7.8 Student Sample Paper: Stefanie Jochman’s ‘Words of Lead’: Emily Dickinson’s Poetry and the Grief of the Civil War

The following sample paper by Stefanie engages New Historicism and applies to Emily Dickinson (1830–86), now considered one of the greatest poets in American literature. But Dickinson was an unknown writer during her life: she wrote around eighteen thousand poems, but only eleven were printed during her lifetime, and those were published anonymously. She lived her entire life in her family’s home in Amherst, Massachusetts (you can tour her home today), never married, and was seen as a recluse spinster by the townspeople. Yet she had fruitful relationships with friends by corresponding with them via letters.

Today, some might assume that readers have always had access to her poetry; however, that is a common misconception. The first volume of her poems was published in 1890, four years after her death; moreover, the editor chose to change her erratic and unusual spelling, punctuation, and wording to conform to the accepted English of the late 1800s. Not until 1955 did readers have a reliable edition of her poetry: Thomas H. Johnson’s *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*. In 1958 Johnson and Theodora Ward published *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*. In 1998 R. W. Franklin revised Johnson’s edition to create what is now considered the most accurate edition: *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Variorum Edition*. We provide this brief overview of Dickinson’s publications since she seems an unlikely candidate for a New Historical paper—she appears to have secluded herself from society, not interested in engaging with that society. In addition, since she only published a select few of her poem anonymously, one might suppose that she could not have entered into a dialogue with the issues of her day. Stefanie makes a compelling case against such assumptions. More important, Stefanie’s paper demonstrates how literature—even when not published—is engaged in the time period in which it was written. Additionally, her paper shows us how literature can inform our contemporary view of a past event (in this case the Civil War). In other words, her paper reflects the power of a New Historical reading.

Please note: Stefanie provides the poems in an appendix to her paper since these are rarely anthologized (if at all) and therefore may be unfamiliar to readers. You can also read Dickinson’s poetry at Poets.org. “Emily Dickinson,” Poets.org, http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/155.

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Introduction to Literature
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“Words of Lead”: Emily Dickinson’s Poetry and the Grief of the Civil War

In a letter to her friend and advisor Thomas W. Higginson, a colonel in the Union army, Emily Dickinson confessed: “War feels to me an oblique place” (letter 280). For many years, that quotation, in combination with the rarity of Dickinson’s reference to the war in other manuscripts, was misinterpreted as indifference or confusion towards the Civil War. However, Dickinson’s interpretation of the war as “oblique” is the best way to describe the nation-dividing conflict that took place on American soil from 1861–65. The Civil War divided families, friendships, and political parties. Arguably a battle for honor (most of the Confederate soldiers, contrary to popular myth, were not fighting in favor of slavery—they were not wealthy enough to own slaves) the Civil War was a conflict of blurred lines. Union supporters were in favor of preserving the Union, but not all of them were passionate about the abolition of slavery; Confederates, most notably General Robert E. Lee, mourned the idea of dissolving the union, but considered their first loyalty to be to their states. Emily Dickinson was not the only person to whom the war seemed oblique; like any period of wartime, feelings of confusion and sorrow pierced the hearts of those on the home front.
An understanding of the mixed feelings shared by many during the Civil War warrants another examination of Dickinson’s life and work during the war years, her most productive period. An investigation into her family’s connection to the war yields evidence of her father’s intriguing opinion of the conflict (he supported the Union but was disgusted by radical abolitionists), as well as Austin Dickinson’s ability to monetarily “dodge” the draft. Dickinson’s correspondence with Thomas Higginson, who secretly worked with John Brown and was later the commander of one of the Union army’s first black regiments, questions her view of slavery. Also, Dickinson’s willingness to publish several poems in a Union fundraiser suggests that she, though quite silent about politics in her letters, supported the North and its troops. However, the strongest argument for Dickinson’s investment in the “oblique” War Between the States is her own poetry, which frequently focuses on the deaths of soldiers that she and her family had once hosted in their home. Poems like “When I was small, a Woman died” (poem # 596); “It feels a shame to be alive” ( # 444); and “Fate slew Him, but He did not drop” ( # 1031) reflect Dickinson’s emotional connection to the Civil War, as well as her fascination with the glorified deaths of soldiers. Given the charged atmosphere surrounding Emily Dickinson during the war years—her father’s political activism, Amherst’s installation of a telegraph that transmitted news of the war, Thomas Dickinson’s military pursuits, and the loss of dear friends like Frazer Stearn—it is impossible to deny Emily Dickinson’s connection to and knowledge of the Civil War. For Dickinson, the war may have been “oblique,” but her poetry provides clarity for readers trying to grasp a citizen’s reaction to the Civil War.

