements of mortal existence, the speaker sees vast potential within the self and chooses the earthly realm of the mind rather than the speculative realm of heaven.

Although clarification of the blue symbol is withheld until the end of this image-sequence, manuscript 2 of Fascicle 84 further amplifies its connotations. Associating the color blue with the Moon Lady in Poem 629 "I watched the Moon around the House," Dickinson suggests that this attribute is related to other characteristics of the moon, that is, its elusiveness and freedom from physical needs and spiritual doubts. The unnamed quality thus far represented by blue is treated further in a playful poem

⁹ Sherwood, pp. 156-57, assumes the guest is God.

on lightning, although the blue imagery is momentarily dropped.

The Lightning playeth--all the while--
But when He singeth--then--
Ourselves are conscious He exist--
And we approach Him--stern--

With Insulators--and a Glove--
Whose short--sepulchral Bass
Alarms us--tho' His Yellow feet
May pass--and counterpass--

Upon the Ropes--above our Head--
Continual--with the News
Nor We so much as check our speech--
Nor stop to cross Ourselves--

Poem 630

In a number of her poems Dickinson associates lightning with the beautiful experience that occurs when insurging spirit causes one to feel a sense of omnipotence.¹⁰ The thesis of this brief poem on lightning, that the silent lightning continually passes above the heads of unwitting men, deepens in significance when related to Dickinson's recurring association of the lightning with the influx of spirit. When so related Poem 630 conveys the idea of a resident, though generally unrecognized, power or spirit within man or available to him.¹¹

This reading of the final poem of manuscript 2 corresponds in essence to the final poem of manuscript 1, where the intimate and superior

¹⁰ Gelpi, p. 83. Of particular notice are Poems 420, 974, 1468, 1581, and 1593.

¹¹ Sherwood, pp. 191-92, arrives at an entirely different significance when he examines Poem 630 out of its fascicle context. He sees the scene of misunderstanding men who ignore and fear the lightning as a representation of the reactions of the unredeemed to God's cosmic design.

guest of the speaker precludes her reliance on anything external. Significantly, both poems suggest the immediacy of a power. Furthermore, both manuscripts progress from the speaker's view of a distant, elusive blue to a consciousness of an immediate power, whether in the guise of a personal visitor or that of the ever-present lightning hovering above one's head.

Finally, in manuscript 3 the significance of the blue imagery is explicated. The first two poems of the manuscript relate the sea to the poet's physical existence on earth. In "Ourselves were wed one summer--dear" (Poem 631) the poet describes her life as encompassed by oceans and the North, in comparison to her companion's existence which is characterized by a vision of imminent heaven or summer. The poem appears to have been written about Dickinson's relationship with her sister-in-law, Sue Gilbert Dickinson. Assuming that to be the case, Thomas H. Johnson offers the following reading of the poem as the message the poet is conveying to her friend. We were once in intimacy and in full agreement, but you deserted me. After that, someone else then taught me my own way of attaining happiness. Stability, certainty, and warmth are your future; doubt and isolation lie before me. Though our fates are different and yours will always be sunny, at one time we shared the sentiment that we were the only poets and that other people were prose.¹²

Within the context of Fascicle 84, "Ourselves were wed one summer--dear--" conveys essentially the same message as that suggested by Johnson.

¹² Johnson, Emily Dickinson: An Interpretive Biography, pp. 40-41.

The emphasis here, though, is more on the poetic speaker's existence of seeming severity and barrenness which lacks prospects for a subsequent heavenly summer.

The value of the blue oceans which distinguish the speaker's mortal existence is explained in the second poem of the manuscript:

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

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

Poem 466

She now realizes that the ocean, which she considered to be a negative thing in the previous poem "Ourselves were wed one summer--dear" is actually exceedingly fertile, bountiful, and magnificent. This infinite source of wealth is in fact her own poetic mind, her blue "ample sea." In this poem the poet asks why should she desire the creations of her own mind, the creations perhaps being visions of heaven as well as the physical poems which she composes, when the created jewels are but products of herself. Touching upon the same subject in a letter, Dickinson expresses her awe of the human mind which creates such concepts as that of infinity, immortality, and God: "It is solemn to remember that Vastness--is but the shadow of the Brain which casts it."¹³

Throughout these three manuscripts in Fascicle 84 the blue imagery has conveyed two distinct connotations, a visionary blue or sea associated with heaven (Poems 628 and 629) and an earthly blue or sea associated

¹³ Letters, No. 735.

with the human mind (Poems 465, 631, and 466). The final poem of this image-sequence clarifies the relationship of these two connotations of blue.

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--

Poem 632

In the first two stanzas of this poem the poetic speaker proclaims that the mind, her earthly resource symbolized by "oceans" and "sea" in the two previous poems, is superior to the blue elusive sea or visionary heaven portrayed in two earlier poems (Poems 628 and 629). The blue image-sequence culminates in the final stanza in which the poet equates human consciousness to God.¹⁴ David Porter understands the distinction between God and the human brain to be the difference in mode of revelation, that is, the "silent revelation of God as distinguished from the verbal means through which the poet reveals her thoughts."¹⁵ Another implication of the metaphor is suggested by William Sherwood as he notes the inferiority of the human "Syllable" which is capable of expressing only a limited por-

¹⁴ This equation is briefly discussed by Denis Donoghue, Emily Dickinson: University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers (No. 81) (St. Paul, Minn.: North Central Publishing Co., 1969), p. 23.

¹⁵ Porter, p. 98.

tion of the infinite range of divine "Sound."¹⁶ Both implications appear valid but are not central to the poem's meaning within its fascicle context. The poet is emphasizing identity yet vast dissimilarity, articulate thought compared to "its indefinite source and matter."¹⁷ The major idea of the passage is the Logos concept in which Word or Thought has two aspects, unuttered thought (idea or God) and spoken or manifest thought (man himself or the human mind).¹⁸ Thus, the poetic voice is emphasizing that the human mind is as omnipotent as God, for it is but the concrete form or manifestation of Pure Intellect.

The meaning of the image series is illuminated now. The speaker initially views the mysteries of life and death as elusive truths which God the Showman tauntingly hides from man (Poems 628 and 629). However, she later realizes that the source of the visions of the Unknown is actually her own poetic mind (Poem 632), the Emperor's gift to her (Poem 466). The poet's mind, then, is wider and deeper than the "blue" mysteries of heaven and is equal to God.

A second image series, and one of Dickinson's most refined utili-

¹⁶ Sherwood, pp. 127-28.

¹⁷ Glauco Cambon, "Violence and Abstraction in Emily Dickinson," Sewanee Review, 68 (July-September, 1960), 463.

¹⁸ Two other poems in which Dickinson alludes to the Logos idea according to St. John are explicated by Anderson in his chapter "Words," Emily Dickinson's Poetry, pp. 41-46.

zations of imagery occurs in Fascicle 25. A "pod" image occurs four times within the twenty-three poems of this fascicle. And, interestingly, the poems containing the image appear to form a location pattern; the images appear in neither the first nor last five poems, but occur almost rhythmically in the central thirteen poems: the sixth, Poem 567; the eighth, Poem 403; the tenth, Poem 404; and the eighteenth, Poem 574.

The problem to be resolved in this gathering is the difficulty in accepting death and pain. First occurring in Poem 567, "He gave away his Life," the pod motif expresses the poet's answer to her qualms about death by symbolizing the process of perfection through death and rebirth. Specifically, Christ chose the natural process of physical maturation and decay so that rebirth and perfection might be achieved.

'Tis Ours--to wince--and weep--
And wonder--and decay
By Blossoms gradual process--
He chose--Maturity--

Poem 567

The cycle concludes when He "Broke--perfect--from the Pod."

Two poems later, however, the poet verbalizes misgivings about the cyclical solution. In Poem 403 "The Winters are so short" she is concerned with earthly hardship as well as with the ultimate experience of death. The pod, once the symbolic answer (through its association with regeneration) to her doubts concerning death, now signifies only the period of winter, pain, and death. Unable to justify the times of suffering and the fact of death, the poetic "I" rebels against the despoliation of her "summer." Her previous justification in "He gave away his

Life" seems invalid, for no one continues to believe in the Noah-tale of divine purpose and goodness concealed within suffering and death. Though earlier she had rationally explained the purpose of death in a manner consistent with her Puritan heritage,¹⁹ she is not yet prepared to accept the explanation emotionally.

