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Declaration

1. Introduction

1.1 Emily Dickinson in Context

Emily Dickinson was a lucky girl. She was born into an illustrious family: Her grandfather, Samuel Fowler Dickinson, was a founder of Amherst Academy in 1814, and later, a co-founder of Amherst College with Noah Webster, the distinguished writer of the first dictionary of the American language, in 1821.¹ Her parents, Edward Dickinson and Emily Norcross Dickinson, were from families that were influential in their respective towns.² Her father was especially interested in the condition of women in society at his time; not only did he help found the first newspaper in Amherst, *The New-England Inquirer*; he also wrote articles on the education of women.

Emily Dickinson was an excellent student during her school time.³ She was fond of learning and her teachers often praised her early compositions; some of those writings were even anonymously published in student publications.⁴ She was a good bread baker. Not only did her father regard her as the most important family baker; she also won awards in contests for her bread baking.⁵ She could play piano quite well; she had a good sense of humor which was partly revealed by her cartoon sketches inside letters for her friends on the topic of politics or the personalities of people she and her friends commonly knew.⁶ She loved science especially botany, geology, and astronomy; she loved children, animals, gardening, and nature; though she was quiet, when she was ready to talk, she talked nonstop.⁷ In a word, young Dickinson was hopeful and vibrant; she dreamed of being the Belle of Amherst when she was seventeen.⁸

Emily Dickinson was a lucky woman. In general, there are three facts concerning nineteenth-century American women. The first fact is that the common expectation for a

¹Cf. Connie Ann Kirk, *Emily Dickinson: A Biography* (Connecticut: Greenwood, 2004) 15; “Emily Dickinson and Noah Webster,” *Emily Dickinson Lexicon*, 3 April 2015, <<http://edl.byu.edu/webplay.php>>; Paul Crumbley, “Emily Dickinson’s Life,” *Modern American Poetry*, 3 April 2015, <<http://www.english.illinois.edu>>. Path: Search Esquire.

² Kirk 9.

³ Kirk 16.

⁴ Kirk 2.

⁵ Kirk 2.

⁶ Kirk 2.

⁷ Kirk 1, 3.

⁸ “Emily Dickinson – Biography,” *The European Graduate School: Graduate & Postgraduate Studies*, 4 April 2015, <<http://www.egs.edu>>. Path: Search Esquire.

nineteenth-century woman was that she should be pure, content, domestic, not related to any sexual or sensual imagery, and should remain private; thus more stereotypes were made upon women such as familial, timid, weak, passive, emotional, illogical, hysterical, susceptible to madness, dependent, and unable to resist temptation.⁹ Additionally, the most popular women's magazine *Godey's Lady's Book*, which promoted the nineteenth-century ideals on the domestic roles of women, claimed in 1860: The role of a wife and a mother was the perfection of womanhood, and throughout the whole nineteenth century, most American women expected to marry and to have children.¹⁰

Also in general, there were mainly four classes of women in the nineteenth century, namely, Native Americans, African American slaves, Irish immigrants, and white Americans.¹¹ Different classes had different lives. For example, Native American women had to do all the farming, raised the children, cared for household responsibilities, and tackled any other tasks that came their way; since they were enslaved, African American women had to do housework after working all day for their masters.¹² Moreover, the second fact shows that due to the expeditious industrialization and urbanization of the nineteenth century, though most Americans were still connected with their rural, agricultural life, the middle class and working class marriage, their family life as well as women's family roles had already been influenced.¹³ This was partly due to the expeditious industrialization and urbanization of the nineteenth century.

The traditional roles of women shifted gradually from domestic life to factories, especially in the urban Northeast, for the center of all economic activities was no longer centered in the home; this change was initially performed by young, single white women, by Irish or other immigrants, or eventually by black women.¹⁴ Therefore,

⁹ "Women in the Nineteenth Century," *Women in Literature*, 3 April 2015, <<http://www2.ivcc.edu>>. Path: Search Esquire.

¹⁰ Tiffany K. Wayne, *Women's Roles in Nineteenth-Century America* (Connecticut: Greenwood, 2007) 1.

¹¹ "Women in 19th Century America," 3 April 2015, <<http://womeninushistory.tripod.com/>>.

¹² "Women in 19th Century America."

¹³ Wayne 1.

¹⁴ Wayne 2.

except for the upper class of white women, the lower class women had the chance to go out and to work in order to support their families. They might work for higher class families in roles such as cleaning, cooking, taking care of the children, making clothes etc.; or, they might also, for example, become factory workers as the Mill Girls of the textile corporations in Lowell, Massachusetts.¹⁵

The third fact is that though activists fought for women's suffrage since 1840s, women still had no or very few political rights in the nineteenth century; moreover, educational opportunities were limited before the Civil War because there were very few educational institutions for women to attend.¹⁶ Though there were half or more white women who were qualified readers at some level at the beginning of the nineteenth century, their literacy rate was still far behind that of their male counterparts, regardless of their national origin or their location in America.¹⁷ Especially, because of the direct fears and concerns that slaves would use literacy as a weapon to gain freedom, it was not only illegal for the African American women to become literate members of society; it was also against the law to teach enslaved people to read and write.¹⁸

Nevertheless, under such circumstances Dickinson could still follow her heart and choose her own life-style, living unmarried and reclusive; it indicates that experiences in her life were extraordinary. It is mentioned above that Dickinson's father was a supporter of women's education; hence, her educational and familial background meant that she was a member of the upper class. With such an identity, she could not only avoid the fate of lower-class women; she could also gain more rights in her life. One reason may be that for the first time in American history, more and more women decided to remain single either by choice or by circumstance in the nineteenth century; they usually belonged to the middle or upper class and they were white, native-born, and with some formal education.¹⁹ Therefore, when one group of women might be single for working, widowhood, desertion, or divorce, another group of women,

¹⁵ "Women in 19th Century America."

¹⁶ "Women in 19th Century America."

¹⁷ Catherine Hobbs, "Introduction: Cultures and Practices of U.S. Women's Literacy," *Nineteenth-Century Women Learn to Write*, ed. Catherine Hobbs (Virginia: The UP of Virginia, 1995) 2.

¹⁸ Christopher M. Span, "African American Education: From Slave to Free," *Encyclopedia of the Social and Cultural Foundations of Education*, ed. Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr. (California: SAGE, 2009) 32.

¹⁹ Wayne 6.

including Dickinson, might remain single to wait for a new ideal of companionate marriage; since they became more educated, they stopped seeking marriage completely for economic or social status reasons.²⁰

Regarding Dickinson's education, it is generally known that she attended Amherst Academy for around seven years; later on, she went to the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary for one year. Thus, for girls in the early nineteenth century, Dickinson's formal schooling was also exceptional.²¹ Furthermore, when Dickinson stopped attending Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, she could continue studying at home in her family library; more importantly, she had the access to develop her own political vision because one inevitable influence was that the Dickinson men were all attorneys with political ambitions.²² As a center of Amherst society, the Dickinson home was always filled with different political opinions, discussions, and debates from a variety of political activists; even Dickinson herself said in a letter to Susan Gilbert in 1852 during a Whig convention in Baltimore: "Why can't *I* be a Delegate to the great Whig Convention? – dont [sic] I know all about Daniel Webster, and the Tariff, and the Law" (L94)?²³ Therefore, such an extensive educational and family background offered her opportunities to choose a different life than most of the American women at that time could imagine or lead.

Emily Dickinson was a lucky poet. James M. Volo claims that the nineteenth century of America was a century of "isms."²⁴ Because of the industrialization, reform, expansion, and warfare which appeared simultaneously in American society at that time, they crashed together and completely destroyed many old things, leaving only almost unrecognizable consequences.²⁵ The whole country experienced, as Volo states, a period of national maturation which influenced different aspects such as governance, justice, economics, finances, industry, manufacturing, communications, travel,

²⁰ Wayne 6.

²¹ "Emily Dickinson: Her Childhood and Youth (1830-1855)," *Emily Dickinson Museum*, 6 April 2015, <https://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/childhood_youth>.

²² Crumbley, "Emily Dickinson's Life."

²³ All page references preceded by L are to the following edition: Thomas H. Johnson, ed., *The Letters of Emily Dickinson* (Massachusetts: The Belknap of HUP, 1970).

²⁴ James M. Volo, *Family Life in 19th-Century America* (Connecticut: Greenwood, 2007) 3.

²⁵ Volo 3.

agriculture, social structure, family order etc.²⁶ Therefore, not only did Urbanism, Abolitionism, Feminism, Humanitarianism, Reformism, and Commercialism fill the consciousness of the nineteenth-century public;²⁷ Romanticism, Transcendentalism, Realism, and Naturalism also enriched art, literature, and philosophy. In a word, these “isms” offered great possibilities to Americans at that period; meanwhile, they also influenced people spiritually especially for writers and poets.

Moreover, Massachusetts is a state with profound history: The pilgrims built their New World after the *Mayflower* arrived at Plymouth in late 1620. Successfully established by the owners of the Massachusetts Bay Company, later in 1630s the Massachusetts Bay Colony was governed by John Winthrop who presented a lay sermon with the title of “A Modell of Christian Charity.”²⁸ In his sermon, the expression of the “City on a Hill” not only emphasized that the Puritans owned the characteristic of being the exemplary chosen people of God; most importantly, it also created an image of the Massachusetts Bay Colony as an ideal Christian community which was extraordinary and powerful and had the responsibility of setting an example for all nations.²⁹

Massachusetts has the oldest institution of higher learning in America – Harvard University; it also had the Salem witch trials which incited people to kill under the instructions of a group of young girls.³⁰ Regardless, a series of issues made it a center in fighting against British governance, such as The Stamp Act, the Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party, the Intolerable Acts etc.;³¹ all these events led to the American War of Independence, which to some degree proves that Massachusetts is an extraordinarily powerful example to all nations. Later in the 1830s and 40s, Massachusetts became the center again for activists of Unitarianism, Transcendentalism etc.³² Thus, the state

²⁶ Volo 3.

²⁷ Volo 3.

²⁸ Susan Castillo, *American Literature in Context to 1865* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) 36.

²⁹ Castillo 37.

³⁰ “The New England Colonies,” *U.S. History: Pre-Columbian to the New Millennium*, 2 April 2015, <<http://www.ushistory.org/us/3.asp>>.

³¹ “Discontent and Revolution,” *A Brief History of Massachusetts*, 11 April 2015, <<http://www.usgennet.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

³² “Discontent and Revolution.”

history to some extent built a rich historical and social background, especially for writers and poets of Massachusetts; meanwhile, it did bring up some famous and important figures in the history of nineteenth century American literature such as Emily Dickinson, Edgar Allan Poe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Adams, James Russell Lowell, Margaret Fuller, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry David Thoreau.

Finally, Dickinson was lucky because she had extraordinary mentors. Though she was influenced by many kinds of thinking from both East and West, it was Emerson's poems that unlocked the door to her poetry writing.³³ If Emerson was a major poetic model for her, then Thomas Wentworth Higginson was not only a poetic model, but also a mentor, a friend, a Master in her life. Their friendship was established in 1862 after Dickinson encountered the "Letter to a Young Contributor" which was written by Higginson; she was inspired and became a complete Higginsonian because after that, she read all his writings and would be upset for missing one single essay.³⁴ What is more, Higginson's series of nature essays, which were inspired by Thoreau, also strongly and continuously influenced Dickinson.³⁵ Therefore, though Dickinson was not in the club of the transcendentalists, the impact of transcendental thought can be easily traced in her work.

Nurtured by all the luckiness, Dickinson believed just as she claimed, "I dwell in Possibility" (J657/Fr466) and "It's easy to invent a Life –" (J724/Fr747), so that anything can happen in her world only if she is willing to imagine and to create. To a certain degree, she identifies herself with possibilities. Based on the topics of meetings and conferences of *The Emily Dickinson International Society* and essays of *The Emily Dickinson Journal*, except for main genres such as religion, Romanticism, Transcendentalism, and Feminism, topics on her oeuvre cover nature, art, music, theater, psychology, mathematics, astronomy, botany, geology, agriculture, photography, translation etc.

³³ Dickinson started writing poems in 1850, and after her friend Benjamin Franklin Newton sending her a copy of Emerson's 1874 volume of poetry, Dickinson "began her own poetic career by reading Emerson's poems, finding them 'pleasant' and often echoing them." Ed Folsom, "Transcendental Poetics: Emerson, Higginson, and the Rise of Whitman and Dickinson," *The Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism*, eds. Joel Myerson, Sandra Harbert Petrulionis, and Laura Dassow Walls (New York: OUP, 2010) 278.

³⁴ Cf. Folsom 278-82.

³⁵ Cf. Folsom 278-82.

Each of her readers has a unique imagery and understanding of the poet and her oeuvre according to their educational, social, and cultural background. On the one hand, she is that girl who is good at backing, fond of children and gardening, sensitive, humorous, talented, diligent, artistic, creative, imaginative, and passionate; on the other hand, her image is radically presented as a “ferocious mind” or a “loaded gun,” or, very personally interpreted as a crazy girl extraordinaire, a stalker, a mean girl, and a woman who is clingy, unbalanced, promiscuous, sexually unsatisfied, and hip enough to be both vampire and zombie.³⁶ Whether each side might mirror a part of Dickinson or her supposed person in her poetic world, one can conclude that there is a sphinx quality in both the poet and her poetry.

1.2 Travel Culture and Writing in Dickinson’s Time (1850s-1880s)

Before revealing the connection between Dickinson and travel, it seems helpful to position the poet in her contemporary travel history and literature. To begin, the Industrial Revolution not only brought as booming economy; it also brought a changed life style to the nineteenth-century Americans. For example, the relationship between work and leisure is reshaped in the early nineteenth century since the working form of small farms and family workshops was changed into mills and factories.³⁷ On the one hand, there was more and more leisure time which was protected by the industrial discipline;³⁸ on the other hand, due to the increased urbanization and the institutionalization of leisure time, in 1870s and 80s, Americans tended to treat travel as something that they were not only comfortable with, but also accustomed to.³⁹ Travel agencies, traveler’s checks, national parks, picture postcards, and cheap guide books were increasing day by day: It not only offered travelers convenience; it also speared information and created more popular destinations.⁴⁰ Additionally, imagery of paintings and photography on the beautiful landscapes also aroused people’s interest, and then

³⁶ Gillian Osborne, “A More Ordinary Poet: Seeking Emily Dickinson,” *Boston Review: On Poetry* (2013): 72-4, at 73.

³⁷ Will B. Mackintosh, “Leisure,” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Social History*, Volume 1, ed. Lynn Dumenil (New York: OUP, 2012) 619.

³⁸ Mackintosh 620.

³⁹ Thomas A. Chambers, “Tourism and Travel,” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Social History*, Volume 2, ed. Lynn Dumenil (New York: OUP, 2012) 425.

⁴⁰ Chambers 425.

they became the map of many tourists.⁴¹

Most importantly, one of the greatest outcomes of the industrialization is the railroad. Since 1849, thousands of Chinese laborers poured into California for gold mining; until 1870, 63,000 Chinese settled in the America.⁴² In 1862, the Homestead Act was passed by the American government; and then two railroad companies – the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific – got large monetary loans and generous grants of land from it, so that they could build a transcontinental railroad from Omaha, Nebraska to Sacramento, California.⁴³ Therefore, when Chinese laborers could no longer get more profit from digging gold, they started to find other jobs such as building the transcontinental railroad; as a result, the Central Pacific Railroad was built by some 12,000 Chinese laborers.⁴⁴ More railroads indicate more trains and travel possibilities; it offered more convenience to travelers meanwhile caused the booming of tourism.

Another notable phenomenon was the European travel after the Civil War. Unlike the eighteenth-century Grand Tour, traveling to Europe became a fashion without difference of age, gender, and race among nineteenth-century American travelers.⁴⁵ For those travelers, European cities offered more opportunities which were not able to be encountered at home; they could enjoy their leisure time but more importantly, experience a greater liberty, for all the pleasure, relaxation, and diversity could free them from the duty, work, and conformity.⁴⁶ In a word, travel in Dickinson's time was diverse and improved; at the same time, the development of travel brought more opportunities and possibilities for not only contributing to the economy, but also enriching people's life.

Writers and artists were always cultural pioneers in the society. In his *Forgiving the Boundaries: Home as Abroad in American Travel Writing*, Terry Caesar claims that

⁴¹ Chambers 425.