The popular myth promoting Emily Dickinson’s distance from both Amherst society and the Civil War can be partially attributed to the political and social climate of small-town New England during the middle of the 19th century. In The American Civil War, Peter Parish notes that those living in the North were at an advantage because the majority of the war was fought on southern soil. “Small town New England … followed its familiar pattern, and local news was only occasionally overshadowed by momentous events far away,” writes Parish (374). In fact, the North, despite the loss of its troops, actually benefited technologically and financially from the war. “Northern industry had a growth that was almost explosive … [such that] the North had little trouble in financing the war,” reports Bruce Catton (444–46). Therefore, Emily Dickinson, a single woman in the North with no immediate family fighting in the war, could easily be detached from the day-to-day drain of wartime in a way that most Southerners could not. Furthermore, Amherst was a relatively secluded town. As Millicent Todd Bingham, daughter of Dickinson’s first editor points out: “Until December, 1861, there was no telegraph…. Indeed Amherst was hardly more than a cluster of farms” (65). The war began with the firing of Fort Sumter in April of 1861, and while the Amherst community did receive its news from the Springfield Republican and locally printed Hampshire and Franklin Express (Bingham 121), it is quite likely that, until the telegraph arrived in 1861, immediate and accurate news of the war was rare.

However, the war news that did reach Amherst affected Dickinson and her poetry. A letter to family friend and editor of the Republican, Samuel Bowles, dated March 1862, offers the poem “Victory comes late” ( # 690), in which Dickinson writes: “Victory comes late, /And is held low to freezing lips / Too rapt with frost / To mind it!” (letter 257).1 In his notes on the letter, Thomas Johnson questions the dating of the poem, but also suggests that, had the poem actually been written in 1862, it may have coincided with the death of Bowles and the Dickinsons’ mutual friend, Frazer Stearns (Letters 400). Given the national news surrounding the date of publication, it is even more likely that the poem was written in 1862. An article in the Republican on February 20, 1862, celebrated the Northern victory at Fort Donelson, Tennessee: “The news of the capture … reached town about 1 p.m. The bells were rung, and more tin horns brought into requisition by the students than the priests blew around the walls of Jericho” (Leyda 46). While not a well-known battle, John Y. Simon writes in The Civil War Battlefield Guide that “Fort Donelson … became the site of the first major Confederate defeat in the Civil War. Victory at Donelson started Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant on his road to Appomattox” (17). After a year of solid defeats like that of the first Battle of Bull Run, where Lee’s forces solidly trounced the Union army, the North needed to boost its quickly falling spirits. Fort Donelson helped northerners to re-envision a Union victory in the war. Surely news of the South’s nearly unstoppable forces had reached Amherst and dampened its citizens’ spirits, therefore making the victory at Fort Donelson a cause to celebrate wildly. Dickinson’s “Victory comes late” reflects the feelings of her neighbors at the news of Fort Donelson. The lines regarding “freezing lips/ Too rapt with frost” (2–3) describe the conditions of the soldiers fighting in Tennessee, where “both armies froze when overnight temperatures unexpectedly fell to twelve degrees” (Simon 18). However, both those injuries felt by both the frozen soldiers and their families at home, were like Dickinson writes, “Too rapt with frost!” (3) to be concerned with the lateness of victory. At the very least, a solid Union victory had finally arrived.