The image reappears two poems later. Meanwhile, the speaker has chosen the role of poet in Poem 569 "I reckon--when I count at all." In as much as she has just stated her resentment at having her summer ruined, by implication she is choosing to be a poet partly because a poet's "Summer--lasts a Solid Year." As Anderson notes, the poet has no need to search for an exterior, removed paradise because she can create her own heaven.²⁰ As a poet the speaker is highly sensitive to the beauty of all living things, particularly to the beauty of human life, and she chooses to trust in her earthly heaven rather than to await a predicted "Further Heaven." Returning to pod imagery to express her sense of joy in living, in Poem 404 "How many Flowers fall in Wood" she laments those which "cast a nameless Pod / Upon the nearest Breeze" without awareness of the beauty of life.

After an intervention of seven poems in which she begins to resolve the problem, the poet employs the pod image to summarize her discovery and resolution (Poem 574 "My first well Day--since many ill"). Following

¹⁹ Perry Miller, The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1954), p. 15.

²⁰ Anderson, Emily Dickinson's Poetry, p. 94.

many days of illness she goes out into the autumn to take, as she says,

. . . the Sunshine in my hands,
And see the things in Pod--

Her illness and confinement have taught her to appreciate things truly significant, but Dickinson evasively declines to specify what the speaker now values. Since the final meaning of pod depends upon what the speaker now views as important, this point must be examined further.

The concluding lines of the poem ambiguously explain that the speaker's sickness and resulting loss of blossoming summer brought

. . . that Etherial Gain
One earns by measuring the Grave--
Then--measuring the Sun--

Poem 574

The sun, which she values highly now, could signify God. In such a case, the suffering of life has taught her to appreciate God and heaven. Yet the lines more likely mean that sickness and imminence of death have taught her to value life.²¹ The speaker has learned the value of suffering and has come to appreciate and love the brief, beautiful season which is characterized by dying. Since autumn seems analogous to Dickinson's concept of life, the poem probably is saying that the poetic "I" now values life which is painful, verging on death, and yet beautiful. But Dickinson intentionally has obscured the choice of the speaker, whether she has come

²¹ Sherwood, p. 133, reads Poem 574 as an expression of the speaker's appreciation of eternal life. Since Dickinson enclosed this poem in a 1862 letter to Samuel Bowles in which the poet most certainly refers to renewed life after a period of illness, the lines in all probability signify here as well that the speaker is valuing mortal existence. See Letters, No. 275. The meaning of the gathering as a whole similarly affirms this reading. The interpretation corresponds to the speaker's attitude in Fascicle 81, discussed in Chapter II, pp. 20-25.

to value heaven or life. And this very indefiniteness of the poem reflects the final conclusion of the fascicle-poem: the poetic "I" will always vacillate between faith and doubt, between certainty in God and heaven and dedication to earthly life (Poem 576 "I prayed, at first, a little Girl").

In Fascicle 25 Dickinson has used the pod image to reflect the speaker's changing attitude toward life and death. Unlike her static imagery appearing in early gatherings prepared between 1858 and 1861, this imagery embodies the psychological progression of the speaker. Initially pod connotes the cycle of life, maturity, death, and rebirth, for the poet sees the pod stage as the means by which life generates new life and death becomes life. At this moment the pod represents to the speaker the concept of human immortality following physical death.²² The next two times she thinks in terms of pod-imagery, however, she is mindful of the role of the pod as the encasement for the dead rather than as the cradle for new life. But after a period of suffering, illness, and doubt, the poet relates the pod to the valuable experience of enduring pain, limitation, or doubt. The pod now is associated with her realization that suffering and loss teach one to value things which are truly important, whether they be God and heaven or all aspects of earthly life.

As these two examples illustrate, in her mature gatherings Emily

²² A similar use of the term pod appears in Fascicle 35, Poem 1082.

Dickinson very adeptly unites imagery with the overall meaning of the fascicle. At their best the image-sequences reflect the changing mood and attitude of the poetic "I," the meaning of each image varying according to the speaker's momentary interpretation of it. Above all, her mature employment of imagery emphasizes the incessant movement of the human mind.

The most notable fact about Dickinson's development of organization and imagery in the fascicles is that both unifying elements matured from static to dynamic devices which enabled the poet to simulate the movement of the mind. By means of imagery in later fascicles she emphasizes the variations of attitude and mood which characterize the human psyche. And through the organization of these fascicles she mimics mental activity in two ways. In many gatherings she narrates and portrays a mental pilgrimage usually leading to the resolution of a problem. And in other gatherings she portrays the mental flow of ideas around a central theme. Moreover, the very method of gathering diverse poems into a total poetic unit or experience results in a structural similarity between life, as perceived by man, and the fascicle. Poems are linked by a technique somewhat akin to the modern stream of consciousness; the poet's mind superficially appears to jump from one subject or set of details to a totally different one, but the poems on disparate topics actually are psychologically associated, each being a link in a steady stream of thought. In conclusion, Emily Dickinson's chief aim in constructing fascicles out of isolated scenes, actions, dialogues, and statements of idea, seems to be the simulation of the poetic speaker's mental search for a meaning in life.

IV. IDEAS AND ATTITUDES EXPRESSED IN THE FASCICLES

As with organization and imagery, tendencies of content and attitude become apparent when the earliest and later fascicles are studied separately. Therefore, the following view of prevalent ideas, of certain techniques of form, and of the poet's attitudes is chronologically oriented.

In her booklets prepared during the years 1858 through 1861 Dickinson favored several topics, the chief of which is poetic creation. Most frequently she relates her poetic occupation to her quest for heaven, for to the poet of the early fascicles poetic creation is an aspect of her search for and dedication to God. In Fascicle 4, for example, through her poetry she seeks heavenly glory after death rather than earthly acclaim:

Low amid that glad Belles lettres
Grant that we may stand,
Stars, amid profound Galaxies--
At that grand "Right hand"!

Poem 168

And, as she explains at the conclusion of Fascicle 37, she continually creates poems because without them

Then--maybe, it would puzzle us
To find our way Home--

Poem 224

In other fascicles she ceases to focus on the attainment of heaven by means of poetic pursuits and considers the more immediate effect of her poems

and other more earthbound aspects of poetry. In Fascicle 83, for example, the poet employs delightfully unpretentious imagery to convey the stimulation and pleasure generated by her poetry:

Many cross the Rhine
In this cup of mine.
Sip old Frankfort air
From by brown Cigar.
Poem 123

In other gatherings more theoretical questions entice the poet, as in Fascicle 7 where she muses on the nature of one's source of poetic inspiration (Poem 137) and on the possibility of this source eventually being exhausted (Poem 136).

A second recurring topic especially prominent in the very first fascicles is the correspondence between the seasonal rebirth in nature and the hypothetical concept of spiritual afterlife for man. Usually she simply presents the correspondence in a more or less straight-forward manner, as in the initial poem of Fascicle 83:

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!
Poem 66

Similarly, human rebirth after death appears certain in the poet's depic-

tion of anthropomorphic flowers sleeping until the bees awake them at springtime (Poem 142). In a few gatherings Dickinson more ambitiously attempts a dramatic portrayal of the loss and restoration of the speaker's spiritual faith in immortality. Typically, she describes her momentary doubt concerning immortality and then records in the following poem an example of regeneration in nature which, by implication, assures her of man's eventual resurrection. For instance, in Fascicle 7 appears a resentful lament for several dead children,

Sparrows, unnoticed by the Father--
 Lambs for whom time had not a fold.
 Poem 141

But in the next poem, "Whose are the little beds, I asked" (Poem 142), the annual death and renascence in nature provide an answer to the speaker's implied question concerning the meaning of human death.

Even though the early gatherings arranged before 1862 certainly contain expressions of doubt and occasionally of skepticism, as a whole these fascicles are positive in attitude toward spiritual issues. In fact, Dickinson appears rather inexperienced in combating real skepticism and incredulity. But whatever her experience with spiritual doubt, the poet of the early fascicles allows a spirit of optimism and certainty to prevail.