⁴² John M. Murrin, et al., "A Transformed Nation: The West and the New South, 1856-1900," *Liberty, Equality, Power: A History of the American People, Concise Fifth Edition, Volume II: Since 1863* (Massachusetts: Wadsworth, 2011) 490.

⁴³ Murrin 489.

⁴⁴ Murrin 490.

⁴⁵ William Merrill Decker, "American in Europe from Henry James to the Present," *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*, eds. Alfred Bendixen and Judith Hamera (New York: CUP, 2009) 127.

⁴⁶ Justin D. Edwards, *Exotic Journeys: Exploring the Erotics of U.S. Travel Literature* (New Hampshire: UP of New England, 2001) 66.

most of the major nineteenth-century writers wrote books concerning their travel experience because all of them traveled to European countries, except for Thoreau, Whitman, and Dickinson.⁴⁷ Their books are, for example, *Tales of a Traveler* (1824) and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* (1837) by Washington Irving of the early 19th century; *White Jacket; or, The World in a Man-of-War* (1850) and *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* (1851) by Herman Melville; *The Innocents Abroad* (1869) and *A Tramp Abroad* (1880) by Mark Twain; *Venetian Life* (1866), *Italian Journeys* (1867), and *A Traveler from Altruria* (1894) by William Dean Howells; *A Little Tour of France* (1884) and *Italian Hours* (1909) by Henry James among his travel writing collections etc. Emerson and Hawthorne also had experience of living in Europe; nonetheless, Caesar believed that they are “canonical on the basis of texts that are not travel writing, or have little to do with it.”⁴⁸

As William W. Stowe puts it, for nineteenth-century American travelers, Europe was by far the most popular destination; various descriptions on traveling to Europe was in that age a standard feature of many newspapers.⁴⁹ By 1875, many accounts of travels appeared not only on newspapers, but also on magazines.⁵⁰ Compared to early American travelers who still considered themselves as ex-Europeans who were still specially related to European culture, in midcentury, writers such as Margaret Fuller, Horace Greeley, and Mark Twain focused on declaring a uniquely American identity.⁵¹ In brief, for American travelers, the experience of traveling Europe was significant in terms of thinking about questions of gender and race; of ways that connecting to their country, their countrymen, and the wider world as African Americans; of former or current slaves, slaveholders, abolitionists; of dependent or independent women; and of marginalized or actively engaged men.⁵²

⁴⁷ Terry Caesar, *Forgiving the Boundaries: Home as Abroad in American Travel* (Georgia: The University of Georgia, 1995) 21.

⁴⁸ Caesar 21-2.

⁴⁹ William W. Stowe, *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1994) 3.

⁵⁰ Stowe, *Going Abroad* 4.

⁵¹ Stowe, *Going Abroad* xi.

⁵² Stowe, *Going Abroad* xi.

Among Thoreau, Whitman, and Dickinson – as it is mentioned above that none of them travel to European countries – Thoreau was considered as the first Transcendentalist who published travel narratives; “A Walk to Wachusett,” “A Winter Walk,” “A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers” were a few examples of his travel writings.⁵³ Travel experience in Thoreau’s eyes was changeable rather than always remaining positive, for he believed that the advantages of traveling and not traveling existed equally to him.⁵⁴ He preferred traveling on foot: On the one hand, he did not need to sacrifice so much to the horse because he could walk to the finest places where the horse could not reach; on the other hand, he believed that roads had their own functions such as for horses and men of business.⁵⁵ That is why he would rather walk into woods, for he was never hastily on the way to any tavern, grocery, livery-stable, or depot.⁵⁶

What is more, one thing, which might also be a reason of why Dickinson did not travel much, is as Thoreau asserted, the advantage of travel was only revealed when it reminded him the value of home, thus enabled him to enjoy it better.⁵⁷ He argued that traveling in one’s own country or even own neighborhood has advantages because one must be familiar with it, could therefore fully prepare to understand what they saw and make fewer travelers’ mistakes.⁵⁸ More importantly, the effective way of discovering novelties, as Thoreau further argued, was not traveling for hundreds or thousands miles from home before one can be said to begin one’s travels.⁵⁹ If travelers quest their travels at home, at any rate they will have advantages based on a long residence in the country which make their observations profitable and correct.⁶⁰

What Thoreau explained is his way of approaching the real significance toward travel. Under that special historical background when Anglo-American travel engaged

⁵³ Barbara L. Packer, “Travel Literature,” *The Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism*, eds. Joel Myerson, Sandra Harbert Petrulionis, and Laura Dassow Walls (New York: OUP, 2010) 397-98.

⁵⁴ “The Henry D. Thoreau Quotation Page: Home and Travel,” *The Walden Woods Project*, 12 May 2015, <<https://www.walden.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁵⁵ “Home and Travel.”

⁵⁶ “Home and Travel.”

⁵⁷ “Home and Travel.”

⁵⁸ “Home and Travel.”

⁵⁹ “Home and Travel.”

⁶⁰ “Home and Travel.”

many people, there were more English as well as American writers and poets wrote about their travel experience and paid less attention whether their writings weighted every word. Therefore, it made Thoreau question if there was a better approach than the “scratch-my-back-and-I’ll-scratch-yours”⁶¹ way of travel. As he wrote in his journal, travel writings, which can benefit the reader, should be written by someone who has both the knowledge of a native as well as the knowledge of a traveler; at the same time, it should be written by someone who is willing to travel in one’s own country and native village and to make any progress between one’s door and gate.⁶² The core for responsible travel writers is not only to be a real, resourceful traveler; they also need to understand more on their native background rather than merely traveling from place to place. Thoreau proposes a higher standard for travel writers. When travel became more convenient and travel writing were diverse and even more flourishing in Dickinson’s age, there is no lack of legendary masterpieces among various experiences and thoughts as well as the guidance of how to achieve a real travel.

1.3 Fictional Travel Writing

Normally, travel writings are considered as nonfictional creation. If Dickinson’s poetry has any relationship with travel literature, based on her personal life and sources of creation, her works should be categorized as fictional rather than nonfictional travel writings. In America, searching for scenery came into being in the 1820s; it had brought a change to travel writing, for more and more people began to focus on the American scene instead of being enthusiastic for the English sublime and picturesque scenery.⁶³ Travel writers had to work out new forms of portrayal to satisfy the new appetite for scenery; therefore, new forms such as poems, vignettes, and sketches – a type of writing which was as vivid as a pencil sketch due to its ability of creating mental picture of scenery – replaced traditional forms of journals and letters.⁶⁴ Since then, characteristics

⁶¹ Jeffrey S. Cramer, *I to Myself: An Annotated Selection from the Journal of Henry D. Thoreau* (Connecticut: Yale UP, 2007) 86.

⁶² Cramer 86.

⁶³ Dona Brown, “Introduction,” *A Tourist’s New England: Travel Fiction, 1820-1920*, ed. Dona Brown (New Hampshire: UP of New England, 1999) 4.

⁶⁴ Brown 4.

such as emotional, subjective, and descriptive began to label travel writings.⁶⁵ When travel writing gradually lost its objectivity, elements of non-fiction and fiction were mingled to some extent.

As Carl Thompson points out in his *Travel Writing* (2011), though it is generally known that the license of making things up which is owned by novelists cannot be used by travel writers; to draw a distinctive line between non-fictional and fictional travel writings is in fact a lot more problematic than people might initially assume.⁶⁶ As a matter of fact, there is no such a line which is a clear-cut between non-fiction and fiction.⁶⁷ The reason is that whether it is reported honestly or documentarily, all examples of travel writing are constructed by their publishers and writers, meaning they are textual artifacts.⁶⁸ The continuous flow of sensory experience is impossible to be recorded when one is traveling, for one would be easily overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of data that may largely be insignificant.⁶⁹ What a writer could do is to collect the significant recent events and attempt to work out an organization of these events as well as her/his reflections on them, and then to conceive a narrative.⁷⁰

On the one hand, as previously stated, every piece of travel writing has to be man-made; on the other hand, the techniques of non-fictional travel writings, as L. Peat O'Neil claims, can also be reflected in fictional travel writings.⁷¹ For example, it is useful to keep a travel journal as the first step into travel writing; nonetheless, a good travel journal relies on all olfactory, tactile, visual, and auditory senses, and at the same time, the writer needs to give these senses a direct report, for recording only what one sees will handicap the writer.⁷² Most importantly, if the writer is able to use the sixth sense, or say, intuition to capture what she/he experiences, meanwhile keeps it in her/his memory, the writing will be more vivid.⁷³

⁶⁵ Brown 4.

⁶⁶ Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (Oxford: Routledge, 2011) 16.

⁶⁷ Thompson 27.

⁶⁸ Thompson 27.

⁶⁹ Thompson 27.

⁷⁰ Thompson 27.

⁷¹ L. Peat O'Neil, *Travel Writing* (Ohio: Writer's Digest Books, 2005) 3.

⁷² O'Neil 3.

⁷³ O'Neil 3.

Thus, intuition is crucial for both vivid non-fictional travel writings as well as fictional ones. In an imaginative world, writers not only have to intuitively capture people or places that are significant and worth portraying; they also have to present their works as if they are actually heard, seen, smelled, tasted, and touched in the real world. O’Neil believes that travel writing depends on presenting experiences and conveying the mood of places; hence, she shares her experience of teaching writers to marshal their senses and to write as if they are blind in order to inspire their other senses.⁷⁴ It coincides with what Dickinson said in a letter to Mrs. J. G. Holland in 1870 – “To shut our eyes is Travel” (L354).

Finally, Don George, the popular travel editor and author of the bestseller, *Lonely Planet Guide to Travel Writing*, mentions his one-year-residence in Greece with two novels as the additional guidebooks: One is John Fowles’s *The Magus*, and the other one is Nikos Kazantzakis’s *Zorba the Greek*. He claims that, according to his travel experience, these two novels are the best guides of all, for they function as enlightening, immersive introductions to the landscape, people, and culture; most importantly as he claims, “some of the best travel writing is fictional.”⁷⁵ Whether non-fictional or fictional, writers’ intuition and imagination is vital for their creation. To some degree, fictional travel writing may present the reader a continuous flow of sensory experience which may be more vivid and impressive.

1.4 Women and Travel

It is unsurprising that early travel accounts were mostly written by men, for risky, unknown adventures could only be taken by someone who was able to move freely in the public sphere.⁷⁶ Though there were popular Renaissance epics which depicted the warrior and princess who roamed the world in search of adventure; in fact, rather than co-travelers, women were the destination points or objects of desire in male narratives

⁷⁴ O’Neil 3.

⁷⁵ Don George, “Introduction,” *Better Than Fiction: True Travel Tales from Great Fiction Writers*, ed. Don George (Victoria: Lonely Planet, 2012) Kindle file.

⁷⁶ Susan Bassnett, “Travel Writing and Gender,” *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, eds. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: CUP, 2002) 225.

such as *The Lusiads* and *The Odyssey*.⁷⁷ In past centuries, travel writing was gendered because men appeared as heroic risk-taking travelers who journeyed in search of fortune and renown to the new world. This idea supported many great travel narratives.⁷⁸

However, women travelers never stop recording their journeys, though their works seem to be treated in a particular way.⁷⁹ For example, many anthologies and studies praise Victorian women travelers' efforts and achievements; nonetheless, from the titles of these studies, the authors seem to imply that those women travelers are somewhat eccentric, and comic notes can be easily associated as a mock interpretations.⁸⁰ Their originality, unusual life stories, and refusal to obey social norms of their era form the focus of those studies.⁸¹ Therefore, women travelers are differently treated in two ways: First, they are different from other women who are more orthodox and socially conformist; second, they cannot use journey as a means of exploring more on the masculinity as male travelers.⁸² In one word, those studies present one point that generally, woman travelers seem to escape from the constraints of their family or society.⁸³

It is difficult to answer if there is difference between women and men's travel writing in any fundamental way; it is also difficult to answer if there is a way in which travel writing is in fact inherently gendered.⁸⁴ As Gillian Rose argues in her *Feminism and Geography*, contrasting to a patriarchal concept that all parts of the planet, as well as society can be mapped, described, and therefore contained, a feminist concept of geography does not aim to map details of the world; instead, it reinserts a physical dimension into the discourse that is "to engage with the everyday as an end itself, not as a means to a different end."⁸⁵ She further explains her argument by presenting a French feminist theory to introduce the notion of the female body: The female body represents viscosity and fluidity while the male body represents solidity and linearity; therefore, a

⁷⁷ Bassnett 225.

⁷⁸ Bassnett 225.

⁷⁹ Bassnett 226.

⁸⁰ Bassnett 226.

⁸¹ Bassnett 226.

⁸² Bassnett 226.

⁸³ Bassnett 226.

⁸⁴ Bassnett 227.

⁸⁵ Bassnett 230.

set of power relations is created and controlled by a vision of the world which is the consequence of the latter, and the former is “less tangible, more flexible, and infinitely varied.”⁸⁶ Due to the intention of circumscribing, defining, and controlling the world, the traditional mapping is a perception of an inherently male act; whereas, as an alternative mapping, feminists’ patterns focus on trivial, banal everyday events, so that they create an entirely different set of structures which is easily recognized and cannot be controlled by patriarchy.⁸⁷

Moreover, through traveling, women could escape from constraints of domesticity.⁸⁸ Many examples of women travel history show that the significance of travel is to offer these female travelers a means of redefining themselves, to assume a different persona, and to become someone who did not exist at their domestic sphere.⁸⁹ In other words, women extend travel writing beyond boundaries of any genres or purposes; even their fictions and autobiographies can be seen as travel stories because not only do they practice spatiality by mapping the self as well as making sense of experience; they also present a way for examining how they think of their position and mobility in the world.⁹⁰ Neither for describing daily life, nor for providing detailed, serious social documentation, Dickinson’s images of traveling not only reveal her unique identity among those female writers; more importantly, they also present her quest to the ultimate answer, such as immortality which is pursued in her complete writing career.

1.5 Travel as One of Her Possibilities

Dickinson possesses favorable conditions in creating fictional works: Her faith of dwelling in possibilities, her rich imagination, her keen intuition, her famous supposed person who is almost omnipotent, and the pleasure of learning and knowing largely satisfy the requirement of being a qualified fictional travel writer. As a matter of fact, one possibility which is presented in her oeuvre is her relationship with travel. For

⁸⁶ Bassnett 230.

⁸⁷ Bassnett 230.

⁸⁸ Bassnett 234.

⁸⁹ Bassnett 234.

⁹⁰ Susan L. Roberson, “American Women and Travel Writing,” *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*, eds. Alfred Bendixen and Judith Hamera (Cambridge: CUP, 2009) 215.

Dickinson, travel may be the last thing in her secluded life; her only out-of-state travel happened in 1855 when she and her sister paid a visit to their father in Washington D.C.⁹¹ Except for the well-known daguerreotype of Dickinson in a dark dress, which was taken when she was around seventeen years old, the other frequently mentioned image of the poet is the white dress recluse who prefers to stay inside of her bedroom. As a famous 1989 cartoon with the title “Failed Business #38” described: They provided an interesting, special offer of “4 days, 3 nights, in your own bedroom” by the “Emily Dickinson’s Travel Agency.”⁹² Travel for Dickinson is simply to go to school, to visit family, to regain her health, and to please her father;⁹³ otherwise, she would rather stay in the house or her bedroom and avoid seeing anyone.

Connie Ann Kirk points out an interesting fact that in Concord, Massachusetts, there was a time that a kind of T-shirt with words – “Thoreau Went Home on Weekends” – on it was prevailing, meaning an isolated hermit as Thoreau who spent his chosen two years and two months at his cabin is not absolutely secluded;⁹⁴ while Dickinson, who was not a Transcendentalist, lived a life that most people cannot imagine. After all, when Emerson was a guest and stayed at Austin Dickinson’s house for his lecture in Amherst in 1857, even though it was only next door, Dickinson would not journey there to meet him.⁹⁵ What is more, it took eight years for Higginson to finally meet the poet; Mabel Loomis Todd who edited and published her poems after her death, did not have a chance to see her in person.⁹⁶

Based on her personal life, people usually do not regard Dickinson as a traveler; however, several of her poems concerning travel or travel imagery are mentioned or selected by some critics or writers in their travel theme or books, meaning *Dickinson might write travel poems* as a phenomenon had already been noticed. Nevertheless, it appears merely as a phenomenon. The result of searching studies that focus upon the

⁹¹ Kirk xviii.

⁹² Domhnall Mitchell and Maria Stuart, “Introduction: Emily Dickinson Abroad,” *The International Reception of Emily Dickinson*, eds. Domhnall Mitchell and Maria Stuart (London & New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009) 1.