As mentioned in the Republican, the students at Amherst Academy were actively involved in the Amherst community. Though secluded, the town of Amherst was a place of superior educational repute, thanks to the college. Emily’s father, Edward Dickinson, was treasurer of Amherst Academy for nearly forty years. The Dickinisons were a prominent, powerful Massachusetts family, and patriarch Edward’s political involvement during the war kept the family financially secure. In fact, the Dickinisons’ wealth allowed them to distance themselves from the battlefield. In 1864, an article appeared in the Republican reporting that Austin Dickinson, Emily’s brother, was drafted into the army, but he quickly paid $500 for a substitute to serve in his place (Leyda 88). Austin and Emily’s father could have assisted in the procuring and purchasing of the substitute, as he was a powerful man in the community and sometimes took part in recruitment programs.2 Edward Dickinson was very involved in the Whig party, the precursor to Abraham Lincoln’s Republican party. In 1850, when battles over slavery were reaching a fever-pitch, the Whig party maintained a membership of northern and southern politicians. However, this combination would eventually lead to the party’s destruction. As northerners drifted closer and closer to slavery-intolerant abolitionism, the northern Whigs demanded similar policies within their political party. The Compromise of 1850 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 permitted the spread of slavery to the West and enraged northern Whigs such that they formed the Republican party with a platform that abruptly halted the spread of slavery. Both the Constitutional Unionist and Republican parties offered prominent positions to Edward Dickinson, but he rejected them in favor of his own political leanings. As Alfred Habegger points out in My Wars Are Laid Away in Books: The Life of Emily Dickinson “Edward kept clear of all parties, [but] he vigorously backed the northern war effort, offering bounties to volunteers and … condemning not just the South but the spectrum of northern political opinion” (402). He disapproved of radical and outspoken abolitionists who were riling southern tempers, thereby encouraging war.

What Emily Dickinson thought of her father’s political efforts is unclear, although Habegger, quoting one of her letters, notes that Dickinson did not look well upon being thrust into the public eye as a politician’s daughter: “I hear they wish to make me Lieutenant-
Perhaps Dickinson was spurred into political action by the threat of Austin’s call to war in the draft of 1864. Perhaps the poems for *Drum Beat* were Dickinson’s way of healing her good friend Colonel Thomas Higginson’s war wound. Dickinson wrote anxiously to Higginson after learning of his injury: “Are you in danger—I did not know that you were hurt…. I am surprised and anxious, since receiving your note” (letter 290). In the same letter, Dickinson offers Higginson a bit of poetry that reflects both her anxiety over his injury as well as the toll the war was taking on the country. She writes: “The only News I know/ Is Bulletins all day/ From Immortality” (1–3). Far from the telegraph-less confines of secluded Amherst, the opening stanza to “The Only News I know” (# 827) expresses the exhaustion she felt after hearing three years’ worth of war news and surviving the deaths of her Aunts Lavinia and Lamira (Habegger 400). Also present in the letter is a fear that another of her beloved friends will die. In one of the stanzas Dickinson omitted from her letter to Higginson, she writes: “The Only One I meet/ Is God—The Only Street— / Existence—This traversed” (7–9). Death surrounded Emily Dickinson such that she felt she communicated with God as though she herself were dead. The “Bulletins…. From Immortality” that she mentions to Higginson are death notices, which, in Amherst, had already been delivered to several of the college trustees’ families, including that of President Stearns, whose son Frazer died at the battle of Newbern in North Carolina. The death of Frazer Stearns inspired some of Emily Dickinson’s most emotional writings about the war. She writes about Stearn at length in several of her letters to her cousins Louise and Francis Norcross, saying “brave Frazer—’killed at Newbern,’ darlings. His big heart shot away by a ‘minie ball.’ I had read of those—I didn’t think that Frazer would carry one to Eden with him” (letter 255). As Thomas Johnson suggests, “Victory comes late” may have expressed bitterness over Frazer’s death (*Letters* 400), but another poem, “It don’t sound so terrible—quite—as it did” (# 426), struggles to put into words the pain that Dickinson observed in her brother Austin when he learned of Frazer Stearns’ death:

It don’t sound so terrible—quite—as it did—
I run it over—“Dead,” brain, “Dead.”

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Turn it, a little—full in the face
A Trouble looks bitterest—
Shift it—just—
Say “When Tomorrow comes this way—
I shall have waded down one Day.” (1–2, 5–9)

Dickinson expressed concern for Austin in a letter to Samuel Bowles, saying, “Austin is chilled—by Frazer’s murder—He says—his Brain keeps saying over ‘Frazer is killed’…. Two or three words of lead—that dropped so deep, they keep weighing” (letter 256). Dickinson’s words fall like the “words of lead” she wrote about to Samuel Bowles; her speaker—presumably Austin—is so sad and desperate in search of comfort for his grief. The poet’s concern could be extended to the rest of the United States. “It don’t sound so terrible—quite—as it did” makes tears speak, and it accurately describes the disbelief most Americans were feeling during the second year of the Civil War. When the South first fired on Fort Sumter, people on both sides of the conflict believed that the war would last only months. Instead, the war lasted four long and weary years. Citizens in the North and South did their best to “shift” the pain of war so they could cope. Nevertheless, the deaths of Frazer Stearns and other soldiers came as a terrible surprise to their families and the nation. Months after Stearns’s death, Emily Dickinson wrote another letter to Samuel Bowles in which she described an encounter with a Union soldier who had asked for “a nosegay” before leaving for battle. She confesses to Bowles “It is easier to look behind at a pain, than to see it coming” (letter 272), so she turned the soldier away, knowing that the pain of befriending another potentially dead man would be too much for her.