Three subjects dominate the gatherings prepared after 1861: the relation between concrete reality and abstract ideals, poetry, and psychodynamics. The first of these is a revised though related statement of

a frequent theme within the early fascicles, the theme of correspondence between regeneration in nature and spiritual afterlife for man. But in the gatherings prepared after 1861, this theme is, if effect, discounted and replaced by the generalized concept that concrete entities symbolize abstract ideas. This idea appears, for instance, in Fascicle 22 where Heaven robes itself in the small entities of the physical world (Poem 694). Later in this fascicle she more precisely states that the tangible nature we perceive is the actualized form of an ideal, which Dickinson calls heaven:

"Nature" is what We see--
 The Hill--the Afternoon--
 Squirrel--Eclipse--the Bumble bee--
 Nay--Nature is Heaven--

Poem 668

Much modified, however, is the poet's attitude in later gatherings toward earthly realities and ethereal ideals. Her previous view that the natural cycle of death and renewal is assuring evidence of spiritual immortality is largely rejected, and the speaker tends to conclude that man is limited during his physical life to concrete experience and barred from knowledge and certainty of speculative spiritual ideas. Again illustrative, Fascicle 22 presents this human limitation and the poet's attitude toward the distant, theoretical realities:

Their Hight in Heaven comforts not--
 Their Glory--nought to me--
 'Twas best imperfect--as it was--
 I'm finite--I cant see--

The House of Supposition--
 The Glimmering Frontier that
 skirts the Acres of Perhaps--
 To Me--shows insecure--

Poem 696

A second frequent subject of the fascicles constructed after 1861 is poetry, a favorite topic of the earlier gatherings as well. In the later gatherings, however, Dickinson emphasizes the creation of poetry during earthly life as an end in itself rather than as a means of attaining heaven. She is especially concerned with the joy-pain duality which she considers an inherent part of the creative process. Pain and suffering, she maintains, make possible the exhilarating and joyous process of creating poetry.¹ A variation of this belief occurs in the speaker's conviction appearing in Fascicle 81 that poetic existence, which transmutes a painful state of mind into a joyful creative experience, is a sacred way of life.² In addition, Dickinson argues that the interrelatedness of suffering and happiness, which characterizes poetic composition, is similarly true of life in general.³

In the later fascicles Dickinson reveals an intense interest in the active human mind which is not apparent in the early gatherings, and from this interest in psychodynamics emerge many of the central ideas in these

¹ For example, Poems 571, 572, and 770.

² See Poems 772, 773, 774 discussed above in Chapter II, pp. 12-19.

³ For instance, Poems 576, 660, 681, 689, and 771.

fascicle-poems. Throughout these gatherings she exhibits fascination with the human plight of mental oscillation between spiritual certainty and doubt or between happiness and despair. Specifically, at the conclusion of Fascicle 22 she describes this recurring cycle:

I many times thought Peace had come
 When Peace was far away--
 As Wrecked Men--deem they sight the Land--
 At Centre of the Sea--

And struggle slacker--but to prove
 As hopelessly as I--
 How many the fictitious Shores--
 Or any Harbor be--

Poem 739

The poet's concern with mental oscillations is particularly prevalent in Fascicle 81, discussed in detail in Chapter II, in which she initiates the gathering with her transformation of despair into happiness and thereafter dramatizes the mental struggle over her love for earthly life and her hope for a subsequent spiritual paradise.⁴ Elsewhere she pointedly asserts the importance of this oscillation between faith and doubt, hope for heaven and love of earth, as she maintains that man truly exists only when experiencing a "Value struggle" (Poem 806 "A Plated Life--diversified"). In fact, the poet's evaluation of the vacillating state of the human mind appears to be the most recurrent theme in the gatherings prepared after 1861. Sometimes she discreetly presents the conviction that a state of uncertainty and want is preferable to a state of satiety, as in "I play at Riches--to appease," Poem 801, where the poetic "I" suspects that "Desire" is more beautiful than "Grant." In other works this conviction acts as

⁴ See Chapter II, pp. 32-44.

the latent thesis behind her extolment of the ever-dissolving truths of which she has glimpses but never possession.⁵ Furthermore, certain poems contain in forceful terms her explicit evaluation of mental vacillation and uncertainty:

Expectation--is Contentment--
Gain--Satiety--
But Satiety--Conviction
Of Necessity

Of an Austere trait in Pleasure--
Good, without alarm
Is a too established Fortune--
Danger--deepens Sum--

Poem 807

In general the poetic speaker of the later gatherings finds the restless and stimulating state of expectancy, want, and uncertainty preferable to the static state of satiety. A final favorite idea issuing from her preoccupation with mental activity clarifies her reason for valuing the unsettling state of quest for truth over accurate determination of that truth: human perception of reality is more significant than objective reality itself:

Perception of an Object costs
Precise the Object's loss--
Perception in itself a Gain
Replying to it's price--

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

Poem 1071

⁵ See particularly Poems 673 and 627.

Roughly speaking, Dickinson is concerned with similar topics throughout all of the fascicles, but she gradually comes to place new significances upon her subject matter. In essence, in fascicles constructed after 1861 she is more concerned with "means" than with "end." Man's chief concern during physical existence, according to later fascicles, is the concrete world which may or may not verify spiritual realities. Indeed, the poet sees intrinsic value in the physical world and human experiences whether or not they lead to a paradisaic afterlife. Though the poetry may aid the poet in eventually attaining heaven, the creation of poetry is itself a sacred way of living and is a desirable end. Furthermore, Dickinson's preoccupation with psychological activity is strongly indicative of her increasing fascination with "means" and decreasing interest in ultimate end; and both by explicit statement and by the implications of her passion for the mental quest for truth, the poet demonstrates that she is more concerned with the "means" of pursuing truth and heaven than with the "end" of possessing knowledge and eventually attaining heaven.

Dickinson's manner of expressing content likewise changes as she gains experience in the compilation of poems. As she matures, Dickinson develops distinct content patterns. Ruth Miller in The Poetry of Emily Dickinson notes the presence of the patterns and offers several very brief, unamplified word-diagrams charting content.⁶ I intend neither to challenge her unexplicated blueprints, since debate about labels is futile when poetry is involved, nor to label categorically the various patterns:

⁶ Miller, p. 249.

I intend, instead, to suggest what appears to represent more accurately the several types of movements or progression of ideas found in Dickinson's more mature fascicles, that is, those compiled after 1861 which, incidentally, compose nearly two-thirds of the total number of gatherings.

Utilized the least frequently, the first pattern is associated with the speaker's separation from a friend and is dramatically presented:

- Theme: Loss of friend or lover
- Development: (1) Loss
 (2) Pain or uncertainty essential
 (3) Acceptance of her role in having
 painful experiences (unrealized
 love on earth); realization that
 divine purpose resides in loss

Fascicle 9 follows this plan (see Appendix III). The gathering begins with a presentation of the speaker's plight: she has turned from God to man, from heavenly aspirations to earthly ones. And as a consequence of her preference for earthly joys, she is deprived of fulfillment of her desires; that is, she is separated by distance or death from a person she loves (Poem 640). Eventually understanding that the fulfillment of her human wants would dull her love and desire for heaven, the speaker realizes that pain is essential (Poems 640 and 313). In the conclusion, after a reversion to skepticism because her requests have been denied by God (Poem 641), the speaker accepts her role and concludes that an angel pilots her along the seemingly agonizing path (Poems 643 and 477).

The second pattern is like the first in that it records mental

movement from a problem to a resolution. This second plan focuses on the pain-joy duality:

Theme: Interdependence of pain and joy

Development: (1) Statement or illustration of the interdependence of pain and joy
 (2) Conflict revolving around her resentment or questioning of human suffering and death (dramatically presented)
 (3) Dedication to poetry which suffering makes possible or dedication to the living of earthly life fully in her own way; desire for heaven and faith in immortality often retained with both dedications

Fascicle 81, discussed extensively in the second chapter, typifies Dickinson's use of the "interdependence of pain and joy" theme.⁷

Initially in this gathering the poet states the theme and explains from personal experience how pain became joy for her (Poems 771, 772, and 773). Subsequently she ponders the relative value of life, characterized by suffering as well as happiness, and of an after-life non-physical existence;⁸ in addition, she struggles with her ever-present anxiety over the imminence of death (Poems 784, 785, and 786). And finally the poet accepts the brevity of life and chooses to live intensely now (Poems 682 and 787).