⁹³ Kirk 57.

⁹⁴ Kirk 57.

⁹⁵ Folsom 278.

⁹⁶ Folsom 288.

phenomenon from *JSTOR*, *Project MUSE*, and *OCLC WorldCat* is not optimistic. Though Dickinson's "travel poems" are cited or introduced in some travel books – for instance, Earl Donald Bennett selects "I like to see it lap the Miles –" (J585/Fr383)⁹⁷ and entitles it "The Railway Train" in his book *American Journeys: An Anthology of Travel in the United States* (1975), Elinor Nauen chooses the same one and presents it firstly in her *Ladies, Start Your Engines: Women Writers on Cars and the Road* (1996); except for this poem, "Exultation is in the going" and "There is no Frigate like a Book" are selected in the book *Songs for the Open Road: Poems of Travel and Adventure* (1998); unfortunately, none of them present how they define Dickinson's "travel poems," or offer a specific explanation or analysis on the poet's travel imagery.

How vital and inevitable is travel for people throughout their history and what kind of significance does it have especially for people such as Emily Dickinson? Zweder von Martels describes that human beings' desire of spreading their footprints on the earth is as beasts in a quest for food and shelter.⁹⁸ Nonetheless, the willingness and joy support them in exploring as well as in changing the world, so that this becomes a critical feature which differentiates human beings from other animals.⁹⁹ People never stop progressing their civilization and livelihood through travel. In ancient times, Nomads traveled from place to place in order to support their life. Their hunter-gatherer society is considered as the earliest human society; even today, thirty to forty million nomadic people are still practicing this oldest lifestyle.¹⁰⁰ Traders, since Sumerians invented coinage before 3000 B.C., were able to travel farther because they could not only use goods to exchange for transportation and accommodation; they could also use money to pay for them.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ All page references preceded by J are to the following edition: Thomas H. Johnson, ed. *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1960). All page references preceded by Fr are to the following edition: Ralph William Franklin, ed. *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* (Massachusetts: HUP, 1999).

⁹⁸ Zweder von Martels, "Introduction: The Eye and the Eye's Mind," *Travel Fact and Travel Fiction: Studies on Fiction, Literary Tradition, Scholarly Discovery and Observation in Travel Writing*, ed. Zweder von Martels (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994) xi.

⁹⁹ von Martels xi.

¹⁰⁰ "Nomad," *New World Encyclopedia*, 3 Spetember 2014,

<<http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Nomad>>.

¹⁰¹ N. Jayapalan, *An Introduction to Tourism* (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2001) 8.

The foundation stone for modern travel was laid by the king Shulgi who was one of the rulers of the Neo-Sumerian Empire, for he built various facilities and offered security at different places for travelers.¹⁰² The Persians, perhaps the first real travelers, traveled long distances in search of more natural resources and new trade markets.¹⁰³ The famous Silk Road (Silk Route) contributes to the civilizations of China as well as Persia, Indian subcontinent, Europe and Arabia.¹⁰⁴ The Greeks were also interested in travel: Homer wrote *Odyssey*; amongst other great philosophers, Plato traveled in Italy, Sicily and Egypt.¹⁰⁵ Same as the Greeks who traveled for worshipping Gods and Goddesses, for participating in games, and for witnessing fairs and festivals, the Romans traveled in additional for enjoyment.¹⁰⁶ Not only did they decorate their means of transport; they also searched for medicinal baths and sea-side resorts; “Spas” won a place in the daily life of the Romans.¹⁰⁷

One great travel experience recorded by the Old Testament was how Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and undertook a forty-year wandering in the desert until they reached the Holy Land that God had promised them. Travel for religious purposes played an important role in the Medieval Period. Geoffrey Chaucer wrote *The Canterbury Tales* to describe a group of pilgrims together on their journey to Canterbury; it becomes his magnum opus as well as the greatest contribution to English literature.¹⁰⁸ There were also famous military campaigns: The crusades aimed to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims, but failed and brought disaster to the people surrounding the Mediterranean Sea.¹⁰⁹ Relying on their advanced seafaring skills, the Vikings voyaged to the coastal region of Mediterranean, the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia.¹¹⁰ The Italian merchant Marco Polo travelled through Asia, reached China, and returned to Venice after twenty-four years. His epic journey inspired many following

¹⁰² Jayapalan 9.

¹⁰³ Jayapalan 9.

¹⁰⁴ Jayapalan 9.

¹⁰⁵ Jayapalan 9.

¹⁰⁶ Jayapalan 10.

¹⁰⁷ Jayapalan 10.

¹⁰⁸ Jayapalan 11.

¹⁰⁹ Jayapalan 11.

¹¹⁰ Jayapalan 11.

travelers. Though scholars today still question whether his chronicles and experiences are completely factual or partially fictional, the influence cannot be denied. Later on, Christopher Columbus achieved four crossing-Atlantic Ocean voyages and left his name in the history of adventure.¹¹¹

The Industrial Revolution offered immense possibilities to modern travel. Today, sea transport, road transport, and air transport make the world smaller. Cars, trucks, buses, bicycles, motorcycles, boats, ships, trains, subways, airplanes, helicopters etc. enable people to travel every corner of the world to fulfill their motivation of living, business, education, writing, relaxation, sightseeing, adventure, exploration, finding themselves, or simply “just going.”¹¹² In a word, travel played, is playing, and will continue playing a significant role in human history and civilization; it not only represents the needs of the society; more importantly, it also represents an inner desire for human beings.

Therefore, it seems that no one can escape from travel or its effect. To Americans, “Travel and the construction of American identity are intimately linked.”¹¹³ To Dickinson, if, as it said, “Thoreau Went Home on Weekends,”¹¹⁴ she also traveled with her supposed person. Just as *Macmillan English Dictionary* (2003) provides, travel can also be “to go to another time or place in your imagination”¹¹⁵ Hence, a secluded life cannot hide the possibility of travel which lies in her supposed person because the supposed person, or say, her speakers seem to have had different experiences of voyage, journey, and going abroad. Except for the undated poems, from “On this wondrous sea / Sailing silently” (J4/Fr3) in 1853 when the poet started her poetry-writing career to

¹¹¹ Jayapalan 12.

¹¹² In Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*, one of the most representative travel novels, the protagonists met a “tall, lanky fellow in a gallon” on one of their road trips. This man “stopped his car on the wrong side of the road and came over to [them],” and he said, “‘You boys going to get somewhere, or just going?’” Kerouac continued writing, “We didn’t understand his question, and it was a damned good question.” “Just going” represents an attitude of traveling with or without any purpose or destination, which is perfectly revealed in *On the Road*. Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (London: Penguin Books, 1972) 24.

¹¹³ Judith Hamera and Alfred Bendixen, “Introduction: New Worlds and Old Lands – the Travel Book and the Construction of American Identity,” *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*, eds. Alfred Bendixen and Judith Hamera (Cambridge: CUP, 2009) 1.

¹¹⁴ Kirk 57.

¹¹⁵ *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners of American English* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research, 2003) 1507.

“Go traveling with us!” in around 1881, five years before her death, she and her supposed person never gave up depicting different travel experiences and presenting various travel imagery. Clearly, travel is not among Dickinson’s themes such as death, nature, love, immortality etc.; perhaps it is because travel seems impossible for someone leading a secluded life. Nevertheless, if it is not seen as a theme in Dickinson’s poetry only because the poet did not travel much and lived most of her life secluded, the reader might lose an angle of interpreting her colorful, thought-provoking travel imagery. Some may consider Dickinson’s travel imagery as a sort of phenomenon rather than a theme; for the poet herself, this imagery, which appears through her poetry, might represent more than merely a phenomenon.

1.6 Dickinson’s Travel Methods

It is mentioned above that the poet traveled only for going to school, visiting family, pleasing her father, and regaining her health, which seems the very ordinary and daily routines for normal people. Compared to her contemporary travel writers such as Henry James who vividly portrayed the difference between the New and the Old world as his international theme, or Melville who recorded a dangerous, constantly changing marine adventure, and accomplished the outstanding *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*, Dickinson herself seemed neither into the idea of traveling by person, nor the idea of traveling for great adventure or cultural collision. For many people, they obtain pleasure from going to the outside world; while Dickinson certainly had her own ways to observe and explore the world, and she also gained pleasure from her experiences. Evidence shows that there are two main convictions which provide her strength to explore the unknown. One is books which function as a requisite vehicle to take her to travel and see the world; the other is a belief that she herself is a truth holder.

1.6.1 Books as a Requisite Vehicle

For a recluse, books are vehicles of the imagination which can take her to travel every corner of the world and to experience different cultures and life. One thing is for certain: Throughout her life, Dickinson never stopped loving books. As mentioned above, not only did her grandfather and her father devote themselves to educational institutions; her brother Austin Dickinson was a treasurer of Amherst College from 1873

till 1895, and even her nephew Ned Dickinson was an assistant librarian in the College.¹¹⁶ Therefore, the intellectual life of the college profoundly influenced the Dickinsons,¹¹⁷ which at the same time, offered the poet opportunities to be imperceptibly influenced by what she constantly saw and heard.

Growing up in this family atmosphere, it is natural that Dickinson established an interest of reading books from her early childhood. Her father guided her to read the Bible and some other inspirational works; her brother and her close friend Susan Gilbert, later her sister-in-law, helped her to cultivate her own reading interests.¹¹⁸ Her earliest readings were basically evangelical and children's monthlies that her father ordered for her and her brother.¹¹⁹ Among them, *Parley's Magazine* was an entertainment magazine for children, which was written in monthly sections on poetry, travel, history, biography, moral tales, and puzzles.¹²⁰ When the poet studied in Amherst Academy and Mount Holyoke, her textbooks had a profound impact on her.¹²¹ Through learning *Elementary Geology* by Edward Hitchcock, *Elements of Mental Philosophy* by Thomas Cogswell Upham, *Familiar Lectures on Botany* by Almira Hart Lincoln Phelps, and *Manual of Botany, for North America* by Amos Eaton, the poet changed her view of the world from a frightening fire-and-brimstone reading at home to a straightforward and non-frightening spectacle.¹²² It is interesting that her well-known use of dash originally came from her early school copy of *Murray's Grammar* which defines:

Of the Dash.

The Dash, though often used improperly by hasty and incoherent writers, may be introduced with propriety, where the sentence breaks off abruptly; where a significant pause is required; or where there is an unexpected turn in the sentiment [...].¹²³

Not only did Dickinson use this rule; she also broke it artfully and repeatedly because of her familiarity and reliance on the definition of dash she had learned from her school

¹¹⁶ “Emily Dickinson at Amherst College,” *Amherst College*, 1 July 2015, <<https://www.amherst.edu>>. Path: Search Esquire.

¹¹⁷ “Emily Dickinson at Amherst College.”

¹¹⁸ Kirk 71.

¹¹⁹ Kirk 71.

¹²⁰ Kirk 71.

¹²¹ Kirk 72.

¹²² Kirk 72.

¹²³ Lindley Murray, *An English Grammar Comprehending the Principles and Rules of the Language* (New York: Collins, 1823) 278.

textbooks.¹²⁴

Only a few books bore the poet's name; it suggested her ownership of them when people removed the Dickinson family library from the Homestead because the poet's father had an inclination to prevent his daughter from reading popular books.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, there were also a large number of books from the Homestead which bore Susan Dickinson's signature; it indicates that these books could be generously shared between Susan and her sister Emily.¹²⁶ The poet's brother would even smuggle Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Kavanagh*¹²⁷ and hid it under the piano for the poet to read in order to avoid the notice of their parents.¹²⁸ As Sharone E. Williams describes, Dickinson was such a diligent reader and she carefully studied books she could get her hands on.¹²⁹ When she started her secluded life, even though she no longer participated in social activities, her family such as Susan and her cousins Fanny and Louisa Norcross who played an important role of a bridge between her and the outside world, continued supplying new books, journals, and ideas to her.¹³⁰

Except for books, there were also many newspapers and magazines around Dickinson, such as *Springfield Republican*, *Scribner's*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *Harper's Monthly Magazine*; the Dicksons subscribed to fifteen kinds of newspapers and magazines; that was above the family average in Amherst.¹³¹ The poet could read to acquire information on current events not only nationally but also locally; she could read works such as essays, short stories, or poetry by some of the best American writers publishing in her day from those reading materials.¹³² Moreover, by reading newspapers and magazines, historical events, foreign places, geological phenomena such as mountain formation or volcanic activity etc. enriched her knowledge as well as

¹²⁴ Kirk 73.

¹²⁵ Kirk 71.

¹²⁶ Kirk 71.

¹²⁷ The *Kavanagh* (1849) by Longfellow "is a romantic novel about small-town life and literary ambition, making it certainly worth closer study for the way it may have affected Dickinson's sensibilities as she entered early adulthood." Kirk 73.

¹²⁸ Kirk 73.

¹²⁹ Sharone E. Williams, "Europe," *All Things Dickinson: An Encyclopedia of Emily Dickinson's World*, ed. Wendy Martin (California: ABC-CLIO, 2014) 318.

¹³⁰ Williams 318.

¹³¹ Domhnall Mitchell, "Amherst," *Emily Dickinson in Context*, ed. Eliza Richards (New York: CUP, 2013) 14.

¹³² Kirk 74.

her vocabulary.¹³³

Additionally, the poet also read various works of different authors such as the writings of John Keats, Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, John Ruskin, Sir Thomas Browne, William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë, Hawthorne, Thoreau, and Emerson.¹³⁴ Basically, Dickinson could eat and drink words; a book for her was a “Bequest of Wings” (J1587/Fr1593). Therefore, books mainly influenced her work in several ways: They offered her subject, techniques, and allusion.¹³⁵ Specifically, books’ crucial position in Dickinson’s life is revealed in “A precious – mouldering pleasure – ’tis –” (J371/Fr569), “Unto my Books – so good to turn –” (J604/Fr512), and “There is no Frigate like a Book” (J1263/Fr1286).

In “A precious – mouldering pleasure,” Dickinson described a meeting with “an Antique Book.” Susan Kornfeld points out that the poet personified the “Antique Book” as some ancient Greeks in draped tunics and cloaks or medieval gentlemen in doublets and hose.¹³⁶ Enik Bollobás claims that Dickinson “authors a new female/masculine sense of creativity” as she uses synecdoche to refer to books in masculine terms.¹³⁷ John Evangelist Walsh further claims that Emerson appears in this poem as a “veiled image,” for the poet compared him to an old book.¹³⁸ Whether Emerson is whom the poet alludes to, the esteem and love is fully expressed through vivid description. Regardless of the positive word choice such as “pleasure,” “privilege,” “venerable,” and

¹³³ Mitchell, “Amherst” 14.

¹³⁴ Kirk 74-5.

¹³⁵ Kirk 75.

¹³⁶ Susan Kornfeld, “The Prowling Bee,” 09 March 2015, <<http://bloggingdickinson.blogspot.de>>. Path: Search Esquire.

¹³⁷ Enik Bollobás, “Troping the Unthought: Catachresis in Emily Dickinson’s Poetry,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 21.1 (2012): 25-56, at 44, *Project MUSE*, 18 August 2018.

¹³⁸ Walsh explains that during Emerson’s visit at Dickinson’s brother Austin’s house which is the “next door” to Dickinson, if she “accompanied Austin and Sue to hear Emerson’s lecture” in that memorable evening of December 16, 1857, there is a possibility that Dickinson “would have joined the company sitting round the fireplace at the Evergreens afterward,” and she might talked to Emerson, and the gathering would leave her deep impression about Emerson. As Ed Folsom points out, for Dickinson, Emerson “was clearly a major poetic model,” and it is “fascinating to think about how Dickinson might have met Emerson in 1857.” If Dickinson showed her poems to Emerson, then the poetic history would be “different.” Unfortunately, the fact is Dickinson “did not even journey next door” to meet him. Cf. John Evangelist Walsh, *Emily Dickinson in Love: The Case for Otis Lord* (New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 2012) 65-6; Folsom 278.

“enchantment,” the poet’s portrayal of how the book communicates with its reader is revealed by the following imagery.

It is “precious” to meet an “Antique Book,” yet the feeling is somehow “mouldering”: Not only is the decaying and passé appearance presented; the dusty and crumbling state of the book is also revealed. This sensory depiction continues appearing when the poet describes how a reader holds and warms the book in both hands (“His venerable Hand to take – / And warming in our own –”). Moreover, the poet lists many questions to ask of the book as if she were a little girl who eagerly wanted to know what happened in an interesting story. Nonetheless, as a tantalizing wizard, after magically presenting himself and sharing his “quaint opinions,” he left and only the amazement and admiration remained.