The traumatic deaths of Union and Confederate soldiers left the nation feeling survivors’ guilt. The poem, “It feels a shame to be Alive” (# 444), suggests that Dickinson herself felt guilty to be alive in Amherst when men like Frazer Stearns were dying; she also envies the significance of a military life. She writes:

It feels a shame to be Alive—

When Men so brave—are dead

One envies the Distinguished Dust—
Dickinson's speaker "envies the Distinguished Dust," indicating her own fascination with the glorified deaths of soldiers. Death is a frequent topic of Dickinson's poetry, but she attributes a special significance to the death of a soldier, whose ashes are not simply ashes, but "Distinguished Dust." Further evidence of Dickinson's fascination with military death is available in her letters. When she describes the homecoming of Frazer Stearns's body, she tells the Norcross cousins, "Nobody here could look on Frazer—not even his father. The doctors would not allow it … we will mind ourselves of this young crusader—too brave that he could fear to die" (letter 255). Dickinson's mention of Stearns's closed casket implies that she would have liked to see the dead body, and her desire to keep Frazer alive in memory suggests a reverence toward his sacrifice.

Dickinson scholar Leigh-Anne Urbanowicz Marcellin discusses the poet's obsession with soldiers' deaths as a relation of opposites: "She is both fascinated with and repulsed by the fallen men; they are at once beautiful and hideous and their deaths noble and meaningless" (65). The deaths of those in "It feels a shame to be Alive" were certainly noble and meaningful, as is the death of a soldier in another poem of the Civil War period, "When I was small, a Woman died" (# 596). This poem describes the death of an orphaned son who "Went up from the Potomac / His face all Victory" (3–4). Dickinson celebrates a battlefield death and sees it as an opportunity for a reunion of souls, "proud in Apparition / That Woman and her Boy" (13–14). Here, battle is the soldier's vehicle of salvation and happiness. Perhaps the poem is Dickinson's own effort to "shift" the pain of grief. By attributing a higher purpose to death, Dickinson can console herself about the magnitude of casualties. In 1862 alone, the North faced two of its most devastating conflicts: the battle of Antietam, where more American men were lost in one day than any other day of combat in the nation's history, and the battle of Fredericksburg, where the mistakes of General Burnside cost 12,600 Union lives (Simon 103). The blood and souls of the Civil War demanded Dickinson's attention and showcased themselves in her work.

As the war progressed, Dickinson stepped away from the deaths of soldiers and narrowed her focus to death itself. Nevertheless, her poetry continued to reflect the events of the war and the emotions surrounding them. Throughout the war, the wounded were sent home to recuperate or be permanently released from their army contracts. However, these soldiers would not return home the same bright-eyed, eager young men they once were. In "Dying! To be afraid of thee" (# 831), Dickinson surmises what the psyche of a war veteran would say to death. To be afraid of death, Dickinson's speaker suggests, "One must to thine Artillery/ Have left exposed a Friend" (2–3); only one who has seen death can fear it. Men on the battlefield witnessed death in the instant decapitation of cannon fire or a bullet's swift piercing of the heart. At the poem's conclusion, Dickinson's speaker describes "Two Armies, Love and Certainty/ And Love and the Reverse" (11–12). Here, the armies are Heaven and Hell, and the prospect of Hell—or "Love and the Reverse"—is what strikes fear into the hearts of those who have seen death. Dickinson raises a still religiously taboo question: when is killing not a sin? Is one who kills in war destined for Hell? Such questions must have plagued the minds of the hollowed-eyed surviving soldiers of the Civil War.