Unlike the first two content outlines, the last two do not involve

⁷ See Chapter II and Appendix II.

⁸ Poems 777, 776, 778, 779, 780, 719, 781, and 782.

an inner problem which is solved through a series of thoughts; rather, they are more overtly concerned with mental processes. Fascicle 84 contains the third content plan:

Theme: Power of the human mind

Development: (1) Power of the mind presented logically
or by example
(2) Workings of the mind illustrated

In this fascicle Dickinson exalts the soul's experiences during its earthly sojourn, valuing them over romantic tales of a distant heaven and unknowable reality.⁹ After this introductory extolment of mental experiences, she illustrates certain mental processes. She first records various thoughts one might have regarding heaven and other theoretical spiritual realities (Poems 629, 1181, and 630) and then concludes that the human mind is truly an infinite source of riches, superior to the supposed realities and equal to God (Poems 466 and 632). And finally she demonstrates the power of the mind to determine life, the significances of death, joy, and pain (Poems 634 and 635).

The final content plan involves a mental state of turbulence:

Theme: Tumultuous state of expectancy and deficiency
and/or oscillation between faith and doubt,
joy and pain

Development: (1) The state logically discussed or dramatically presented
(2) Conclusion that deficiency, uncertainty, and vacillation are preferable to satiety

⁹ Poems 628, 669, 465, and 674. See Chapter III, pp. 59-67.

The poet utilizes this pattern in Fascicle 30. The gathering commences with the speaker's celebration of a person with a sense of the beauty and brevity of life (Poems 795 and 796). In the subsequent poems (Poem 797, 730, and 731) the poetic speaker continues by identifying two other aspects of a worthwhile attitude toward the world: the drive to find deeper meanings in concrete entities and the impulse to search and desire. Here and elsewhere in the fascicle (Poems 799, 801, 681, and 807) the poet enounces her sense of deprivation and anguish inherent in human existence and her conviction that hardship produces its advantage. Thus far the speaker is simply employing exposition rather than drama to lead up to her thesis, the idea that "Expectation--is Contentment" and is more desirable than fulfillment because

Good, without alarm
Is a too established Fortune--
Danger--deepens Sum--

Poem 807

This final emphasis on the animated mental state of uncertainty and fluctuation is highly significant, since it occurs in more than one-third of the mature fascicles included in this study.¹⁰ Moreover, the fascination with and ultimate preference for the desiring, discontented mind is central to Dickinson's purposes in the fascicles themselves. Just as in the case of Fascicle 30 where the poetic "I" is concerned with

¹⁰ Fascicles 22, 30, 31, 81, and 84.

the struggling mind in its search for meaning and certainty, in the fascicles as a whole Dickinson similarly conveys quest rather than records absolute truths. Emily Dickinson, it appears, is concerned primarily with the search and accordingly she employs four patterns of content development which either trace the thought processes of the speaker (Pattern I: Loss of friend; and Pattern II: Interdependence of pain and joy) or else more explicitly deal with human thought processes (Pattern III: Power of the human mind; and Pattern IV: Tumultuous state of expectancy).

In his biography of Emily Dickinson, Thomas H. Johnson notes the poet's tendency by 1861 to express idea by means of form.¹¹ Anderson similarly asserts that Dickinson's poetic mode is in unison with her meaning.¹² Both scholars are describing the poet's techniques in individual poems, but the same tendency is evident in the larger poetic units, the fascicle-poems, particularly those prepared in 1862 and 1863. Her use of content patterns which emphasize mental processes is one way form reinforces meaning; specifically, by ordering the poems on the basis of psychodynamics, she supports her more explicitly stated ideas of the mind as a source of wealth and of the immense value of the questing mind.

In four other ways Dickinson uses form to suggest or demonstrate one or more of the recurring ideas presented more overtly in the content of the fascicle-poems. Moreover, these four elements of form also enable

¹¹ Johnson, p. 148

¹² Anderson, Emily Dickinson's Poetry, p. 24.

Dickinson to reemphasize mental movement and progression which is apparent in organization, imagery, and content.

The first formal technique of concern is Dickinson's policy of juxtaposing opposites, a poem on pain followed by one on ecstasy, for instance. Most illustrative of such juxtaposition is Fascicle 85 in which poems on certainty, doubt, dedication, and loss of faith appear in succession.¹³ By so ordering a poetic statement or experience of faith followed by one of uncertainty, and then declaration of dedication followed by a description of her total loss of faith and hope, Dickinson is conveying through form the psychological vacillation between joy and pain, certainty and disbelief. This idea concerning the human psyche here conveyed through form is explicitly stated a few poems later in Fascicle 85:

The Soul has Bandaged moments--
When too appalled to stir--
She feels some ghastly Fright come up
And stop to look at her--

Salute her--with long fingers--
Caress her freezing hair--
Sip, Goblin, from the very lips,
The Lover--hovered--o'er--
Unworthy, that a thought so mean
Accost a Theme--so--fair--

The soul has moments of Escape--
When bursting all the doors--
She dances like a Bomb, abroad,
And swings upon the Hours,

As do the Bee--delirious borne--
Long Dungeoned from his Rose--
Touch Liberty--then know no more,
But Noon, and Paradise--

¹³ See the discussion of Fascicle 85 in Chapter III, pp. 52-54.

The Soul's retaken moments--
 When, Felon led along,
 With shackles on the plumed feet,
 And staples, in the Song,

The Horror welcomes her, again,
 These, are not brayed of Tongue--
 Poem 512

Thus, by juxtaposing poems on opposite experiences Dickinson communicates by means of ordering the tendency of the sensitive mind to move from one emotion or mood to its reverse.

A second formal technique worth noting involves Dickinson's use of concrete objects and occurrences to suggest abstract concepts. In writing on the literal level about the physical world the poet actually communicates her view on something much less concrete, such as the idea of heaven. A simple poem about an annual flower, when part of a fascicle, can become a commentary on immortality, for the meaning of the fascicle-poem gives new depths of meaning to individual poems. For instance, Poem 737 in Fascicle 22 presents the poet's conception of some undescrivable reality or Unknown, though literally the poem is only a description of the moon.

Her Bonnet is the Firmament--
 The Universe--Her Shoe--
 The Stars--the Trinkets at Her Belt--
 Her Dimities--of Blue

Poem 737

Basically Dickinson realizes that man as a part of the mortal world can never determine the validity of ideals and of religious fears and hopes.¹⁴ But if he chooses to pursue abstract truths he can do so only through

¹⁴ Ford, p. 147.

their correspondence to things in the physical world, and Dickinson therefore sometimes describes abstractions by using physical sensation.

Demonstrating this tendency is a poem about the faltering speaker who cannot yet accept the death of a friend:

I hinted Changes--Lapse of Time--
 The Surfaces of Years--
 I touched with Cautions--lest they crack--
 And show me to my fears--

Poem 734

This technique of treating abstract ideas in terms of the physical world conveys several ideas presented in content. One such idea is inherent in the technique, the assumption that a correspondence exists between the natural world and the spiritual one. And this idea, incidentally, is a tenet embraced by Ralph Waldo Emerson and other transcendental contemporaries of Dickinson. Her reliance on concrete terms likewise suggests another idea repeated in the content of the fascicle: during this life man can only truly comprehend things concrete. The aim of the fascicle is, in essence, to search for belief, and to the poet the only way of seeking ultimate truth is by means of her perceptions of concrete entities. Consequently, Dickinson continually describes abstractions in terms of her perception of things concrete, i.e. the ideal in terms of the real; in so doing, moreover, she simulates through form the psychological jump occurring when man perceives something in his physical environment and associates it with an abstract or spiritual concept.