Not only did the poet value books; she also highlights the companionship and the healing power of them. As David Preest points out, when Dickinson was finally told by her doctor that she could read books again without restriction, she told her friend Joseph Lyman that, “Going home I flew to the shelves and devoured the luscious passages. I thought I should tear the leaves out as I turned them.”¹³⁹ This feeling is revealed by the first and second stanzas of the poem “Unto my Books –.” Reading a book is not only an award for the “tired Days”; it is also a necessity for everyday life. Furthermore, as the metaphor, “Banquettings” for “Retarded Guests” shows, the pleasure is coming not only from the fulfilled needs, but also from an emotion of gratitude and appreciation.

Whether the outside world is filled with numerous kinds of strangeness, difficulties, or misery, there are always holidays inside of her world with books. The books’ healing power and companionship makes them her “Kinsmen of the Shelf”; they promise the poet pleasure and deliver her satisfaction,¹⁴⁰ just as “Banquettings” for “Retarded Guests.” What is more, in order to present the power and fierceness, the poet likens books to frigates, pages to coursers in “There is no Frigate”:

There is no Frigate like a Book
To take us lands away

¹³⁹ David Preest, “Emily Dickinson: Notes on All Her Poems,” *Emily Dickinson Poems*, 1-529, at 202, 06 March 2016, <<http://www.emilydickinsonpoems.org/>>.

¹⁴⁰ Preest 202.

Nor any Coursers like a Page
Of prancing Poetry –
This Traverse may the poorest take
Without oppress of Toll –
How frugal is the Chariot
That bears the Human soul.

Using simile is always a remarkable way for Dickinson to describe either concrete or abstract subjects; she summarizes the essential part of the quality of books toward these similes. A book contains various information and knowledge which can take readers “Lands away” and bring them experiences as real travel does; moreover, there may be different things happened on a single page which could bring the reader emotional roller-coaster.

Based on all the amazing things that a reader can obtain from a book, Dickinson argues from a practical, realistic angle that reading is the cheapest way to travel; whether rich or poor, everyone can afford it. It brings freedom as well as equality; most importantly, it “bears the Human soul.” Being influenced unobtrusively and imperceptibly, her family constructed a base with rich knowledge and information for her, so that she was able to be immersed in that ocean of different subjects and genres. The poet herself bound with books; not only did she love and treasure them; she was also proud of owning them and confidently believed that they were the best vehicle in the world for her to travel anywhere she wanted.

1.6.2 Heart + Mind + Brain = Truth

The olfactory, tactile, visual, and auditory senses are required to compose good fictional travel writing; meanwhile, the sixth sense, or say, intuition also helps create vivid depictions. Without exaggeration, Dickinson is a poet of intuition. Since she was influenced by Transcendentalism and Emerson and Higginson were major poetic models for her, it is predictable that some of her viewpoints in her writings relate more or less to transcendental thoughts. She once asserted, “Travel why to Nature, when she dwells with us” (L321) in a letter to Mrs. Holland; it responds to the essence of Transcendentalism that a higher spiritual world is represented by an entire physical

universe¹⁴¹ as well as what Emerson wrote in his essay, “Nature always wears the colors of the spirit.”¹⁴² Human beings as part of nature have the access to “ultimate truth” as if they had it naturally, accessibly, and “readily at hand.”¹⁴³ It is a potential that exists within every person. Therefore, having an actual travel experience makes no difference to Dickinson, for she believes that nature dwells in her spirit, and she can travel in her spirit to explore nature and to pursue truth; or, she might simply believe that her spirit is the truth.

Hence, on practicing the belief in the self and the potential of the individual,¹⁴⁴ Dickinson has three important components of her notion: One is heart, one is mind, and another is brain. According to *Emily Dickinson Lexicon*, the meanings of these three words are partly overlapped, and each one of them is capable of replacing another.¹⁴⁵ Their interrelationship seems more important than their single meanings when they are put together to be compared or contrasted. Concerning the heart, mind, and brain poems, namely, the poems which explore the nature of the mind and consciousness,¹⁴⁶ Charles R. Anderson claims that they contain a special interest that is beyond their intrinsic worth.¹⁴⁷ He further explains what Dickinson intended to express in these poems was to identify and define the self rather than to present a philosophical point of view.¹⁴⁸ The poet is interested in searching individual ability and possibility, and at the same time declaring her own belief.

In order to present her comprehension to the three important components, the poet uses extreme description, definition, contrast, and comparison to convey the concepts of her individual system of belief. To begin, the ability of heart is shown in “The Life we have is very great” (J1162/Fr1178). Major adjectives (“great” vs. “smallest”), verbs (“Surpasses” vs. “Reduces”), and nouns (“Infinity” vs. “Human Heart’s extent”)

¹⁴¹ Jerry Phillips, *Romanticism and Transcendentalism: 1800-1860* (New York: Infobase, 2006) 33.

¹⁴² Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays, Second Series*, 20 April 2015, <<http://www.gutenberg.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

¹⁴³ Phillips 34.

¹⁴⁴ Phillips 34.

¹⁴⁵ See the definitions of “heart,” “mind,” and “brain.” Cf. “Emily Dickinson Lexicon.”

¹⁴⁶ Charles R. Anderson, “The Conscious Self in Emily Dickinson’s Poetry,” *American Literature* 31.3 (1959): 290-308, at 291, *JSTOR*, 17 May 2018.

¹⁴⁷ Anderson 291.

¹⁴⁸ Anderson 291.

Dickinson uses in this poem are all sharing one intention – to create contrasts. The main contrast in this poem is between life and human heart. According to human beings' experience, life is "very great"; it is great mostly because of its "infinity" which is impossible to be surpassed by anyone. The human heart is clearly small in comparison with such vastness of life; yet, in front of the "smallest Human Heart's extent," the vastness is insignificant and reduced to nothing.

What the poet reveals here is the possibility of human heart. The ironical way of contrasting "greatness" with "smallest" is to indicate what she believes: Even if life is infinite, it still has "space" and "dominion" which indicates limit or boundary; whereas, the complexity and possibility of a human heart, or say, the individual potential, cannot be measured by time or space, or any limit and boundary. From the poet's words, she holds the idea that the infinity of life will be "beheld," and "all dominion" will be "shown"; nevertheless, she does not put any time or space limit on the "smallest human heart," which to some degree implies that the "vastness" of a heart "surpasses" the infinity of the life.

Then, the power of brain is presented in "The Brain – is wider than the Sky –" (J632/Fr598). The poet has various descriptions of the brain; except for depicting that its size is "wider than the Sky," depth is "deeper than the sea," and weight is "just the weight of God"; its shape is described as "The Brain has Corridors – surpassing / Material Place –" (J670/Fr407).¹⁴⁹ As a physical organ, the brain is where meaning is made; hence, this poem presents not only the power of human imagination; it also presents critiques on "orthodox psychology's privileging of mind's immateriality" as Michael Kearns puts it.¹⁵⁰ Whether how immaterial mind is, without brain as its manufacturer, it cannot be produced.

The poet uses different metaphors to describe the characteristics of brain, such as the sky and people can be contained by its wideness; the sight of the blue sea can be absorbed by it just as buckets of water are absorbed by sponges; and because of its

¹⁴⁹ Jed Deppman, "Trying to Think with Emily Dickinson," *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 14.1 (2005): 84-103, at 85, *Project MUSE*, 17 May 2018.

¹⁵⁰ Michael Kearns, "Emily Dickinson: Anatomist of the Mind," *Emily Dickinson and Philosophy*, eds. Jed Deppman, et al (New York: CUP, 2013) 21.

widths and depth, it “can take in all the gifts of God.”¹⁵¹ The only difference between them is comparable to the relationship between “syllable” and “sound.” Though the last stanza concerning “The Brain is just the weight of God –” is controversial because the simile of “syllable and sound” can be interpreted in different ways,¹⁵² the most important thing which is proved in this poem is that, for Dickinson, brain is as crucial as heart in discovering the potential of the individual; they are not only vital from a biological viewpoint; they also contain power to access the world of truth.

The relationship between heart and mind is not metaphysically interpreted but physically described by a vivid simile, “The Mind lives on the Heart / Like any Parasite – / If that is full of Meat / The Mind is fat” (J1355/Fr1384). Contrasting to the commonly abstract, philosophical description of heart and mind, these four verses, presented in a humorous tone, show how and how much the mind relies on the heart through a daily example. On the one hand, as a most vital element, food, which provides by heart, sustains the parasitic life of the mind; on the other hand, mind has the possibility of becoming fat under the condition that heart has already become “full of Meat.” Giving or receiving, their relationship seems normal and logical, and a strong, dispensable demand is revealed.

“The Heart is the Capital of the Mind –” (J1354/Fr1381) also depicts the included and be-included relationship between heart and mind; at the same time, it reveals how they interact and finally display the potential of the individual. By functionally and spatially presenting the unity among heart, mind, and the self¹⁵³ and re-defining the significance of heart, mind, and individual, this poem focuses not only on how enormous they are, but also on how independent they can be. If human beings wander in their life for finding the truth, they should seek in their own spiritual world because when they realize how colorful and unimaginable their spiritual world is, they will understand that they themselves are the “ecstatic nation.”

¹⁵¹ Preest 212.

¹⁵² For further reading on Dickinson’s similes of “syllable and sound,” cf. Sharon Leiter, *Critical Companion to Emily Dickinson: A Literary Reference to her Life and Work* (New York: Infobase, 2007) 183-84.

¹⁵³ Kearns 27.

A good example of the capitalized “Yourself” is her attitude toward word choice. It is wildly acknowledged that a good poet should do good rhyme, and this standard was considered particularly true in Dickinson’s age. Though Higginson suggested that she should work on her word-order, the poet refused and claimed that her choice and order of words were right and they were inevitable symbols of her thought, which were completely satisfying to her sense of expression.¹⁵⁴ The individuality is so important to her that she is not afraid and even indifferent to all conventional rules,¹⁵⁵ for she could persist as she claims in this poem: “Yourself” is “Numerous enough.” As the poet suggests, focusing and seeking is the way to find the potential within every person. “‘It is Yourself,’ like salvation always within reach.”¹⁵⁶

“I never saw a Moor –” (J1052/Fr800) again positively states the power of the individual heart and mind. David Preest offers two basic readings for this poem. First, it proves that the poet at least accepts the existence of heaven because her speaker seems arriving there at the end of life’s journey;¹⁵⁷ as Greg Johnson points out, an explicit faith in an external, localized heaven is baldly stated.¹⁵⁸ Second, the poet may suggest that artists do not need to have experienced something to make use of it in their art.¹⁵⁹ In other words, even without experience, the mind, or say, one’s spiritual world is omnipotent enough that it can offer sources of truth for artists.

As a matter of fact, the focus of this poem might not be whether the poet believes that heaven exists. She uses images, such as “moor,” “sea,” “God,” and “heaven” which are sublime in people’s life, as examples in order to arouse the reader’s curiosity of the question of *how* she achieved such a realm. If readers understand the power of heart, brain, mind, and the individual, they may be able to answer this question. The ironical tone and the contrasts which are created by the two lines beginning with “yet” reveal the poet’s confidence, and the source of her confidence is clearly not her real-life

¹⁵⁴ Grace B Sherrer, “A Study of Unusual Verb Constructions in the Poems of Emily Dickinson,” *American Literature* 7.1 (1935): 37-46, at 37, *JSTOR*, 25 July 2015.

¹⁵⁵ Sherrer 37.

¹⁵⁶ Kearns 27.

¹⁵⁷ Preest 334.

¹⁵⁸ Greg Johnson, “Emily Dickinson: Perception and the Poet’s Quest,” *Renaissance: Essays on Values in Literature* 35.1 (1982): 2-15, at 12, 18 May 2018, <<https://www.pdcnet.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

¹⁵⁹ Preest 334.

experience. If she relies on her spiritual truth, it is not hard to understand why her speaker feels “As if the Checks were given –,” for the belief in oneself and the potential of the individual can to some extent make a person omnipotent.

Because of such faith on her individual power, it makes Dickinson spiritually confident and independent on the road of seeking truth; with such confidence and independence, shutting her eyes is travel. In brief, the saying that Dickinson is a “mind traveler” or Dickinson travels in her imagination can be proved not only by her adoration and trust of books; it can also illustrate her faith for the power of heart and mind. It is true that real travel experience is an important condition for good travel works; nonetheless, it is not the only, conclusive condition for it. On the level of seeking the truth of travel, Dickinson’s fictional methods do not affect her pursuit of it.

1.7 Literature Review on Dickinson’s Images of Traveling

Searching for the secondary-literature information of Dickinson’s images of traveling in *The Emily Dickinson Journal* from volume one, 1992, to volume twenty-six, 2017 in *Project MUSE*, one interesting phenomenon is revealed: It seems that discussions on the relationship between Dickinson and travel reached a summit in 1996. Five essays that year attempt to build the relationship between Dickinson and travel from different aspects. One of them mentioning the influence on Dickinson by nineteenth-century scientific and technological development is Marianne Erickson’s “The Scientific Education and Technological Imagination of Emily Dickinson.” Erickson claims that the poet grew up with the railroad, and “I like to see it lap the Miles –” reveals her sincere enthusiasm for the railroad; what is more, the poet’s rejoicing was revealed in letters to her brother when the railroads came to Amherst and New London.¹⁶⁰ Through her anthropomorphosis of the train, the poet seemed to join the exhilarating celebration of the technological miracle and the typical *invader* (emphasis mine) of the nineteenth-century garden.¹⁶¹

The other four essays focus on the topic of “Emily Dickinson abroad.” Among them, Chanthana Chaichit’s “Emily Dickinson Abroad: The Paradox of Seclusion” can

¹⁶⁰ Marianne Erickson, “The Scientific Education and Technological Imagination of Emily Dickinson,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 5.2 (1996): 45-52, at 48, *Project MUSE*, 13 June 2018.

¹⁶¹ Erickson 48-9.

be seen as a well-structured general introduction to this topic. To begin, Chaichit claims that Dickinson did travel abroad; nevertheless she traveled in her imagination and her poems of travel and adventure reveal this.¹⁶² Either alone or with someone, Dickinson traveled through levels of spiritual experiences; for example, poems as “I went to Heaven –” (J374/Fr577), “I started Early – Took my Dog –” (J520/Fr656) etc. reveal that the poet attempts to psychically communicate with the world outside her private shelter.¹⁶³ “I never saw a Moor –” not only presents the poet’s inexperienced life; it also presents her ability to see “How the Heather looks” through her imagination.¹⁶⁴ Her artistic technique, accompanied by her imaginative passion, are crucial in creating an inner world as a way to journey abroad, which enable her to move freely to wherever she wants.¹⁶⁵ She can move from consciousness to unconsciousness, from reality to fantasy, and from Amherst to the whole universe including death, heaven, eternity, and immortality: All because she believes that she dwells in possibility.¹⁶⁶ In brief, to calm her psychological turmoil as well as to present her poetic genius is two subconscious motives that the poet took when she traveled in her imaginative world.¹⁶⁷

Second, Dickinson has already been abroad because her poems and letters are internationally recognized, meaning people from different countries read, learn, discuss, and translate her works.¹⁶⁸ Chaichit refers this as a sort of posthumous traveling because the works of Dickinson were published after her death.¹⁶⁹ She further uses, for example, Willis J. Buckingham’s editing, *Emily Dickinson: An Annotated Bibliography: Writings, Scholarship, and Criticism, 1850-1968*, to display the poet’s recognition in foreign countries.¹⁷⁰ Dickinson’s works are appreciated in such places as Germany, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Netherlands, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Croatia, Austria,

¹⁶² Chanthana Chaichit, “Emily Dickinson Abroad: The Paradox of Seclusion,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 5.2 (1996): 162-68, at 162, *Project MUSE*, 13 June 2018.

¹⁶³ Chaichit 162.

¹⁶⁴ Chaichit 162.

¹⁶⁵ Chaichit 163.

¹⁶⁶ Chaichit 163.

¹⁶⁷ Chaichit 163.

¹⁶⁸ Chaichit 163.

¹⁶⁹ Chaichit 163.

¹⁷⁰ Chaichit 163.