By 1865, the nation was, not surprisingly, exhausted by war. Similarly, Dickinson's poetry during the final years is short, sparse, and skeletal. Many of the 1865 poems are only four lines long. Alfred Habegger suggests: "War gave [Dickinson] a powerful vehicle with which to parse her own extremity" (404). One poem, "Fate slew Him, but He did not drop" (# 1031), is an example of Dickinson's combination of themes. The poem is a description of Christ, "Impaled … on fiercest stakes—/ He neutralized them all" (3–4), which overcomes the obstacles thrown by Fate, which, in this poem represents the opposite of God, thereby showcasing Dickinson's penchant for religious imagery. However, the poem also includes military language. Dickinson writes: "She [Fate] stung him—sapped His firm Advance" (5), implying that Christ was a soldier, or that soldiers were Christ-like in their sacrifice. Christ theSoldier is then, at the poem's conclusion, "Acknowledged … a Man" (8). The final line presents some trouble, given that Christians believe Christ proclaimed his divinity in the resurrection; however, the concept of Christ the soldier works well with the poem's conclusion. Young boys left for war with the hopes of becoming men. By using the Christ/soldier imagery, Dickinson questions whether or not the thousands who volunteered for military service accomplished such a feat. Here, Dickinson also criticizes how male-dominated society forced the war upon its young men with the draft. Should they have endured a pain that could be likened to Christ's on the cross? In her later, death-centered poetry Dickinson presents herself as an objector to the war. She may have supported the goals of the Union forces, but the pain of battle made her question the necessity, as well as the methods, of war.

Endnotes

1. Please see the Appendix to read "Victory comes late" and other referenced poems in their entirety.

2. In The Years and Hours of Emily Dickinson, Jay Leyda includes documentation of both Austin's use of a substitute and Edward Dickinson's involvement in recruitment.

An excerpt from the Hampshire and Franklin Express, dated July 18, 1862 reads:

Meeting of the Citizens of Amherst. $100 Bounty Offered to Each Volunteer. …On motion of W.A. Dickinson it was voted, That… the town should pay $100 dollars bounty in addition to what the U.S. and State governments pay…It was here announced by Hon. Edward Dickinson that Mr. William Stearns…had offered a bounty of $25 to every Soldier who should enlist from Amherst not exceeding 36…The following persons guaranteed $100 in case town did not appropriate. (63—the omissions are Leyda's)
A record of enlistment for May, 1864, states: “Complete Record of the Names of all the Soldiers and Officers...from Amherst, Mass. During the Rebellion begun in 1861...Names of men who were drafted from Amherst...who furnished substitutes May 1864 Dickinson Wm Austin Paid for substitute 500’” (89; the omissions are Leyda’s).

Karen Dandurand writes: “‘Blazing in Gold and quenching in Purple,’ titled ‘Sunset,’ appeared in the Drum Beat on 29 February; ‘Flowers—Well—if anybody’...titled ‘Flowers’ on 2 March; and ‘These are the days when Birds come back’...titled ‘October,’ on 11 March” (18). None of these poems have a direct reference to war, soldiering, or death; however, both “Flowers—well, if anybody” and “These are the days when Birds come back” are tonally melancholy and desperate. In “Flowers—well, if anybody,” Dickinson describes the flowers as having “Too much pathos in their faces,” a sentiment that could easily be transferred to returning soldiers (9). Nevertheless, the actual publication of the Drum Beat poems is more important than their content when discussing Dickinson’s relationship to the war.

Appendix

To provide the reader with a better understanding of Dickinson’s war poetry, all poems referenced within the essay are printed here in their entirety. All poems, except “Victory comes late,” are taken from Thomas H. Johnson’s The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson. “Victory comes late” appears as it was written in Dickinson’s letter to Samuel Bowles, March 1862.

Victory comes late,
And is held low to freezing lips
Too rapt with frost
To mind it!
How sweet it would have tasted!
Just a drop!

*Was* God so economical?
His table’s spread too high
Except we dine on tiptoe!
Crums fit such little mouths—
Cherries—suit Robins—
The Eagle’s golden breakfast—dazzles them!
God keep his vow to “Sparrows,”
Who of little love—know how to starve!

It don’t sound so terrible—quite—as it did—
I run it over—“Dead”, “Brain”, “Dead”
Put it in Latin—left of my school—
Seems it don’t shriek so—under rule.
Turn it, a little—full in the face
A Trouble looks bitterest—
Shift it—just—
Say “When Tomorrow comes this way—
I shall have waded down one Day.”
Till I get accustomed—but then the Tomb
Like other new Things—shows largest—then—
And smaller, by Habit—
It's shrewder then
Put the Thought in advance—a Year—
How like "a fit"—then—
Murder—wear!