A third instance of unification of manner and matter occurs in the way the fascicles are constructed; the gatherings are composed of individual poems so organized as to make each fascicle resemble man's per-

ception of a portion of life and to simulate the incessant movement of the human mind. Just as an individual has changing attitudes and moods from moment to moment, so the fascicle-poem has varying attitudes and moods from poem to poem. The fascicle-poem, like life as perceived by an individual, is a whole which is composed of isolated units, the poems in the gatherings and experiences in life. And though each individual unit is complete in itself, when taken all together they make a meaningful whole. Both the fascicle and life are characterized by continuous movement from one idea or experience to another, from one decision to re-evaluation, from vision to revision. And in both, identical images vary in meaning according to the perception of the poet or individual at the moment.¹⁵

This manner of construction is consistent with Dickinson's idea expressed overtly in content that man's perception is more significant than objective reality. In this concern for perception rather than for reality and for psychological progression rather than for static truth Dickinson is like the novelist Henry James. Furthermore, the manner of assembling independent poems on various topics into a meaningful unit suggests the *Weltanschauung* which presupposes that individual moments, if intensely embraced, make a meaningful life.

And a final way that the poet communicates idea through form is by means of a cryptic and seemingly unpolished style. In both the fascicle-

¹⁵ The relationship between imagery and the speaker's varying attitudes is discussed Chapter III, pp. 58-72.

poems and individual poems Dickinson tightly compresses thought, eliminates unessentials, and gives a roughness to her poetic creation. Typically, in the individual poem she expresses her thought with a scarcity of words, using shortened verb and adverb forms, replacing conventional punctuation with a hurried dash, and omitting articles, pronoun antecedents, and other unessentials.¹⁶ The apparent roughness is further intensified by her unorthodox rhythm and rhyme techniques. Compression and lack of surface smoothness likewise characterize the fascicle-poem, for the fascicle lacks stated transitions between its poems (which superficially appear unrelated) and thus between the various points of view and subject matter. This roughness of style found in both the particular poem and the fascicle-poem suggests one of Dickinson's major ideas: deficiency and expectancy are preferable to satiety and fulfillment. Also this style conveys the rapid movement of time and ceaseless change which characterize life, as the poet perceives it, and the poet's sense of urgency which she recommends as the best attitude toward life. And perhaps even more significant is the fact that she again makes manifest her fascination with mental processes, for by deleting unessentials and transitions particularly and by compressing thought, she imitates the quick, unencumbered movement of the mind.

It appears that the most recurrent ideas in fascicle content are natural products of Dickinson's psychological makeup. That her manner

¹⁶ See Ford, p. 103, for a commentary on Dickinson's use of the dash; Whicher, p. 236, discusses her economy in matters of syntax.

of expression should reinforce these ideas, therefore, is not surprising. Furthermore, that her preoccupation with thought processes should appear in both content and form is predictable in light of the emphasis she gives it in organization and imagery.

Insofar as idea and formal techniques of the fascicle-poems are manifestations of the poet's attitude, the following summary of attitudes expressed in the mature fascicles epitomizes what the poet conveys through both content and form. Firm conviction in heaven and God appears in only about one-third of the mature fascicles studied as compared to the more frequent statement of this conviction in the earlier gatherings prepared before 1862. These fascicles, unlike the earlier ones, contain an abundance of doubt and skeptical questions concerning God, immortality, and human suffering. Frequently the poet concludes that man is limited during this life to concrete entities, and that understanding death and God and knowledge of the validity of heaven come only after death. And in these gatherings the poet emphasizes activity rather than a more static state of certainty; she devotes herself to the creation of poetry, which is her means of seeking the truth about life and death, and she dedicates herself to the living of an intensely sensitive existence now. The mature fascicles vary greatly in subject and attitude, but one common element flows throughout almost every one of them, only two or three excepted: the poet always places major importance on mental process, whether it be resolving a conflict; regaining faith; transforming pain into a joyful, beautiful experience; or oscillating between pain and joy, doubt and hope.

Just as the organization of the fascicles becomes more complex and mature as the poet compiles more of them, so the content therein contained becomes more complicated and varying. In general, the content tends to change from emphasis on immortality, of which the poet of the early gatherings has substantial assurance, to fascination with the psychological processes whereby man searches for belief. And by means of both content and form Dickinson emphasizes the process of struggling with doubt and uncertainty in an attempt to achieve a sense of hope and assurance. At polar distance from the initial gathering Fascicle 82 in which Dickinson records the poetic speaker's certainty of and dedication to heaven is Fascicle 81 in which she concludes with the speaker's dedication to live fully her earthly life. But the resolutions and conclusions are themselves unimportant. The resolution or conviction recorded in a particular fascicle is always subject to revision and indeed is likely to be negated by the next gathering Dickinson prepares. Whatever the final resolution of a fascicle may be, the significant portion of the fascicle is the psychological process by which the poet comes to the conclusion.

V. CONCLUSION

From Emily Dickinson's death in 1886 until the 1950's the fascicles which the poet had so carefully prepared and preserved were ignored or forgotten by those interested in Dickinson's poetry. Between 1955 and 1968, however, three studies related to Emily Dickinson's gatherings appeared, and in these works the ordering of poems within many of the fascicles was established and the poetic value of each fascicle as a poem of assemblage was asserted.¹

Much is to be gained from extensive consideration of the content and poetic value of the fascicle-poems. The meaning of individual poems will be illuminated, for Dickinson's poetry has generally been considered to lack clear contextual basis,² whereas in actual fact more than half of her poems have a context arising from the fascicle framework in which Dickinson carefully placed them. Re-evaluation of Dickinson's poetry is thus necessary, because the poetic value of an individual poem is related to the poem's role in the fascicle and to the poet's purpose and meaning in the gathering. Far more important than the explication and evaluation

¹ Johnson, Leyda, and Franklin agree on the ordering of the twenty-three gatherings which were studied in this paper. Ruth Miller asserts the value of each gathering as a poem in its own right and demonstrates her view with two fairly brief discussions of specific booklets.

² Porter, p. 153.

of individual poems, however, is the illumination of Emily Dickinson's poetic method and intention in the fascicle-poems. Furthermore, the final and most significant result of extensive consideration of the fascicle is a more comprehensive and penetrating view into the poet's mind than has been possible from the fragmentary study of isolated poems expressing fleeting impressions, feelings, and thoughts.

In the present study I am continuing the monumental task first recognized and initiated by Ruth Miller in her book appearing in 1968: the intensive consideration of the content and poetic quality of Dickinson's fascicles. Building on Miller's preliminary fascicle study outlined in the final chapter of her work,³ I have examined the twenty-three gatherings with undisputed orderings and have considered the patterns of organization, employment of imagery, and poetic content therein. Moreover, while undertaking these considerations I discerned a common element consistently and obtrusively reflected in both the method and matter of the mature fascicles composed in 1862 and thereafter: specifically, Dickinson's preoccupation with mental activity. I believe that the motivating force behind the creation of the fascicle-poems is Emily Dickinson's fascination with psychodynamics and that her ultimate intention in the gatherings is the portrayal of man's mental struggle to find meaning in life.

This concept is illustrated by Fascicle 81, a highly refined poetic use of the fascicle as an extended poem portraying purposeful mental progression. In this gathering Dickinson presents the psychological drama

³ Miller, "The Fascicles," pp. 247-288.

whereby the poetic "I" learns to accept suffering, human frailty, and mortality as inevitable and even desirable inasmuch as they intensify her joy in her brief human existence and heighten her determination to live fully the kind of life she has chosen. The essence of the plot is the poetic speaker's attempt to reintegrate opposing forces within the self, her desire for the immaterial heaven which offers eventual peace and her passion for the concrete earth characterized by ceaseless activity and flux.

Dickinson presents this unified psychological experience by selecting and arranging individual poems with diverse subject matter, settings, moods, points of view, rhythm and rhyme schemes, and purposes. In general, each poem presents a mental state, psychic situation, or tentative belief held by the speaker, and each provokes another psychological situation or commentary; the following poem then portrays the ensuing responsive attitude. In this manner the gathering of dissimilar poems is endowed with psychological cohesion and self-propelling mental movement. Each poem is itself an independent unit which expresses a momentary experience or idea within the consciousness of the poetic "I." But acting as one element in a carefully constructed psychological progression, each poem represents a step in the speaker's digressive but purposeful mental journey.