Switzerland, Russia, Japan, India, China etc.¹⁷¹ Critics and Dickinson scholars from all over the world contribute to Dickinson's scholarship whether by critical essays, or by books such as *The International Reception of Emily Dickinson* (2009) which reveals the general development of Dickinson's scholarship in different regions and countries. As a Dickinson scholar from Thailand, Chaichit offers some examples of how Thai scholars and university students devote themselves to research Dickinson's works and to take the research to a new level based on the knowledge of American culture and the cultural background of Thailand.¹⁷²

Third, whether imaginatively or internationally, the paradoxical twist between her secluded life and her poems that describe travel and going-abroad experience attracts people's attention.¹⁷³ Before Chaichit, the paradox of the poet's life has already been noticed by many critics. Some are for example, *Introduction to Emily Dickinson* (1947) by Henry W. Wells; *The Capsule of the Mind: Chapters in the Life of Emily Dickinson* (1961) by Theodora Ward; *Emily Dickinson: Personae and Performance* (1988) by Elizabeth Phillips; and *The House without the Door* (1989) by Maryanne M. Garbowsky.¹⁷⁴ To Chaichit, there are two outcomes of the paradoxical twist. On the one hand, though Dickinson "felt compelled to become a recluse" and her works cannot be considered as a complete reflection of her life, her supposed person is brave and strong, willing to try new things, accepting challenges; hence, it is easy for her/him to travel away from home to exotic places.¹⁷⁵ On the other hand, though being reclusive was rare in Dickinson's time, in creating images of traveling, she "reveals herself as a normal human being reacting against a humdrum life."¹⁷⁶ Because of writing poems concerning travel, the poet gained a double life; either of these lives is a source of her creation. Finally, Chaichit agrees with what Theodora Ward concludes: Paradoxes enhance the charm of Dickinson's character, which will continually baffle the

¹⁷¹ Chaichit 163.

¹⁷² Chaichit 164.

¹⁷³ Chaichit 164.

¹⁷⁴ Chaichit 167.

¹⁷⁵ Chaichit 164.

¹⁷⁶ Chaichit 166.

observer.¹⁷⁷

Cynthia L. Hallen also finds that though Dickinson practiced Emerson's advice by exploring rich poetry in her garden and house, an abiding interest in searching lands abroad is revealed in various places she mentioned in Europe, South America, and Asia, as well as allusions she made to famous explorers such as William Kidd, Hernando de Soto, and Christopher Columbus.¹⁷⁸ In her "Brave Columbus, Brave Columba: Emily Dickinson's Search for Land," Hallen points out that the prototype of some of the poet's most striking images of exploration originates in Columbus's four voyages.¹⁷⁹ The poet's allusions to Columbus produce four conclusions: First, she accomplished Emerson's standards that a great American poet should create epic poetry by discovering nature in the pursuit for the riches of eternity; second, a *Columbiad*, which means "[a]n epic of America,"¹⁸⁰ is constituted in her works, presenting an American epic poem which describes the discovery of Amherst and America in a continuing poetic search for immortality; third, images of the poet's epic depiction of voyage come from Washington Irving's 1828 *Life and Voyage of Columbus*; and finally, her epic work can be defined as a circuit, a circumference, a circumlocution, and circumnavigation concerning her life, love, and language when she sought promised lands.¹⁸¹

As Hallen puts it, Dickinson was the only American poet who was successful in finding new worlds by exploring it at home, in the garden, in books, and in words.¹⁸² Though her verses are economic and syllabic, and appear as lacking the characteristics of an epic work, some of her poems consistently describe the epic search for a homeland, a new land, and a promised land.¹⁸³ She further presents the relationship between Dickinson and Washington Irving's *The Life and Voyage of Christopher Columbus* by analyzing poems such as "Sic transit Gloria mundi" (J3/Fr2) and "Once more, my now

¹⁷⁷ Chaichit 167.

¹⁷⁸ Cynthia L. Hallen, "Brave Columbus, Brave Columba: Emily Dickinson's Search for Land," *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 5.2 (1996): 169-75, at 169, *Project MUSE*, 18 June 2018.

¹⁷⁹ Hallen 169.

¹⁸⁰ Hallen 171.

¹⁸¹ Hallen 169.

¹⁸² Hallen 170.

¹⁸³ Hallen 170.

bewildered Dove" (J48/Fr65).¹⁸⁴ In these poems, the poet not only alluded to many international explorers who traveled in search of knowledge and territory such as Peter Parley, Daniel Boone, Noah Webster etc.; she also claims that the poet's description of her speaker's search for land can match the great American epic or great works such as Homer's *Odyssey* and Shakespeare's *Tempest*.¹⁸⁵ Additionally, Hallen lists many parallels between Dickinson's Columbiad and Irving's *Life and Voyage of Christopher Columbus* at the end of her essay.¹⁸⁶ Through the search for land which is revealed in her poems and letters, Dickinson shows that all human beings are explorers and the most important destination is love at home.¹⁸⁷

As most scholars, Jane Donahue Eberwein also claims that there is nothing landlocked on Dickinson's imagination in her essay, "'Siren Alps': The Lure of Europe for American Writers."¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, she mentions Dickinson's geographic curiosity which sparked at school and was continually reinforced in her lifelong reading.¹⁸⁹ Moreover, given that some of her favorite authors, such as Longfellow, Irving, William Cullen Bryant, and Geoffrey Crayon never forgot to affirm the stronger claims of their homeland when they entertained the reader with their idyllic accounts of foreign travel, the poet obviously senses the same pressures of which her traveling compatriots attempt to balance the appreciation between Europe's cultures and Yankee loyalty.¹⁹⁰ Therefore, rather than portraying the architecture of European sites which transformed landscapes with an imprint of human creativity, Dickinson focuses more on exotic names of distant continents such as Asia and South America, and her geographic glossary covers all the world.¹⁹¹ As Eberwein observes, Dickinson in fact has the advantage of keeping herself away from those aspects of European cultures that most offended American sensibilities by staying at home, living as a recluse.¹⁹² She particularly analyzes the poem "Our lives

¹⁸⁴ Hallen 171.

¹⁸⁵ Hallen 172.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Hallen 173-74.

¹⁸⁷ Hallen 175.

¹⁸⁸ Jane Donahue Eberwein, "'Siren Alps': The Lure of Europe for American Writers," *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 5.2 (1996): 176-82, at 176, *Project MUSE*, 20 June 2018.

¹⁸⁹ Eberwein, "'Siren Alps'" 176.

¹⁹⁰ Eberwein, "'Siren Alps'" 176.

¹⁹¹ Eberwein, "'Siren Alps'" 177.

¹⁹² Eberwein, "'Siren Alps'" 178.

are Swiss –” (J80/Fr129), arguing that it is a brilliant metaphor for contrasting Europe and America as well as presenting contrasts within Europe.¹⁹³

Gudrun M. Grabher wrote “Emily Dickinson and the Austrian Mind” to call the poet a mind traveler.¹⁹⁴ In order to show how powerful Dickinson’s mind is, Grabher adapted some of Dickinson’s poems to create interactions between Dickinson and the representatives of the Austrian history of the mind, such as the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, the poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the painter Gustav Klimt, the composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud.¹⁹⁵ She points out that circumference is very important to Dickinson, for it enables the poet to sail around her subjects of inquiry.¹⁹⁶ Through circumference, those subjects are illuminated from different angles and points of view and approached by definitions and terminologies with an unbalancing, opposite, and seemingly safe ground.¹⁹⁷ Thus, the poet can penetrate to a somewhere of meaning and make it condensed, distilled, and evaporated.¹⁹⁸ By bidding and bending language, even silence can be forced to speak.¹⁹⁹

Book chapters which focus on analyzing Dickinson’s images of traveling are as follows: In Helen Barolini’s *Their Other Side: Six American Women and the Lure of Italy*, she began the prologue by presenting her close relationship with Italy in order to claim that one significance of the Italian experience is to provide women a freedom of creative expression and a sort of lifestyle they had not enjoyed at home.²⁰⁰ Barolini chose six thinking women’s stories to reveal how Italy, as an enchantment, lures American women from different aspects such as art, natural beauties, pageantry, the presence of history, and the humanities; the six women are Margaret Fuller, Emily Dickinson, and Constance Fenimore Woolson of the nineteenth century and the

¹⁹³ Eberwein, “‘Siren Alps’” 181.

¹⁹⁴ Gudrun M. Grabher, “Emily Dickinson and the Austrian Mind,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 5.2 (1996): 10-7, at 10, *Project MUSE*, 20 June 2018.

¹⁹⁵ Grabher 11.

¹⁹⁶ Grabher 10.

¹⁹⁷ Grabher 10.

¹⁹⁸ Grabher 10.

¹⁹⁹ Grabher 10.

²⁰⁰ Helen Barolini, *Six American Women and the Lure of Italy* (New York: Fordham UP, 2006) xv.

twentieth-century authors Mabel Dodge Luhan, Marguerite Caetani, and Iris Origo.²⁰¹

In chapter two, “The Italian Side of Emily Dickinson,” Barolini claims that Dickinson’s “Our lives are Swiss –” is the exact visualization when she resided at Lake Como in northern Italy, impressed by the stunning and contemplative view of the lake and the Alps.²⁰² She points out an interesting phenomenon that many English and American women, who were tired of the Anglo tradition, treated the idea of Italy as a freeing of their human qualities as well as an enriching of life.²⁰³ Even the reclusive Dickinson would love to create imagery about Italy which symbolizes some longed-for, beckoning freedom of spirit based on her imagination.²⁰⁴ Moreover, Barolini explains how other authors or works influenced Dickinson and formed her Italian side, particularly the influence from the novel *Corinne, or Italy*²⁰⁵ by the French woman Madame de Staél, which also directly influenced many English and American women of talent.²⁰⁶ For Dickinson, Italy resides in one’s soul; it represents a quality of independent artistic spirit which is as strong as can be gleaned from any actual trip.²⁰⁷

In chapter “Becoming a Poet in ‘turbaned seas’” by Cristanne Miller in her book *Reading in Time: Emily Dickinson in the Nineteenth Century*, Dickinson’s curiosity and interest in Oriental places, countries, and cultures are fully explored.²⁰⁸ In her later work, the poet not only uses images of Asia to express complex desires, critique the world she knew, and describe things she loved; she also characterized herself as a traveler.²⁰⁹ Miller not only lists seventy-one of Dickinson’s poems on the Orient from 1858 to 1881,²¹⁰ she also presents the poet’s 1860 poems which mention images of traveling, escaping, or foreign place and people in the appendix.²¹¹ Images of Oriental

²⁰¹ Barolini xvi.

²⁰² Barolini 56.

²⁰³ Barolini 57.

²⁰⁴ Barolini 57-8.

²⁰⁵ The novel *Corinne, or Italy* narrates “the story of a love affair between Oswald, Lord Nelvil, and a beautiful poetess,” as well as “an homage to the landscape, literature and art of Italy.” Cf. *Buffalo & Erie County Public Library*, 22 July 2015, <<http://www.buffalolib.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

²⁰⁶ Barolini 62.

²⁰⁷ Barolini 81.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Cristanne Miller, *Reading in Time: Emily Dickinson in the Nineteenth Century* (Massachusetts: U of Massachusetts, 2012) 118-46.

²⁰⁹ Miller, *Reading in Time* 118.

²¹⁰ Miller, *Reading in Time* 119.

²¹¹ Miller, *Reading in Time* 197-99.

places and people, as well as Dickinson's insight on their culture, are systematically examined in this chapter. On the one hand, Miller traces back to the ways of how Dickinson reached the reading material and learned about the Oriental countries and their cultures such as China, Japan, India, and Turkey.²¹² On the other hand, she provides specific analysis to some of the representative poems, such as "Some Rainbow – coming from the Fair!" (J64/Fr162), "The Malay – took the Pearl –" (J452/Fr451), "The lonesome for they know not What –" (J262/Fr326), and "If you were coming in the Fall" (J511/Fr536), to demonstrate the Orientalism in Dickinson's poems.

In chapter one "The Train, the Father, His Daughter, and Her Poem: 'I like to see it lap the Miles'" of his book, *Emily Dickinson: Monarch of Perception*, Domhnall Mitchell displays sufficient historical material to reveal how the Dickinsons were involved in the nineteenth century's railway network.²¹³ By presenting Edward Dickinson's contribution to the Amherst railroad project and his daughter's curiosity and enthusiasm for her father's deed, Mitchell positioned the poet in the flux of the nineteenth-century technological revolution.²¹⁴ The rest of this chapter focuses on analyzing the poem "I like to see it lap the Miles," revealing such things as the poet's motivation, interest in animals etc. through her letters and her personal life and presenting how she vivid images in this poem.²¹⁵

Finally, Judith Farr elaborates on the connection between Dickinson's poetic world and the paintings of the nineteenth-century American landscape painters in chapter two "Solitary Mornings on the Sea" of her book *The Passion of Emily Dickinson*. Farr claims that Dickinson is often a nature painter;²¹⁶ for her, painting is the systematic metaphor for writing.²¹⁷ Many of her letters reveal this character. For example, in an 1852 letter to Susan Gilbert, she asked, "Do I paint it natural" (L85); in another letter to Susan she wrote, "I would paint a portrait which would bring the tears"

²¹² Miller, *Reading in Time* 123.

²¹³ Domhnall Mitchell, *Emily Dickinson: Monarch of Perception* (Massachusetts: The U of Massachusetts, 2000) 15.

²¹⁴ Cf. Mitchell, *Monarch* 15-7.

²¹⁵ Cf. Mitchell, *Monarch* 18-43.

²¹⁶ Judith Farr, "Disclosing Pictures: Emily Dickinson's Quotations from the Paintings of Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, and Holman Hunt," *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 2.2 (1993): 66-77, at 66, *Project MUSE*, 22 June 2018.

²¹⁷ Farr, "Disclosing Pictures" 76.

(L176). When she explained her originality to Higginson, she wrote that, “[I] never consciously touch a paint, mixed by another person –” (L271). In the chapter, apart from the paintings of Albert Pinkham Ryder (1847-1917) and Elihu Vedder (1836-1923) whose works were probably unknown to Dickinson but still share the same evocations of the suffering mind or soul with Dickinson’s poetry,²¹⁸ Farr also focuses on the influence of Thomas Cole’s *The Voyage of Life* to Dickinson’s poetic creation.

She argues that the images Cole creates in his *Voyage* can be found in some of Dickinson’s poems; hence it is undeniable that Cole’s paintings become an important source of inspiration for Dickinson.²¹⁹ For example, in “On this wondrous sea” Farr observes that Dickinson attempts to work with key images such as the seas of life and eternity, the shore and storm, and the west which are also portrayed in Cole’s *Voyage*.²²⁰ Moreover, in “Adrift! A little boat adrift!” (J30/Fr6), there are images of the brown dusk, the raining down of night, and the red dawn;²²¹ in “Angels, in the early morning” (J94/Fr73), there are images of angels who play the roles of the guide for human beings as well as the protector for nature;²²² and in “Will there really be a ‘Morning’?” (J101/Fr148), there are images of water lilies, mountains, exotic countries, and imagination of the speaker as a Bunyan-esque voyager from this world to the next.²²³

All of them, as Farr claims, are the images that Dickinson recreated in her imagination after seeing Cole’s *Voyage*.²²⁴ On the level of traveling, Cole’s *Voyage* depicts a Christian’s life journey from the beginning until the end. Though Farr focuses more on the aesthetic aspect of how Dickinson was influenced by Cole’s landscape paintings, she indeed presents the connection between Cole’s *Voyage* and Dickinson’s poems concerning voyage, such as “On this wondrous sea,” “Adrift! A little boat adrift!” and “Whether my bark went down at sea –” (J52/Fr33). Essentially then, from all mentioned above, it is an undeniable fact that Dickinson was a mind traveler who traveled and left many works concerning travel and images of traveling. She has great

²¹⁸ Judith Farr, *The Passion of Emily Dickinson* (Massachusetts: HUP, 1992) 88.

²¹⁹ Farr, *The Passion* 78.

²²⁰ Farr, *The Passion* 80.

²²¹ Farr, *The Passion* 80.

²²² Farr, *The Passion* 80.

²²³ Farr, *The Passion* 81.

²²⁴ Farr, *The Passion* 78-84.

interest and curiosity in foreign lands and their culture; her oeuvre traveled, is still traveling, and will continue to travel internationally; and she presents to her reader her various sources for creating those images of traveling, not only from books, but also from science and technology, as well as paintings.