444
It feels a shame to be Alive—
When Men so brave—are dead—
One envies the Distinguished Dust—
Permitted—such a Head—
The Stone—that tells defending Whom
This Spartan put away
What little of Him we—possessed
In Pawn for Liberty
The price is great—Sublimely paid—
Do we deserve—a Thing—
That lives—like Dollars—must be piled
Before we may obtain?
Are we that wait—sufficient worth—
That such Enormous Pearl
As life—dissolved be—for Us—
In Battle's—horrid Bowl?
It may be—a Renown to live—
I think a Man who die—
Those unsustained—Saviors—
Present Divinity—

596
When I was small, a Woman died—
Today—her Only Boy
Went up from the Potomac—
His face all Victory
To look at her—How slowly
The seasons must have turned
Till Bullets clipt an Angle
And He passed quickly round
If pride shall be in Paradise—
Ourself cannot decide—
Of their imperial Conduct—
No person testified—

But, proud in Apparition—
That Woman and her Boy
Pass back and forth, before my Brain
As even in the sky—
I’m confident that Bravoes
Perpetual break abroad
For Braveries, remote as this
In Scarlet Maryland—

827
The Only News I know
Is Bulletins all Day
From Immortality.
The Only Shows I see—
Tomorrow and Today—
Perchance Eternity
The Only One I meet
Is God—The Only Street—
Existence—This traversed

If Other News there be—
Or Admirabler Show—
I’ll tell it You—

831
Dying! To be afraid of thee
One must to thine Artillery
Have left exposed a Friend—
Than thine old Arrow is a Shot
Delivered straighter to the Heart
The leaving Love behind.
Not for itself, the Dust is shy,
But, enemy, Beloved be
Thy Batteries divorce.
Fight sternly in a Dying eye.
Two Armies, Love and Certainty
And Love and the Reverse.

1031
Fate slew Him, but He did not drop—
She felled—He did not fall—
Impaled Him on Her fiercest stakes—
He neutralized them all—

She stung Him—sapped His firm Advance—
But when Her Worst was done
And He—unmoved regarded Her—
Acknowledged Him a Man.

Works Cited
———. “Dying! To be afraid of thee.” Dickinson, Poems 403.
———. “Fate slew Him, but He did not drop—.” Dickinson, Poems 473.
———. “It don’t sound so terrible—quite—as it did—.” Dickinson, Poems 203–4.
———. “It feels a shame to be Alive—.” Dickinson, Poems 213.
———. “When I was small, a Woman died—.” Dickinson, Poems 292–93.

THE lovers of Emily Dickinson’s poems have been so eager for her prose that her sister has gathered these letters, and committed their preparation to me. Emily Dickinson’s verses, often but the reflection of a passing mood, do not always completely represent herself, — rarely, indeed, showing the dainty humor, the frolicsome gayety, which continually bubbled over in her daily life. The first is one of the oldest yet found, dated when Emily Dickinson had but recently passed her fourteenth birthday. I was delighted to receive a paper from
you, and I also was much pleased with the news it contained, especially that you are taking lessons on the *piny,* as you always call it. But remember not to get on ahead of me. Father intends to have a piano very soon. Emily Dickinson. 1890. Besides the Autumn poets sing (131). Emily Dickinson. 1890. A lane of Yellow led the eye (1650). Emily Dickinson. 1890. I like to see it lap the Miles (43). Emily Dickinson. 1890. Emily Dickinson. 1951. One day is there of the series. Emily Dickinson. 1890. Slim paper labels punctuate the specimens like enormous dashes inscribed with the names of the plants — sometimes colloquial, sometimes Linnaean — in Dickinson's elegant handwriting. What emerges is an elegy for time, composed with passionate patience, emanating the same wakefulness to sensuality and mortality that marks Dickinson's poetry. Page from Emily Dickinson's herbarium (Houghton Library, Harvard University). Page from Emily Dickinson's herbarium (Houghton Library, Harvard University). [...] The appearance of the jasmine as the first flower of the herbarium is symbolic of that aspect of Emily Dickinson's life that is most associated with love and crisis. To browse Academia.edu and the wider internet faster and more securely, please take a few seconds to upgrade your browser. Log In. Sign Up. Sorry, preview is currently unavailable. You can download the paper by clicking the button above. Related Papers. Dickinson and Patriarchal Meter: A Theory of Metrical Codes by Annie Finch. By Annie Finch. Cambridge Companion to Emily Dickinson. By Layla Ali. American Literary Periods. By Ana Pop. A History of Feminist Literary Criticism. By Alexander Kasilag. Encyclopedia of Feminist Literary Theory. By souhila BOUKHLIFA. READ PAPER. Download pdf. ×Close.