Dickinson's interest in mental activity is clearly evident in this gathering. The plot itself of Fascicle 81 involves the speaker's emotional conflict which is resolved in the conviction that oscillation between pain and joy is inevitable and desirable. Thus the content of

the gathering is the mental activity of the questing poetic "I" as she questions and finally embraces the human plight of suffering and oscillating between pain and happiness.

Dickinson's method of presenting the content is likewise related to psychological operations. Specifically, Dickinson not only presents a narrative which involves emotional agitation and conflict; she represents the emotional drama within the poetic "I" by means of the structure of the extended poem. The poem-units in the gathering correspond to thought-units within the mind. In the fascicle as in the human consciousness, association binds the units into a whole, and the relationship between units is not explicit. In both, clarity and rationality are subordinated to compression, fluidity, and immediacy. Beneath the surface significance of each unit lie layer upon layer of connotative meanings which emerge when the parts are related to the whole.⁴ Dickinson is thus structuring the

⁴ Lawrence Durrell presents a view concerning modern poetry which is relevant to this discussion of Dickinson's psychological authenticity in her manner of creating the fascicle-poems. See A Key to Modern British Poetry (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), pp. 49-71 particularly. The thesis of Durrell's book is the idea that modern poetry exhibits just such characteristics as those described above regarding Dickinson's fascicles; he believes that the new psychological poetry is an indirect cultural consequence of Freudian psychology and modern physics. Dickinson appears to have intuitively grasped some of the same psychological principles as were culturally assimilated by modern poets, and the reality which she portrays is consequently similar to that of later poets, such as T. S. Eliot. For brief notes on the similarity between Dickinson and Eliot see Lindberg-Seyersted, p. 241, and Suzanne M. Wilson, "Emily Dickinson and Twentieth Century Poetry of Sensibility," American Literature, 36 (1964), 357.

fascicle-poem to simulate an animated human mind and is portraying the psychological drama by means of method as well as matter.

Moreover, this acute interest in mental activity evident in Fascicle 81 is characteristic of the other fascicles prepared after 1861. In methods of organization, employment of image series, and choice of content Dickinson exhibits her fascination for psychodynamics; this interest, however, seems to be limited to the mature fascicles, that is, those prepared in 1862 and 1863 particularly and in the few compiled thereafter, and is not evident in the earlier gatherings compiled between 1858 and 1861. A degree of poetic maturation becomes evident when the earlier fascicles are compared to the later ones, and the refinement of technique and content characteristic of gatherings after 1861 seems related to Dickinson's concern in the later fascicles for processes within the human mind.

The early gatherings and especially those prepared in the later 1850's typically exhibit weak, rather obscure attempts at organizing the poems into meaningful wholes, but the later gatherings created after 1861 generally manifest the organizational adeptness of a mature poet. Whereas the organization of the earliest fascicles was static, that of the mature ones is dynamic in that it portrays mental activity. Generally the later gatherings either portray an emotional drama within the speaker's mind involving a problem or present a series of fluid ideas as they flow through the mind of the poetic "I." The chief organizational pattern is a dramatic record of the speaker's movement through painful experiences of inner turmoil to some resolution. The other two patterns of organization likewise involve mental progression. The expository pattern is composed of a series

of associated thoughts which pass through the speaker's mind, the thoughts being unhampered by explicit transitions. And the third pattern is a fusion of the other two and both presents the speaker's thoughts and then illustrates them by dramatically portraying the inner experiences of the poetic "I." In each pattern of organization the individual poem which embodies an emotional state or a thought is joined to the other poems of the gathering by implicit association of idea.

In addition to organization other aspects of form convey Dickinson's interest in psychodynamics. Her manner of juxtaposing opposites, a poem on agony with one on joy for example, reflects the tendency of the highly sensitive mind to fluctuate from one intense emotional state to its reverse. Similarly, Dickinson's continually changing poetic voice reflects variation in ego which is an inherent aspect of the human consciousness. The fact that the individual consciousness has no single "I" or self is suggested by the constantly varying speaker in each gathering, in Fascicle 84 for instance where the poetic "I" is at once a dead person recalling death, an introspective soul with a superior guest, one who tactlessly examines the moon, and a person conscious of his inner wealth, to mention but a few roles of the self. By constantly changing the poetic voice Dickinson intuitively depicts the internal journey of the introspective person as he wanders amidst the myriad voices within.

As discussed above regarding Fascicle 81, Dickinson represents the animated mind through her method of constructing the fascicle-poem. By presenting one poem after another, each a separate mental experience or thought, and relating the poems only by idea-association, Dickinson suggests

the mind's continuous progression from one idea or experience to another, from vision to revision. Moreover, by deleting transitions and other unessentials and by severely compressing thought she simulates the rapid, unencumbered movement of the mind.

Furthermore, Dickinson conveys mental activity by means of imagery. In her most sensitive use of imagery she embodies the psychological development of the speaker in an image-sequence. In Fascicle 25, for example, a pod image reflects the variations within the poetic "I" as the pod changes from a sign of immortality, to an emblem of death, and eventually to a symbol of the season of suffering and limitation which teaches one to value mortal existence. Because the connotation of the pod image varies according to the speaker's emotions, the image-sequence as a whole conveys the ever-changing mood and attitude of the poetic "I."

This same emphasis on psychological process and development apparent in the formal technique of the mature fascicles is obtrusively present in the content or subject matter of the later gatherings. Generally speaking, the content of the mature gatherings is related to earthly "means" rather than to some ultimate "end" or spiritual gain. Man's chief concern is living fully and sensitively in his earthly environment, for human experiences are intrinsically beautiful and valuable whether or not they lead to a paradisaic afterlife. Assuming a similar view toward poetry, Dickinson manifests a concern for the act of creating poems rather than for the possible reward she might achieve, whether it be spiritual certainty or earthly acclaim. Similarly, she is intensely concerned with the act of experiencing a lapse in religious belief or of experiencing insurging

spirit and renewed faith, and she expresses less interest in the absolute validity of heaven, God, and other such truths about which she loses or gains confidence. Ultimately, Dickinson is not concerned in the fascicles with truth itself, but is absorbed by the mental search for truth, belief, and meaning during earthly existence. Her subject matter is the mental pursuit. At the end of most gatherings a decisive statement or conviction is generally offered, but this conclusion is only the final stanza of an extended poem; whatever that ending may be--renewed faith in immortality or an espousal of her destiny to wonder and fear--the concluding idea is not the subject of the fascicle-poem; rather, the psychological process whereby the poetic "I" arrives at the conclusion is the substance of the poem.

The psychological movement depicted in the fascicles composed in 1862 and thereafter tends to follow one of four patterns of content development. Two of the content plans involve mental conflict and resolution of a problem. The remaining two patterns contain a series of psychologically associated thoughts regarding matters of the human mind; specifically, one content plan offers a sequence of ideas about the potential of the energetic human mind and the other plan is a thought-sequence on the value of psychological oscillation and mental search. These four content patterns and Dickinson's general emphasis in the gatherings on means rather than end substantiate Richard P. Blackmur's assertion of Dickinson's concern in life and poetry: "All her life she was looking for a subject and the looking was her subject in life as in poetry."⁵

⁵ "Emily Dickinson's Notation," Kenyon Review, 18 (1956), 230.

In conclusion, Emily Dickinson is presently known for her short poems of high poetic quality, whereas scholars have almost entirely overlooked her more ambitious fascicle-poems in which she assembles the individual poems into psychodynamic poetry. I believe that Dickinson's poetic acclaim should rest as well on her fascicles, the less conventional and frequently very beautiful poetic expressions wherein she consciously portrays the subject she most values in her life and her art: man's profound psychological struggle to find a sustaining belief, whether in God or in earthly life itself, and to thereby maintain a sense of meaning and purpose during mortal existence.