1.8 Research Methodology and Theory

1.8.1 Presenting Rather than Concluding

Dwelling in possibility helps Dickinson to envision and to create; however, it brings a maze to her reader: Except for problems of poetic diction²²⁵ such as syntax or grammar which may frustrate the reader who expects the movement of a poem,²²⁶ the condensed structure also creates gaps for understanding the poetic flow and even meanings. One of the major obstacles the reader must encounter in reading or analyzing Dickinson's poems is ambiguity. It is a sphinx-like quality which can easily arouse the reader's curiosity and association. It seems to lure the reader in certain directions; at the same time, it seems to lead nowhere. For example, the word "Master" in her master letters could be her family friend Samuel Bowles, the minister Charles Wadsworth, her Amherst College classmate George Gould, her sister-in-law Susan Gilbert, or simply a lover, or even her God.²²⁷ Such a situation is the same as her use of words such as God, He, etc. in her poetry. Alicia Ostriker points out that contradicting herself is never a problem to Dickinson, for words such as God, Jesus, heaven etc. contain an abundant

²²⁵ Poetic diction refers to "a manner of speaking designed specifically for writing in the genre of poetry." Lewis Turco gave one example of using difference syntax in expressing one same thing between "ordinary middleclass speech" and "in Wordsworth's ode." The former might say "A thought of grief came to me alone"; while the latter reverses the syntax as "To me alone there came a thought of grief." And the latter, which has an "elevated" tone because of "syntactical inversion", is the so-called "nineteenth-century period style." Turco claims that "there are always two sorts of poetic diction" in every period. One is "period style" and the other is "idiosyncratic style" which is "invented by individual poets." Writers or poets who have the "idiosyncratic style" are called "stylists." Cf. Lewis Turco, *The Book of Literary Terms: The Genres of Fiction, Drama, Nonfiction, Literary Criticism, and Scholarship* (New Hampshire: UP of New England, 1999) 12-3. Dickinson is such a stylist because it is known to all that her poetry does not belong to the nineteenth-century mainstream, and her style was not recognized as the normal style that the most poets practiced in the nineteenth century.

²²⁶ William C. Spengemann, *Three American Poets: Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, and Herman Melville* (Indiana: U of Notre Dame, 2010) 77.

²²⁷ Cf. "Emily Dickinson's Love Life," *Emily Dickinson Museum*, 9 April 2015, <https://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/love_life>; Lucie Brock-Broido, *The Master Letters: Poems* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995) vii.

variety of meanings.²²⁸ Whether they are highly ambiguous or mutually incompatible, their functions and meanings do not surpass the intrinsic purpose of the poem.²²⁹

What is more, as both Carl Rollyson and Lisa Paddock claim in the poem, “The things we thought that we should do” (J1293/Fr1297), there are different understandings or interpretations of heaven and lands for example.²³⁰ Heaven on the one hand could be seen as the Christian one; on the other hand, it could also represent a heaven of people’s hopes or a fine place people strive for by leading disciplined lives.²³¹ Lands could be considered as those that Columbus discovered, or say, the physical world in which people can lead adventurous lives; or it could be a dwelling place for imagination where Dickinson was able to continue her creative work.²³² Needless to say, there are many poems which have a riddling quality, such as “I like to see it lap the miles” because it does not mention the horse or the railroad by name; or poems that are unfinished, such as “Why should we hurry – why indeed” (J1646/Fr1683); or poems that are open-ended, such as

Nought – that We – No Poet’s Kinsman –
Suffocate – with easy woe –
What, and if, Ourselves a Bridegroom –
Put Her down – in Italy? (J312/Fr600).

Another major obstacle is: Should there be a conclusion, a result, or a solution for all these ambiguities she creates in her works? The answer may be “yes,” but the process of finding that resolution will be tough. Take Dickinson’s belief as an example: Does she believe in God? A simple “yes” or “no” cannot answer this question, for she herself probably is not certain; she keeps questioning herself on her belief through her whole life, though she claims that she is a pagan.²³³ If she believes in God, then which God does she refer to: The Christian God, the God of nature, or the God from Transcendentalism, from Buddhism, or from her own spiritual world? Therefore, as

²²⁸ Alicia Ostriker, “Re-playing The Bible: My Emily Dickinson,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 2.2 (1993): 160-71, at 165, *Project MUSE*, 25 June 2018.

²²⁹ Ostriker 165.

²³⁰ Carl Rollyson and Lisa Paddock, *Emily Dickinson: Self-Discipline in the Service of Art* (Indiana: ASJA, 2009) Kindle file.

²³¹ Rollyson and Paddock, “Self-Discipline.”

²³² Rollyson and Paddock, “Self-Discipline.”

²³³ “The Spirituality of Emily Dickinson,” 5 May 2015, <<http://www.sumangali.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

Paula Bennett puts it,

The world which her poetry creates is a world in which nothing can be known for certain [...]. The result is a free, constantly changing form of poetry in which conclusions – whether formal or thematic – cannot be drawn and in which *variant readings are part of the very substance of the text*.²³⁴

Nevertheless, Wendy Barker points out that though Bennett claims in her introduction that conclusions cannot be drawn in discussion of Dickinson's poems, she continues to draw many arbitrary and firm conclusions in her following chapters.²³⁵

It proves again that the ambiguities Dickinson creates in her poetic world, in which nothing can be known for certain, bring not only a marvelous reading experience, but also bewilderment and distraction, simultaneously. Hence, in the chapter "Emily Dickinson: The Violence of the Imagination," her poetry is described as a battlefield of clashing and conflicting impulses and commitments; in this battlefield, different contradictions exist, so that figure clashes against figure, selfhood against selfhood, and claim against claim.²³⁶ Moreover, her characteristic doubling, or say, the working at cross-purposes is revealed by the contradictions of say and unsay, claim and disclaim, assert and deny, defend and attack, desire and decline, offer and retract, gain and lose, as well as define and circumvent definition.²³⁷ Simply, Dickinson's poems are indeed problematic on almost every level.²³⁸

Therefore, finding a way, which focuses more on presenting or revealing rather than concluding or resolving, might be an easier approach to be closer to what Dickinson's speaker might express in the poems. After all, as Cristanne Miller claims, it is Dickinson who believes that for certain kinds of experience, there are no literal descriptions or adequate names.²³⁹ In the poem "There's a certain Slant of light"

²³⁴ Paula Bennett, *Emily Dickinson: Woman Poet* (Iowa: U of Iowa, 1990) 19.

²³⁵ Wendy Barker, "On Dickinson: The Best from American Literature, and: Lyric Contingencies: Emily Dickinson and Wallace Stevens, and: Emily Dickinson: Woman Poet (review)," *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 1.1 (1992): 100-05, at 104, *Project MUSE*, 13 July 2018.

²³⁶ Sacvan Bercovitch, ed., "Emily Dickinson: The Violence of the Imagination," *The Cambridge History of American Literature, Volume Four: Nineteenth-Century Poetry, 1800-1910* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004) 428.

²³⁷ Bercovitch 429.

²³⁸ Donna Bauerly, "Emily Dickinson's Rhetoric of Temporality," *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 1.2 (1992): 1-7, at 2, *Project MUSE*, 15 July 2018.

²³⁹ Cristanne Miller, "Approaches to Reading Dickinson," *Women's Studies* Vol. 16 (1989): 223-28, at 223.

(J258/Fr320), the poet portrayed a “certain Slant of light” which leaves “no scar, / But internal difference, / Where the Meanings, are –.” The cryptically metaphorical meaning of these verses suggests that by using a space of difference or uncertainty inside the closed circle of things that the reader assumes to understand, the poet shows the outer edge of the subject she wants to depict, since her experience cannot be specified and concretized.²⁴⁰

Hence, the adequacy of meanings needs to be reconsidered because it seems that the best way the poet used to present or describe her experience and perception to the reader is to show how it upsets previous understanding.²⁴¹ In other words, compared to the previous understanding, whether it is common, conservative, or connatural, the depiction of the poet is often in a disturbing and renewing process.²⁴² Thus, the reader ought to comprehend difference or uncertainty through their individual experience, or through a way which might be similar to the poet’s in understanding; finally, they may be able to name it.²⁴³

Such a situation requires more in reading Dickinson’s poems. Edward Hirsch defines that poetry reading is a creative act, a perpetual beginning, an adventure in renewal, and a rebirth of wonder; for the reader, reading poetry is a kind of pilgrimage as one sets out and goes forth.²⁴⁴ Hence, poetry reading seems a process of leaving the familiar, expected zone to feel and observe the world poets create. Furthermore, Hirsch lists three false assumptions to tell readers what not to expect when they encounter their first reading of a poem. First, most of them think that a poem can be understood, regardless of anything they might encounter after the first reading; second, poems are a sort of code and the task of reading a poem is to crack this code; finally, they tend to overly interpret a poem according to their intention.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁰ Miller, “Approaches” 223.

²⁴¹ Miller, “Approaches” 223.

²⁴² Miller, “Approaches” 223.

²⁴³ Miller, “Approaches” 223.

²⁴⁴ Edward Hirsch, *How to Read a Poem: And Fall in Love with Poetry* (Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1999) 2.

²⁴⁵ Edward Hirsch, “How to Read a Poem,” *Poets.Org*, 5 September 2014, <<http://www.poets.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

According to Hirsch's explanation, those who become poets have a strong desire for poetry just as the way hungry people seek food; poetry to them is bread and wine, spiritual sustenance, a method of transfiguration, and a way of transformative thinking.²⁴⁶ He quotes Dickinson's definition of poetry from her 1870 remark to Higginson:

If I read a book [and] it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry. These are the only way I know. Is there any other way. (L342a)

Hirsch further explains that surprisingly, Dickinson's cognition of poetry is not from some intrinsic qualities of poetry itself, such as the style, form, rhyme, rhetorical device etc.; she understands and defines true poetry by an extremity which is based on her actual physical intensity.²⁴⁷ The poet values her physical experience and trusts her intuition rather than the abstract logic. Her physical feelings may be caused by collisions of different emotions which contain explosive energy,²⁴⁸ such as excitement, astonishment, ecstasy, desire, sorrow, desperation, indifference, or depression; those feelings enable her to create kaleidoscopic images which keep changing with each reading.²⁴⁹ At the same time, such a process helps her distinguish what the poetry really is, as Hirsh puts it, "she knows it by what it does to her, and she trusts her own response."²⁵⁰

Thus, when physical feelings surpass logic, intellect, or any rational control, passion and intimacy are easily revealed not only in her poetry but also in her letters. It may also be the reason that Brenda Wineapple, the author of *White Heat*, points out that hospitality is so much when reading Dickinson's poems and letters; or as Lillian Faderman reminds the reader that Susan Gilbert is not the only special love in Dickinson's life because many extant love letters reveal that Dickinson never hid her

²⁴⁶ Hirsh, *Fall in Love with Poetry* 7.

²⁴⁷ Hirsh, *Fall in Love with Poetry* 7.

²⁴⁸ Sarah Wider, "Corresponding Worlds: The Art of Emily Dickinson's Letters." *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 1.1 (1992): 19-38, at 19, *Project MUSE*, 15 July 2018.

²⁴⁹ Martha Ackmann and Kathleen Welton, "Q&A: *White Heat*," *Emily Dickinson International Society Bulletin* 12.2 (2009):12, at 12, 7 September 2014, <<http://www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

²⁵⁰ Hirsh, *Fall in Love with Poetry* 7.

love to such as Emily Ford and Kate Anthon.²⁵¹ In a word, because of various undeniable difficulties in understanding Dickinson's poems as well as her particular perception of poetry, a better way to move closer to the beauty of her poems is not to seek a solution or conclusion for the poetic moments, but to present or reveal interesting images in her verses. It is meanwhile a better way to feel the fluid, dynamic power as well as her strong emotion in her creation without any interruption and discontinuity. Readers therefore will be welcomed in by a successful poem, and then, they will realize ideas which may not have been foremost in the writer's mind when they were composing.²⁵²

1.8.2 From Her Fly to Imagism

Breaking Bad, a highly-praised series²⁵³ which has five seasons including sixty-two episodes, narrates a chemistry teacher Walter H. White (Bryan Cranston), who is diagnosed with lung cancer, but meanwhile, manufactures and sells methamphetamine with his former student Jesse Pinkman (Aaron Paul) in order to acquire financial support for his pregnant wife and his handicapped son.²⁵⁴ The tenth episode of the third season presents an interesting visual interpretation for a fly. With a word "Fly" as its title, it describes a simple scene in which Walter was obsessive about killing a fly which was trapped in his methamphetamine laboratory.²⁵⁵

According to the rating on *IMDb*, this episode appears as the last one on the list, contrasting to the other sixty-one episodes,²⁵⁶ meaning it has the lowest evaluation in the whole television series. It to some degree indicates that this episode is more controversial than the others. Audiences have more disagreements to it perhaps because it is not as thrilling or intense as most of the episodes which narrate either the crime of

²⁵¹ Lillian Faderman, "Rowing in Eden: Reading Emily Dickinson (review)," *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 3.1 (1994): 105-107, at 106, *Project MUSE*, 16 July 2018.

²⁵² Hirsh, "How to Read a Poem."

²⁵³ From 2008 to 2015, *Breaking Bad* has "118 wins and 192 nominations," and these awards include 2014 Golden Globe Award, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014 Primetime Emmy Award, etc. For further information, cf. "Breaking Bad, Awards," *IMDb*, 12 July 2015, <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0903747/awards>>.

²⁵⁴ "The Chemistry of Breaking Bad," *Chemistry Views*, 12 July 2015, <<http://www.chemistryviews.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

²⁵⁵ "Fly," *Breaking Bad: Season Three*, screenplay by Sam Catlin and Moira Walley-Beckett, dir. Rian Johnson, Sony Pictures Entertainment, 2010.

²⁵⁶ "'Breaking Bad,' Episodes Rated by IMDb User Rating," *IMDb*, 12 July 2015, <<http://www.imdb.com>>. Path: Search Esquire.

producing and selling meth, or the process of lying, hiding, shielding, and escaping of the teacher-and-student partners for methamphetamine manufacture. Instead, this episode presents Walter, as a clumsy, ridiculous clown who used different ways to kill a fly, but was tricked by it even with the help of his student Jesse.

However, this episode still causes many discussions. According to the production logistics and budgets of the television industry, it is indeed a bottle show, which means it is filmed almost entirely on existing sets, with a minimum of guest stars in order to maintain the budget as small as possible; the saved money then will be used for another episode coming down the way.²⁵⁷ Nevertheless, it is, as Kathryn Kernohan claims, one of *Breaking Bad*'s five greatest episodes not only because it is a masterpiece with its wide, sweeping shots and multiple POV camerawork; it is also because of its vivid depiction of a self-contained character study in psychology.²⁵⁸ Moreover, it is called a stunning new direction²⁵⁹ as well as a simple and cheap, but brilliant high point of a series.²⁶⁰ Hence, in one word, it is different.²⁶¹

It is different not only because of its dialogue, directing and cinematography, or the input from the characters;²⁶² it is also because of the image of a fly. It presents a close-up shot of its head, eyes, wings, tentacles, and rapid, slight movements, accompanying with no buzz but a lullaby at the beginning of this episode. It is odd enough so that an important role of the fly is immediately established by fitting the plot dynamics, by being strongly intrusive to be a reasonable contamination, and by revealing one saying which captures a running motif in the life of Walter, who is, “[a] fly in the ointment.”²⁶³ Therefore, it is natural for some audiences and reviewers to notice the role of the fly as well as its symbolic meaning and significance in this episode, for every important image could be and should be interpreted in a way that relates to the

²⁵⁷ Alan Sepinwall, “‘Breaking Bad’ – ‘Fly’: The Best Bottle Show Ever?” *HITFIX*, 20 July 2015, <<http://www.hitfix.com>>. Path: Search Esquire.

²⁵⁸ Kathryn Kernohan, “Breaking Bad’s Five Greatest Episodes,” *JUNKEE*, 20 July 2015, <<http://junkee.com/breaking-bads-five-greatest-episodes/20669>>.

²⁵⁹ Donna Bowman, “*Breaking Bad*: ‘Fly’,” A.V. CLUB, 20 July 2015, <<http://www.avclub.com/tvclub/breaking-bad-fly-41430>>.

²⁶⁰ “‘Breaking Bad’ – ‘Fly’: The Best Bottle Show Ever?”

²⁶¹ Seth Amitin, “Breaking Bad: ‘Fly’ Review,” *IGN*, 20 July 2015, <<http://www.ign.com/articles/2010/05/24/breaking-bad-fly-review>>.

²⁶² Amitin, “Breaking Bad: ‘Fly’ Review.”

²⁶³ “Fly,” 20 July 2015, <<http://www.thetvcritic.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

motif, and meanwhile serves to it.

Hence, the fly symbolizes, for example, guilt, contamination, irrational obsession, or the loss of control,²⁶⁴ just as Walter puts it,

This fly is a major problem for us: It will ruin our batch, and we need to destroy it and every trace of it so we can cook. Failing that, we're dead. There's no more room for error, not with these people.²⁶⁵

This fly is not only a fly, for in Walter's mind, at least, it is a major problem that is ruining his methamphetamine; thus, killing it seems very important for him. Nonetheless, hunting the fly may also be his excuse or pretense, for he realizes that he has already done too many wrong things on the road of manufacturing methamphetamine; that is the reason he says, "There's no more room for error." Hunting the fly in this episode gives him a chance to self-reflect and confess.

Nevertheless, except for all the symbolic meanings and significance which are predictable to be noticed, figured out, and interpreted as any different, unconventional, and controversial work, it is easy to neglect one possibility that if this fly represents only an insect from nowhere. Indeed, the image of the fly at the very beginning of the episode can symbolize anything that the audience wants to be. However, on a sensory, emotional level, the close-up shot of its head, eyes, wings, tentacles, and rapid, slight movements certainly does not convey a pleasant, comfortable feeling; it is visually unpleasant and annoyed and it is a common first impression of a fly. Such an image not only creates an unforgettable atmosphere which wraps the whole episode; it also causes controversy to this episode. That is the significance of a successful image according to perspectives of Imagism.

Ezra Pound claims in his “‘A Retrospect’ and ‘A Few Don’ts’ (1918)” that according to the principles of Imagism, the best way of using symbols is when “their symbolic function does not obtrude,”²⁶⁶ or say, focusing on the object itself rather than its connotations.²⁶⁷ He believes that it is a freer and more appropriate way of

²⁶⁴ “Fly (symbol),” *Wikia*, 20 July 2015, <[http://breakingbad.wikia.com/wiki/Fly_\(symbol\)](http://breakingbad.wikia.com/wiki/Fly_(symbol))>.

²⁶⁵ “Most Popular Titles with Quotes Matching ‘the Fly’,” *IMDb*, 20 July 2015, <<http://www.imdb.com>>. Path: Search Esquire.

²⁶⁶ Ezra Pound, “‘A Retrospect’ and ‘A Few Don’ts’ (1918),” *Poetry Foundation*, 12 July 2015, <<http://www.poetryfoundation.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

²⁶⁷ Turco 31.

maintaining the poetic quality to readers who may not understand the symbol, or say, “a hawk is a hawk” for them.²⁶⁸ Imagists provide a way in which not only the poetic quality can be appreciated by different readers due to different background and understanding, but also a new way to reconsider the significance of an image.

Similarly, there are various ways of interpreting Dickinson’s images based on several different educational and cultural backgrounds of the reader; therefore, it is hard not to put quotation marks or capitalization on all of her lyrics due to the reader’s personal willingness and understanding. For example, in the famous “I heard a fly buzz when I died” (J465/Fr591), the image of a fly causes many discussions. Some critics argue that the fly represents Beelzebub, the lord of the flies who is sometimes known as Satan or any devil; while others claim that the fly indicates decay, carrion, and a corpse physically and realistically; moreover, it may suggest that there is “no spiritual significance” for death; eternity and immortality cannot be achieved in the afterlife.²⁶⁹ Various interpretations prove at least that a successful image is powerful, profound, impressive, and thought-provoking.

When people discuss and interpret various symbolic meanings of Dickinson’s fly, one hypothesis is worth considering: The fly may only be a fly. Given the fact that Dickinson’s speaker was in a very special situation of witnessing her/his own death and preparing to follow the light from the windows; nonetheless, a fly interposed. Rather than connecting it to decay, carrion, a corpse, or the lord of the flies, the first impression of it should be unpleasant and annoyed because people hardly think that flies are adorable and their buzz is melodic. To the reader, a fly that interposes a sad, serious moment is too strange to be ignored; then, there are chances that the reader might encounter their different complex which is evoked by the strange but successfully attractive image of a fly before they enter into the process of figuring out the symbolic meanings of the fly. This situation is described by Imagism that an image can reveal an emotional and intellectual complex in an instant of time.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Pound, “‘A Retrospect’ and ‘A Few Don’ts’ (1918).”

²⁶⁹ “Dying,” *Emily Dickinson*, 10 July 2015, <<http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu>>. Path: Search Esquire.

²⁷⁰ Pound, “‘A Retrospect’ and ‘A Few Don’ts’ (1918).”

Psychologically, a complex is a combination of clusters of related thoughts, feelings, impulses, and memories; many of them have been suppressed, meaning they are pushed out of consciousness.²⁷¹ Once a successful image evokes it, senses of sudden liberation, freedom from time and space limits, as well as sudden growth are aroused by the presentation of the complex.²⁷² Dickinson's poems never lack of images. Not only was she called an innovative pre-modernist poet among the founders of American poetry²⁷³ and her compressed, irregular poems correspond to principles of Imagism; her poetry is also filled with "visual shock"²⁷⁴ which is created by her unique choice of images.

Dickinson practiced rules of Imagism in many ways: For example, using exact words, choosing subjects freely, creating new rhythms, and presenting images and good concentration can also characterize her poetry.²⁷⁵ One might question the ambiguity which seems contradictory to the hard and clear principle²⁷⁶ in her poetry. For her, words not only equate with symbols; they also express the thought by their selection and arrangement.²⁷⁷ Higginson recalled that in his attempt to lead Dickinson in the rules and traditions of writing poems; though he tried not to be perfunctory, it was still hard for Dickinson to accept.²⁷⁸ She tried very hard to correct the spelling of a word and also showed utter carelessness of greater irregularities.²⁷⁹

She even replied to Higginson with her usual naïve adroitness:

DEAR FRIEND, – Are these more orderly? I thank you for the truth.

I had no monarch in my life, and cannot rule myself; and when I try to

²⁷¹ Mary Ann Mattoon, "Obstacles & Helps to Self-Understanding," *Voidspace*, 22 July 2015, <<http://www.voidspace.org.uk>>. Path: Search Esquire.

²⁷² Pound, "A Retrospect" and 'A Few Don'ts' (1918)."

²⁷³ For example, David Porter describes Dickinson's spiritual doubt in his book *Dickinson: The Modern Idiom* (1981) as "pre-emptive of modernist decentredness"; Richard E. Brantley claims that "Dickinson's pre-Modern mode [...] overlaps her late-Romantic imagination at the very point [...]" in his book *Emily Dickinson's Rich Conversation: Poetry, Philosophy, Science* (2013) etc.

²⁷⁴ "Billy Collins on Emily Dickinson," *YouTube*, uploaded by Carlos Barrera, 24 March 2018, <<https://www.youtube.com>>. Path: Search Esquire.

²⁷⁵ "On Lowell, Pound, and Imagism," *Modern American Poetry*, 5 July 2015, <<http://www.english.illinois.edu>>. Path: Search Esquire.

²⁷⁶ "On Lowell, Pound, and Imagism."

²⁷⁷ Sherr 37.

²⁷⁸ Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Carlyle's Laugh and Other Surprises* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909) 262.

²⁷⁹ Higginson 262.

organize, my little force explodes and leaves me bare and charred.

[...]

You say I confess the little mistake, and omit the large. Because I can see orthography; but the ignorance out of sight is my preceptor's charge.²⁸⁰

Dickinson did not accept the suggestions of Higginson though. Instead, she used her usual naïve adroitness to express that she was compelled by her little force, so that she could not organize her poems according to the traditions; in fact, as Grace B. Sherrer explains, she reaffirmed that the word-choice and the word-order of her poems reflected her complete satisfaction to her sense of expression.²⁸¹ They are the exact choice and way she attempted to reveal her thought; hence they are the right, inevitable symbols of her thought.²⁸² Therefore, though ambiguity cannot be escaped when discussing Dickinson's poetry, it seems that the poet knew how to create poems that are clear and hard without any blur and indefiniteness²⁸³ through her own perspective and cognition for explicit poetry.

Furthermore, the poet has no limitation on choosing subjects. Readers can find poems on nature, religion, art, love and death; they can also find poems on commerce, law, medicine, fashion, music, theater, psychology, mathematics, astronomy, botany, geology, agriculture, photography, translation etc. On the aspect of new rhythms, though most readers of Dickinson's time considered that a good poet should write good, exact rhythms, the poet still did experiments on various stanzaic and metrical forms.²⁸⁴ The poet's employment of rhyme is always experimental and not exact; rhymes such as slant rhyme, approximate rhyme, or no rhyme at all, which are commonly used in modern poetry rather than in her contemporaries, can also be seen in Dickinson's poetry.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁰ Higginson 262.

²⁸¹ Sherrer 37.

²⁸² Sherrer 37.

²⁸³ "On Lowell, Pound, and Imagism."

²⁸⁴ In Dickinson's experiments of "metrical and stanzaic forms," there are for example, the "short meter (6686) and the ballad stanza, which depends more on beats per line (usually 4 alternating with 3) than on exact counts. Even in common meter, she was not always strict about the number of syllables per line, as the first line in 'I'll tell you how the Sun rose' demonstrates." Cf. "Major Characteristics of Dickinson's Poetry," *Emily Dickinson Museum*, 10 July 2015,

<https://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/poetry_characteristics>.

²⁸⁵ "Major Characteristics of Dickinson's Poetry."

Concentration is one of the poet's abilities as well as an adept technique. Judith Farr believes that Dickinson's reclusion forms her heightened concentration; thus, the poet is believed to create a world of deliberate, measured shapes.²⁸⁶ For example, in "A bird came down the walk" (J328/Fr359), she ignored the size, shape, color, and species of the bird; instead, she captured every common fragment of the movement of the bird and creates a plot. The way she used to depict the bird is just as a camera which firstly, gives it a close-up and then a long take that records every single move of it. The bird, as an unexpected guest who flew into Dickinson's garden, ate an angle-worm, drank a drop of dew, and hopped and glanced, was all captured by the poet's concentration; an ordinary scene is vividly and differently portrayed. In this kind of exactitude, the measured, deliberate shapes convey not only her thirst for concretion; it also presents her desire to form a personal world in art.²⁸⁷

Additionally, as Lewis Turco points out, Imagists believe that the most important part of poetry is the sensory level.²⁸⁸ Dickinson frequently practices it in her poetry. For example, in "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain" (J280/Fr340), the poet described the funeral visually ("Mourners to and fro"), auditorily ("A Service, like a Drum – / Kept beating – beating – till I thought" and "then I heard them lift a Box / And creak across my Soul"), and tactilely ("I dropped down, and down – / And hit a World, at every plunge"). In this condensed poem, the reader is able to feel the frustrating oppression toward the sensory description. It is therefore one of the impressive poems which depicts a different afterlife.

In short, rather than the abstract and logical analysis, to be closer to the moment of a poem emphasizes physical and emotional experiences. Just as Dickinson's definition of poetry: When reading a book, if she feels that her body is too cold to be warmed or she feels physically that her head is taken off, she knows that is poetry; and it is the only way for her so that she doubts that if there is any other way. Hence, the senses provide more possibilities of understanding a poem because different readers have different repressed complexes. Therefore, except for figuring out the symbolic

²⁸⁶ Farr, *The Passion* 50.

²⁸⁷ Farr, *The Passion* 50.

²⁸⁸ Turco 31.

meanings of one object, another important focus is what its image evokes. Whether the complexes it evokes are happy or sad, they belong to the personal experience of every reader. Thus, as a successful image, Dickinson's fly is simple and meanwhile mysterious, for on the one hand, it is only a fly; whereas on the other, it is the trigger of the flood of complexes.

1.9 Outline of Poems and Chapters

During the early phase of exploring images of traveling in Dickinson's poetry, in order to determine whether travel is a consistently-mentioned topic which exists in Dickinson's poetry and to categorize the poems concerning images of traveling, the first step is to trace back to the definition of travel. By consulting *Webster's Encyclopedia Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (1989), *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1989), *Collins English Dictionary* (web) and *Chambers English Dictionary* (1988), except for the usage in science and basketball,²⁸⁹ the definition of travel as a verb can be divided into four areas:

1. Action: To go, move; to traverse, to journey etc.
2. Purpose: For pleasure, for work, for business etc.
3. Means: To go on foot; by car, train, plane, or ship etc.
4. Destination: An area, region, district, country, foreign place etc.²⁹⁰

Dickinson's images of traveling appear in one, or intersections of two or more aspects. Thus, in order to reveal the diversity of those images, each aspect or intersection, or variety of areas will be treated by different poems. Based on the definition of travel, the following table shows the selected poems concerning Dickinson's images of traveling:

Year	Selected Poems Concerning Images of Traveling
1853	“On this wondrous sea”
c. 1858	“The feet of people walking home”; “Through lane it lay – through bramble –”; “Adrift! A little boat adrift!”; “Whether my bark went down at sea –”

²⁸⁹ The scientific use of the verb “travel” can be found, for example, in describing something which is to be transmitted, such as light, sound etc., or a piece of mechanism which moves in a fixed course. And it also can be used in basketball, meaning “to take an excessive number of steps while holding the ball.” “Collins English Dictionary,” 06 February 2015, <<http://www.collinsdictionary.com>>. Path: Search Esquire.

²⁹⁰ *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (New Jersey: Gramercy Books, 1989) 1508; *The Oxford English Dictionary: Second Edition* (Oxford: OUP, 1989) 444; *Chambers English Dictionary* (Edinburgh: W&R Chambers and CUP, 1988) 1562; “Collins English Dictionary.”

c. 1859	“Exultation is the going”; “Our lives are Swiss –”; “”Twas such a little – little boat”; “Many cross the Rhine”; “Pigmy seraphs – gone astray –”
c. 1860	“As if some little Arctic flower”; “With thee, in the Desert –”; “Least Rivers – docile to some sea”
c. 1861	“Wild Nights – Wild Nights!”; “The lonesome for they know not What –”; “Where Ships of Purple – gently toss –”; “This – is the land – the Sunset washes –”; “Tie the String to my Life, My Lord”
c. 1862	“”Twas the old – road – through pain –”; “I went to Heaven –”; “I started Early – Took my Dog –”; “I cross till I am weary”; “I like to see it lap the Miles –”; “I Years had been from Home”; “Our journey had advanced –”; “A little Road – not made of Man –”
c. 1863	“Because I could not stop for Death –”; “It tossed – and tossed –”; “Bereaved of all, I went abroad –”
c. 1864	“I sing to use the Waiting”; “A Door just opened on a street –”
c. 1865	“Trudging to Eden, looking backward”; “Nor Mountain hinder Me”; “It was a quiet way –”
c. 1872	“If my Bark sink”
c. 1873	“Elijah’s Wagon knew no thill”; “There is no Frigate like a Book”
c. 1878	“The Road was lit with Moon and star –”
c. 1880	“The Road to Paradise is plain”
c. 1881	“Go Traveling with us!”
c. 1884	“A Sloop of Amber slips away”
c. 1885	““Red Sea,’ indeed! Talk not to me”
Undated	“Down Time’s quaint stream”; “I did not reach Thee”

Additionally, as Malina Nielson and Cynthia L. Hallen observe, Dickinson mentions various place names in her poetry; and there are at least 162 place names which cover different areas such as Europe, Middle East, North America, Africa, Central America, Eurasia, Asia, South America, Sacred Space and the Solar System, as well as Austronesia and the North Pole.²⁹¹ This will be specifically discussed in chapter four.

Hence, this dissertation attempts to present various images of traveling in Dickinson’s poetry and how they function in pursuing the poet’s favorite subjects, such as immortality. As a combination of background information and theoretical support, part one not only locates Dickinson in the intersection of her special upbringing, the identity as a female traveler, and the possibility of travel imaginatively; it also presents

²⁹¹ Malina Nielson and Cynthia L. Hallen, “Emily Dickinson’s Placenames,” *Names: A Journal of Onomastics* 54.1 (2006): 5-6.

general discussions on her travel issue and how her poetry relates to Imagism. Based on the relationship among the distinctly American Romanticism, the nineteenth-century American landscape paintings, and Transcendentalism, part two mainly presents the comparison between Thomas Cole's paintings and Dickinson's voyage images. The poet's suspicion on whether she could arrive at the final destination, or say, immortality is revealed.