APPENDIX I

FASCICLES STUDIED⁺

Fascicle Number	Approximate date of compilation
1	1858-1859
4	1860
7	1859
9	1862
12	1863
15	1860
18	1863
19	1862
20	1861
22	1863
25	1862
30	1863
31	1863
33	1862, 1864
34	1862
35	1866
37	1860-1861
40	1862
81	1863
82	1858
83	1859
84	1862
85	1862

⁺ The twenty-three fascicles studied are those whose internal ordering is indisputable.

APPENDIX II

POEMS IN FASCICLE 81

Initial Poems in the Gathering

(Sheet Numbers ⁺)	(Poem)	(First Line)
1	771	None can experience stint
1a	772	The hallowing of Pain
2	773	Deprived of other Banquet
2a	774	It is a lonesome Glee--
2a	775	If Blame be my side--forfeit Me--
3	776	The Color of a Queen, is this--
3a	677	To be alive--is Power--

Central Poems in the Gathering

(Sheet Numbers)	(Poem)	(First Line)
4	777	The Loneliness One dare not sound--
4a	676	Least Bee that brew--
5	778	This that would greet--an hour ago--
5a	779	The Service without Hope--
6	718	I meant to find Her when I came--
6a	780	The Truth--is stirless--
7	719	A South Wind--has a pathos
7	781	To wait an Hour--is long--

Concluding Poems in the Gathering

(Sheet Numbers)	(Poem)	(First Line)
7a	782	There is an arid Pleasure--
8	783	The Birds begun at Four o'clock--
9	784	Bereaved of all, I went abroad--
9a	785	They have a little Odor--that to me
10	786	Severer Service of myself
11	682	'Twould ease--a Butterfly--
11a	787	Such is the Force of Happiness--

⁺ The sheet numbering was assigned in the Bingham Collection of the Frost Library in Amherst, Massachusetts; the poem number was assigned by Johnson in his edition of Poems. This summary of the poems appears in Miller, "Appendix I," pp. 320-21.

(APPENDIX II CONTINUED)

(Manuscript 1; 2 Poems)

None can experience stint
 Who Bounty--have not known--
 The fact of Famine--could not be
 Except for Fact of Corn--

Want--is a meagre Art
 Acquired by Reverse--
 The Poverty that was not Wealth--
 Cannot be Indigence

771

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

(Manuscript 2; 5 Poems)

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

A Robin's famine able--
 Red Pilgrim, He and I--
 A Berry from our table
 Reserve--for charity--

773

It is a lonesome Glee--
 Yet sanctifies the Mind--
 With fair association--
 Afar upon the Wind

A Bird to overhear
 Delight without a Cause--
 Arrestless as invisible--
 A matter of the Skies.

774

If Blame be my side--forfeit Me--
 But doom me not to forfeit Thee--
 To forfeit Thee? The very name
 Is sentence from Belief--and Home--

775

Purple--

The Color of a Queen, is this--
 The Color of A Sun
 At setting--this and Amber--
 Beryl--and this, at Noon--

And when at night--Auroran widths
 Fling suddenly on men--
 'Tis this--and Witchcraft--nature keeps
 A Rank--for Iodine--

776

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

(Manuscript 3; 4 Poems)

The Loneliness One dare not sound--
 And would as soon surmise
 As in it's Grave go plumbing
 To ascertain the size--

The Loneliness whose worst alarm
 Is lest itself should see--
 And perish from before itself
 For just a scrutiny--

The Horror not to be surveyed--
 But skirted in the Dark--
 With Consciousness suspended--
 And Being under Lock--

I fear me this--is Loneliness--
 The Maker of the soul
 It's Caverns and it's Corridors
 Illuminate--or seal--

777

Least Bee that brew--
 A Honey's Weight
 The Summer multiply--
 Content Her smallest fraction help
 The Amber Quality--

676

This that would greet--an hour ago--
 Is quaintest Distance--now--
 Had it a Guest from Paradise--
 Nor glow, would it, nor bow--

Had it a notice from the Noon
 Nor beam would it nor warm--
 Match me the Silver Reticence--
 Match me the Solid Calm--

778

The Service without Hope--
 Is tenderest, I think--
 Because 'tis unsustained
 By stint--Rewarded Work--

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

779

(Manuscript 4; 5 Poems)

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

The Truth--is stirless--
 Other force--may be presumed to move--
 This--then--is best for confidence--
 When oldest Cedars swerve--

And Oaks untwist their fists--
 And mountains--feeble--lean--
 How excellent a Body, that
 Stands without a Bone--

How vigorous a Force
 That holds without a Prop--
 Truth stays Herself--and every man
 That trusts Her--boldly up--

780

A South Wind--has a pathos
 Of individual Voice--
 As One detect on Landings
 An Emigrant's address.

A Hint of Ports and Peoples--
 And much not understood--
 The fairer--for the farness--
 And for the foreignhood.

719

To wait an Hour--is long--
 If Love be just beyond--
 To wait Eternity--is short--
 If Love reward the end--

781

There is an arid Pleasure--
 As different from Joy--
 As Frost is different from Dew--
 Like element--are they--

Yet one--rejoices Flowers--
 And one--the Flowers abhor--
 The finest Honey--curdled--
 Is worthless--to the Bee--

782

(Manuscript 5; 3 Poems)

The Birds begun at Four o'clock--
 Their period for Dawn--
 A Music numerous as space--
 But neighboring as Noon--

I could not count their Force--
 Their Voices did expend
 As Brook by Brook bestows itself
 To multiply the Pond.

Their Witnesses were not--
 Except occasional man--
 In homely industry arrayed--
 To overtake the Morn--

Nor was it for applause--
 That I could ascertain--
 But independant Extasy
 Of Deity and Men--

By Six, the Flood had done--
 No Tumult there had been
 Of Dressing, or Departure--
 And yet the Band was gone--

The Sun engrossed the East--
 The Day controlled the World--
 The Miracle that introduced
 Forgotten, as fulfilled.

783

Bereaved of all, I went abroad--
 No less bereaved was I
 Upon a New Peninsula--
 The Grave preceded me--

Obtained my Lodgings, ere myself--
 And when I sought my Bed--
 The Grave it was reposed upon
 The Pillow for my Head--

I waked, to find it first awake--
 I rose--It followed me--
 I tried to drop it in the Crowd--
 To lose it in the Sea--

In cups of artificial Drowse
 To steep it's shape away--
 The Grave--was finished--but the Spade
 Remained in Memory--

784

They have a little Odor--that to me
 Is metre--nay--'tis melody--
 And spiciest at fading--indicate--
 A Habit--of a Laureate--

785

(Manuscript 6; 3 Poems)

Severer Service of myself
 I--hastened to demand
 To fill the awful Vacuum
 Your life had left behind--

I worried Nature with my Wheels
 When Her's had ceased to run--
 When she had put away Her Work
 My own had just begun.

I strove to weary Brain and Bone--
 To harass to fatigue
 The glittering Retinue of nerves--
 Vitality to clog

To some dull comfort Those obtain
 Who put a Head away
 They knew the Hair to--
 And forget the color of the Day--

Affliction would not be appeased--
 The Darkness braced as firm
 As all my strategem had been
 The Midnight to confirm--

No Drug for Consciousness--can be--
 Alternative to die
 Is Nature's only Pharmacy.
 For Being's Malady--

736

'Twould ease--a Butterfly--
 Elate--a Bee--
 Thou'rt neither--
 Neither--thy capacity

But, Blossom, were I,
 I would rather be
 Thy moment
 Than a Bee's Eternity--

Content of fading
 Is Enough for me--
 Fade I unto Divinity--

And Dying--Lifetime--
 Ample as the Eye--
 Her least attention raise on me--

682

Such is the Force of Happiness--
 The Least--can lift a Ton
 Assisted by it's stimulus--

Who Misery--sustain--
 No Sinew can afford--
 The Cargo of Themselves--
 Too infinite for Consciousness'
 Slow capabilities.

787

APPENDIX III

FASCICLES DISCUSSED IN TEXT

Fascicle 7

(Manuscript Number)	(Poem)	(First Line)
1	134	Perhaps you'd like to buy a flower,
	135	Water, is taught by thirst.
	136	Have you got a Brook in your little heart,
	137	Flowers--Tell--if anybody
	138	Pigmy seraphs--gone astray--
2	83	Heart, not so heavy as mine
	139	Soul, wilt thou toss again?
	140	An altered look about the hills--
	141	Some, too fragile for winter winds
3	142	Whose are the little beds, I asked
	143	For every Bird a Nest--
	85	"They have not chosen me," he said,
4	144	She bore it till the simple veins
	81	We should not mind so small a flower--
	145	This heart that broke so long--
	146	On such a night, or such a night,

Fascicle 9

(Manuscript Number)	(Poem)	(First Line)
1	636	The Way I read a Letter's--this--
	637	The Child's faith is new--
	472	Except the Heaven had come so near--
	638	To my small Hearth His fire came
2	639	My Portion is Defeat--today--
	473	I am ashamed--I hide--
3	640	I cannot live with You--
	641	Size circumscribes--it has no room

4	474	They put Us far apart--
	642	Me from Myself--to banish--
	475	Doom is the House without the Door--
5	313	I should have been too glad, I see--
	476	I meant to have but modest needs--
6	(476)	(conclusion of "I meant to have")
	643	I could suffice for Him, I knew--
	644	You left me--Sire--two Legacies--
	477	No Man can compass a Despair--

Fascicle 20

(Manuscript Number)	(Poem)	(First Line)
1	293	I got so I could hear his name--
	263	A single Screw of Flesh
	264	A Weight with Needles on the pounds--
2	217	Savior! I've no one else to tell--
	265	Where Ships of Purple--gently toss--
	266	This--is the land--the Sunset washes--
	294	The Doomed--regard the Sunrise
	225	Jesus! thy Crucifix
	267	Did we disobey Him?
3	295	Unto like Story--Trouble has enticed me--
4	296	One Year ago--jots what?
	297	It's like the Light--
	298	Alone, I cannot be--

Fascicle 22

(Manuscript Number)	(Poem)	(First Line)
1	692	The Sun kept setting--setting--still
	693	Shells from the Coast mistaking--
	694	The Heaven vests for Each
	733	The Spirit is the Conscious Ear.

- 2 734 If He were living--dare I ask--
 695 As if the Sea should part
 668 "Nature" is what we see--
 735 Upon Concluded Lives
- 3 736 Have any like Myself
 680 Each Life Converges to some Centre--
- 4 696 Their Hight in Heaven comforts not--
 697 I could bring You Jewels--had I a mind to--
 698 Life--is what we make it--
 699 The Judge is like the Owl--
- 5 1142 The Props assist the House--
 700 You've seen Balloons set--Hav'nt You?
 689 The Zeroes--taught us--Phosphorus--
 701 A Thought went up my mind today--
- 6 673 The Love a Life can show Below
 702 A first Mute Coming--
 703 Out of sight? What of that?
 704 No matter--now--Sweet--
- 7 (704) (conclusion of "No matter--now--Sweet--")
- 8 737 The Moon was but a Chin of Gold
 738 You said that I "was Great"--one Day--
 739 I many times thought Peace had come

Fascicle 25

(Manuscript Number)	(Poem)	(First Line)
1	564 402 565 335	My period had come for Prayer-- I pay--in Satin Cash-- One Anguish--in a Crowd-- 'Tis not that Dying hurts us so--
2	566 567 568 403	A Dying Tiger--moaned for Drink-- He gave away his Life-- We learned the Whole of Love-- The Winters are so short--
3	(403)	(conclusion of "The Winters are so short--")

4	569	I reckon--when I count at all--
	404	How many Flowers fail in Wood--
	405	It might be I'm Olier
	406	Some--Work for Immortality--
5	570	I could die--to know--
	571	Must be a Wo--
	572	Delight--becomes pictorial--
	407	If What we Could--were what we would--
	573	The Test of Love--is Death--
6	574	My first well Day--since many ill--
	309	For largest Woman's Heart I knew--
	408	Unit, like Death, for Whom?
7	575	"Heaven" has different Signs--to me--
	409	They dropped like Flakes--
	576	I prayed, at first, a little Girl,

Fascicle 30

(Manuscript Number)	(Poem)	(First Line)
1	794	A Drop fell on the Apple Tree--
	795	Her final Summer was it--
	796	Who Giants know, with lesser Men
2	797	By my Window have I for Scenery
	730	Defrauded I a Butterfly--
	731	"I want"--it pleaded--All it's life--
3	876	It was a Grave, yet bore no Stone
	798	She staked her Feathers--Gained an Arc--
	799	Despair's advantage is achieved
	800	Two--were immortal twice--
4	803	Who Court obtain within Himself
	732	She rose to His Requirement--dropt
	802	Time feels so vast that were it not
5	801	I play at Riches--to appease
	804	No Notice gave She, but a Change--
	686	They say that "Time assuages"--
6	681	On the Bleakness of my Lot
	805	This Bauble was preferred of Bees--
	806	A plated Life--diversified
	807	Expectation--is Contentment--

Fascicle 31

(Manuscript Number)	(Poem)	(First Line)
1	712	Because I could not stop for Death--
	759	He fought like those Who've nought to lose--
	713	Fame of Myself, to justify,
2	678	Wolfe demanded during dying
	760	Most she touched me by her muteness--
	761	From Blank to Blank--
3	762	The Whole of it came not at once--
	763	He told a homely tale
	764	Presentiment--is that long Shadow--on the Lawn--
	765	You constituted Time--
4	766	My Faith is larger than the Hills--
	714	Rests at Night
	715	The World--feels Dusty
	767	To offer brave assistance
5	768	When I hoped, I recollect
	316	The Wind did'nt come from the Orchard--today--
6	716	The Day undressed--Herself--
	717	The Beggar Lad--dies early--
	769	One and One--are One--
	770	I lived on Dread--

Fascicle 82

(Manuscript Number)	(Poem)	(First Line)
1	18	The Gentian weaves her fringes--
	6	Frequently the woods are pink--
	19	A. sepi, petal, and a thorn
	20	Distrustful of the Gentian--
	21	We lose--because we win--
	22	All these my banners be.
2	23	I had a guinea golden--
	24	There is a morn by men unseen--
	323	As if I asked a common Alms,
	25	She slept beneath a tree--

- 3 7 The feet of people walking home
 26 It's all I have to bring today--
 27 Morns like these--we parted--
 28 So has a Daisy vanished
- 4 29 If those I loved were lost
 30 Adrift! A little boat adrift!
 31 Summer for thee, grant I may be
 32 When Roses cease to bloom, Sir,
 33 If recollecting were forgetting,
 4 On this wondrous sea
 34 Garlands for Queens, may be--
 35 Nobody knows this little Rose--

Fascicle 84

(Manuscript Number)	(Poem)	(First Line)
1	628 669 465 674	They called me to the Window, for No Romance sold unto I heard a Fly buzz--when I died-- The Soule that hath a Guest
2	629 1181 630	I watched the Moon around the House When I hoped I feared-- The Lightning playeth--all the while--
3	631 466 632 467	Ourselves were wed one summer--dear-- 'Tis little I--could care for Pearls-- The Brain--is wider than the Sky-- We do not play on Graves--
4	312 633 468 469	Her--"last Poems"-- When Bells stop ringing--Church--begins-- The Manner of it's Death The Red--Blaze--is the Morning--
5	634 470	You'll know Her--by Her Foot-- I am alive--I guess--
6	1067 635 329 471	Except the smaller size I think the longest Hour of all So glad we are--a Stranger'd deem A Night--there lay the Days between--

Fascicle 85

(Manuscript Number)	(Poem)	(First Line)
1	348 505	I dreaded that first Robin, so, I would not paint--a picture--
2	506 349 507 350	He touched me, so I live to know I had the Glory--that will do-- She sights a Bird--she chuckles-- They leave us with the Infinite.
3	508 509	I'm ceded--I've stopped being Their's-- If anybody's friend be dead
4	510 511	It was not Death, for I stood up, If you were coming in the Fall,
5	351 352 328	I felt my life with both my hands Perhaps I asked too large-- A Bird came down the Walk--
6	512 513	The Soul has Bandaged moments-- Like Flowers, that heard the news of Dews,

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