Through sunset images, part three reveals the poet's thinking on the sublime and circumference. Part four focuses on the images of roads, travelers, and means of travel; the poet presents desperation and hesitation on whether immortality can be reached by mortals. Through different images of toponyms, part five continues presenting the poet's failed journeys to immortality; a comparison between her verses and Haiku will also be revealed. Through discussing the poet's home/house image, part six points out the special bond between Dickinson and her dwelling, and whether she equates home to heaven. Part seven reviews Dickinson's images of traveling from voyage, sky, journey, toponyms, to home – one's supposed destination.

Finally, the poet mentioned that for several years the “only companion” to her was her Lexicon in an 1862 letter to Higginson (L261). As a matter of fact, Dickinson herself and Dickinson scholars have already equated the Lexicon with Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language* since the early 1930s.²⁹² Her niece Martha Dickinson Bianchi puts it, “The Dictionary was no mere reference book to her; she read it as a priest his breviary – over and over, page by page, with utter absorption.”²⁹³ As a lexicographer herself, the poet's lexical creativity cannot all be attributed to the study of the dictionaries; however, the Webster's dictionary is still very important to comprehending the intricate semantic puzzles of the poet.²⁹⁴ Thus, *Emily Dickinson Lexicon*²⁹⁵ should provide more appropriate definitions and explanations for

²⁹² “Emily Dickinson and Noah Webster.”

²⁹³ Martha Dickinson Bianchi, *The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson* (Connecticut: Biblo and Tannen, 1971) 80.

²⁹⁴ “Emily Dickinson and Noah Webster.”

²⁹⁵ Speaking of Dickinson's lexicon, readers, especially translators, have “compounded” problems on it, for Dickinson not only “uses multiple lexical connections to tie the words of a poem together into an unusually dense network,” but her words “relate cross-textually from one poem to another.” Therefore, translators must have a dictionary when translate Dickinson's poems. And which dictionaries are the best

the poet's word choice. Additionally, Thomas H. Johnson's *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* and *The Letters of Emily Dickinson* are consulted as primary resources.

2. Voyage: Dickinson and Visual Culture

There are two reasons for beginning this section with Dickinson's voyage poems. First, most of them were written in her early years; as a result, they serve as a source of contrast when revealing the poet's spirit as it was later expressed in her travel writing. Second, her personal interests and family background pulled her toward the painting of some landscapists as books did to her as well. Therefore, the famous landscapist Tomas Cole's *The Voyage of Life*, for example, is used as a direct visual source as one seeks clues to the poet's imagery of voyage. The following section thus explores the artistic influence on the poet who was attracted to the interrelationship of American Romanticism, Transcendentalism, and the Hudson River School.

2.1 Dickinson and the Nineteenth-Century American Landscape Paintings

Image is defined as an “opinion that people have about someone or something, which may not be a true one,” and it is the “picture that you see on a computer or television screen, or in a movie theater” today and a “photograph, painting, or other work of art that represents a person or thing”²⁹⁶ in Dickinson’s time. Image as an opinion may be abstract, complicated, or sometimes unintelligible; whereas, it can be more directly expressed through concrete forms such as paintings. Landscapes, as one of the major subjects that painters are fond of portraying, occupy a position in American travel writing as well. Clearly, American travelers keep establishing their personal, national identities through landscape; meanwhile, inspired by the welter of facts and impressions which constitute the American scene, those traveling writers, writing travelers, and “poets” in the Emersonian sense also created significant landscapes in

and most appropriate for reading Dickinson's poems? Scholars find that the “lexicon” of Dickinson “was an 1844 reprint of Noah Webster's unabridged 1841 *American Dictionary of the English Language*.” Hence, the online *Emily Dickinson Lexicon* is chosen because it is created according to Emily Dickinson's poems, the Webster's 1844 *Dictionary of the English Language*, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and other resources, which should be a more accurate version to Dickinson's lexicon. Cf. Cynthia L. Hallen and Laura M. Marvey, “Translation and the Emily Dickinson Lexicon,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 2.2 (1993): 130-46, at 130, *Project MUSE*, 1 August 2018; “Emily Dickinson Lexicon.”

²⁹⁶ *Macmillan English Dictionary* 703.

their work.²⁹⁷

2.1.1 Distinctly American Romanticism

Mid-nineteenth century America was affected by Nationalism and the Second Great Awakening. It was an era in which not only new things evolved one after another; changes also occurred in different aspects of society. From the late eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century, Romanticism was a dominant force in politics, religion, and the arts in America.²⁹⁸ Nevertheless, in the mid-nineteenth century, Americans were no longer satisfied with influence from the Romanticism of the European Romantic Movement; instead, they pursued other influences which were distinct and unique to their cultural experience.²⁹⁹ One of the influences came from the traditions of American Indians and their connection with nature; this significantly contributed to the development of a distinctly American Romanticism.³⁰⁰

When the beauty and the wilderness of the country's landscape became an increasingly more attractive subject, American artists, writers, and poets sought means of expression in order to celebrate the existent and undisturbed legacy of nature.³⁰¹ Generally speaking, as a reaction against convention, Romanticism firmly stated the power of the individual, so that this era was also characterized by an idealization of the individual.³⁰² One major principle of Romanticism for the art world is to deeply appreciate the beauty of nature, meaning the Romantic artists needed to represent "in their art the same feelings nature inspired in them," as well as the significance of their subjective experiences.³⁰³ It indicates that on the one hand, individual emotions and senses can provide access to higher truths which are beyond the world of reason and intellect; on the other hand, imagination offers a crucial way for individuals to

²⁹⁷ William W. Stowe, "'Property in the Horizon': Landscape and American Travel Writing," *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*, eds. Alfred Bendixen and Judith Hamera (Cambridge: CUP, 2009) 27.

²⁹⁸ Phillips 4.

²⁹⁹ "Art, Artists and Nature: The Hudson River School," 16 May 2017, <<https://www.albanyinstitute.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

³⁰⁰ "Art, Artists and Nature."

³⁰¹ "Art, Artists and Nature."

³⁰² Phillips 4.

³⁰³ Phillips 5.

experience spiritual or transcendent truths.³⁰⁴ Therefore – imagination together with the love affair with nature – in the eyes of artists, writers, and poets, a new Eden became the best depiction of the American landscape.³⁰⁵ It not only intrigued artists such as the landscapists of the Hudson River School; it also influenced writers such as Washington Irving (1783-1859), James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) and others.³⁰⁶

2.1.2 From Thomas Cole to the Relationship between Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Landscape Paintings

The Hudson River School³⁰⁷ offered an exceptional portrayal of the new Eden. Its artists focused on portraying harmony in nature; their works are not only formally composed; they also concentrated on fine details.³⁰⁸ Moreover, they interpret and express their poetic views rather than simply copying nature.³⁰⁹ Among them, Thomas Cole³¹⁰ was the most distinguished figure. As a poet-painter,³¹¹ Cole's paintings and his writings were lighthouses of the Hudson River School artists.³¹² He was a self-taught artist, and interestingly his artistic inspiration came “from poetry and literature,” strong influences that marked his paintings.³¹³ Perhaps due to his special art background, his paintings do not simply echo the other landscapists who praise the

³⁰⁴ Phillips 5.

³⁰⁵ Phillips 20.

³⁰⁶ Phillips 23.

³⁰⁷ From 1820s till the end of the nineteenth century, a group of painters “established the first true tradition of landscape painting in the United States.” The scenery of the Hudson River Valley was their main resource and inspiration. These artists “created artworks showing meticulously rendered details and an almost religious reverence for the magnificence of the American wilderness.” And they were the pioneers of “re-creating the unique beauty of the American landscape for the public.” Cf. “Art, Artists and Nature.”

³⁰⁸ “The Hudson River School: American Art, 1820-1870,” 20 July 2017, <<https://public.wsu.edu>>. Path: Search Esquire.

³⁰⁹ “Art, Artists and Nature.”

³¹⁰ Thomas Cole (1801-1848) was an English-born American artist. When he studied in the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Art, he “began to develop a style that he considered distinctly American. This style flourished when Cole also found, on an 1825 sketching tour, his signature subject: the Hudson River Valley in New York State.” With participation of several other aspiring artists, later on, Cole and his informal group were known as the Hudson River School. Cf. Christopher John Murray, *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era, 1760-1850* (New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004) 200.

³¹¹ Farr, “Disclosing Pictures” 69.

³¹² “Art, Artists and Nature.”

³¹³ “Thomas Cole,” *American Paradise: The World of the Hudson River School*, eds. John P. O’Neill, Barbara Burn, Teresa Egan, and Mary-Alice Rogers (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987) 119.

beauty of nature and life; they also offer a poetic and historical quality which transcends and reaches a level of new civilization and belief.

His friend William Cullen Bryant, an American Romantic poet and journalist, wrote a sonnet, “To an American Painter Departing for Europe”; this sonnet entreated Cole to be faithful to the wild image of America. It not only presents the beautiful landscape of America that Cole portrayed in his distinctive way; it also claims hyperbolically at the very beginning:

Thine eyes shall see the light of distant skies:
Yet, Cole! thy heart shall bear to Europe's strand
A living image of thy native land,
Such as on thy own glorious canvass lies.
[...]³¹⁴

Bryant had high appreciation and expectations for Cole. As Paul Landshof puts it, Cole was engaged in an argument over the assumed superiorities and greater purity of American landscapes by Bryant than those he will find.³¹⁵ To Bryant, Cole would never copy any other painters’ ideas on how to portray nature in a supposed way. Instead, nature under his portrayal uniquely endowed new life and meanings so that the American landscape, in woods and fields, not only had its own physiognomy; it also had tinges of an exclusive American atmosphere.³¹⁶ As Bryant claimed, “here is American nature and the feeling it awakens.”³¹⁷

Hence, for most Americans in the 1850s, Cole’s art stood for the height of a moral landscape, and nature had been translated into what he considered a new paradise.³¹⁸ Similarly, when writers initiated extolment of the American landscape’s beauty and equated God with nature, Cole’s distinctive landscape paintings were helpful to separate American culture from that of Europe.³¹⁹ In a word, what Cole contributed

³¹⁴ William Cullen Bryant, “Sonnet – to an American Painter Departing for Europe,” 18 February 2015, <<http://www.vcu.edu>>. Path: Search Esquire.

³¹⁵ Paul Landshof, “The American Sonnet: Barometer of Change in American History,” *Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute*, 19 February 2015, <<http://www.yale.edu>>. Path: Search Esquire.

³¹⁶ William Cullen Bryant, “The Academy of Design,” *Prose Writings of William Cullen Bryant*, ed. Parke Godwin (New York: D. Appleton, 1884) 232.

³¹⁷ Bryant 232.

³¹⁸ Farr, *The Passion* 70.

³¹⁹ Tammis K Groft, W. Douglas McCombs, and Ruth Greene-McNally, *Hudson River Panorama: A*

to the distinctly Romantic period of America was not only the beautiful imagery of American wild landscapes; it was also something different, enlightening, part and parcel of American's own civilization and identity.

Whether the images were from their surroundings or from their imagination, painters presented them on canvas; in like manner, writers and poets put visual or spiritual images on paper. It is clear that in order to respond to distinctly American Romanticism, landscapists no longer merely copied subjects that naturally existed; instead, they criticized historical development and human beings' spiritual and moral position in the world through their identified art.³²⁰ What they intended to interpret became increasingly more complicated due to their growing visions of spiritual life, ethics, and even politics.³²¹ Similar to writers and poets, their general principles of historical, social, and psychological development could also be shown to the world.³²² In the distinctly Romantic period, landscapists, writers, and poets intersected because they attempted to seek new art from the beauty of nature that they could call their own³²³ from the beautiful nature.

As the remarkable outburst of Romanticism on Puritan ground,³²⁴ literary Transcendentalism even regarded nature as a foundation to any sense of American transcendentalism.³²⁵ Emerson, who continued to highlight the ability of individuals, believed that every natural fact expresses a spiritual truth that people could only feel rather than reason; at the same time, this revelation could be freely sought without recourse to dogma or authority.³²⁶ This new sense of awareness and experience was celebrated by the American landscape.³²⁷ Similarly, landscapists such as Cole also

Passage through Time (New York: State U of New York, 2009) 112.

³²⁰ Anthony Comegna, "Art as Ideas: Thomas Cole's *The Course of Empire*," 10 August 2017, <<https://www.libertarianism.org/columns/art-ideas-thomas-coles-course-empire>>.

³²¹ "Art as Ideas: Thomas Cole's *The Course of Empire*."

³²² "Art as Ideas: Thomas Cole's *The Course of Empire*."

³²³ "Interactive Tour," *Explore Thomas Cole*, 20 July 2017, <<http://www.explorethomascole.org/tour>>.

³²⁴ James Elliot Cabot, *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Volume 1, 1887 (London: Forgotten Books, 2013) 248, qtd. in Barbara L. Packer, *The Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism* 84.

³²⁵ Graham Clarke ed., *The American Landscape: Literary Sources & Documents*, Volume II (East Sussex: Helm Information, 1993) 3.

³²⁶ Clarke 3.

³²⁷ Clarke 3.

wrote essays to venerate the American wilderness and to emphasize its difference from Europe. In his essay, a sense of wonder and its earnest request to the transcendental foundation of American nature are equal to Emerson's *Nature*.³²⁸ Therefore, on establishing a new national identity which is distinct from Europe, the contribution that is made by both transcendentalists and the Hudson River School's artists is most obvious as Max Oelschlaeger claims in "The Roots of Preservation: Emerson, Thoreau, and the Hudson River School."³²⁹

Finally, as Barbara Groseclose puts it in *Nineteenth-Century American Art*, it is impossible to escape Transcendentalism when talking about American landscape.³³⁰ It is because they share the same principle that the only way to know God or the Over-Soul is in the deed of seeking, especially in solitary communion in nature.³³¹ It is true for both transcendentalists and landscapists when they perform in the reality.³³² Moreover, Groseclose mentions the "unexpected bridge" between Transcendentalism and the Hudson River School: Due to the rise of the middle class in the nineteenth century, they joined the upper class and became a group that had opportunities in their leisure time to improve their morality through activities as viewing landscape, traveling, walking in the woods, and looking at art.³³³

Landscape paintings can offer a unique, visual impression; hence, when looking-at-art becomes popular, it is natural that more and more people, especially writers and poets, seek inspiration from paintings. In a word, it is undeniable that in an age when painting was still more popular than photography in large scale and had not been replaced by other visual means such as television, Movie Theater, or computer, it was the main entertaining and creative source in people's artistic and spiritual lives. In the American Romantic period, when Americans began pursuing something distinct and unique, the fusion of art and literature became a mighty force in declaring a new

³²⁸ Clarke 337.

³²⁹ Max Oelschlaeger, "The Roots of Preservation: Emerson, Thoreau, and the Hudson River School," 10 March 2018, <<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

³³⁰ Barbara Groseclose, *Nineteenth-Century American Art* (Oxford: OUP, 2000) 124.

³³¹ Groseclose 124.

³³² Groseclose 124.

³³³ Groseclose 125.

identity.

2.1.3 Thomas Cole and Emily Dickinson

Thomas Cole's *The Voyage of Life* (1839-1840),³³⁴ a series of four oil paintings that are separately entitled *Childhood*, *Youth*, *Manhood*, and *Old Age*, appeared almost everywhere in places such as parish houses, hospitals, schools, homes, hotels, and restaurants.³³⁵ His fame spread as his paintings were wildly copied in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and other parts of New England in the 1840s.³³⁶ At the time of his death in 1848, an exhibit of his original *Voyage* was open to the public, and over 100,000 people queued to view it.³³⁷ As Judith Farr asserts, Dickinson "no doubt saw copies of the *Voyage*, in one or the other version."³³⁸ And this evidence comes from various sources.

First, when the American public was exceedingly influenced by Cole's *Voyage*, Dickinson had a chance to see it during her stay at Mary Lyon's³³⁹ seminary (Mount Holyoke Female Seminary) from 1847 to 1848.³⁴⁰ Moreover, due to Mary Lyon's religious fervor, she possibly hung Cole's series on the walls of the seminary so that the students were immersed in Christian faith, platonic high-mindedness, and romantic

³³⁴ In the late 1830s, Thomas Cole aimed to advance "the genre of landscape painting" by conveying "universal truths" on "human existence, religious faith, and the natural world." Then, four oil paintings which were "conceived in 1836" achieved the "aspiration" – it was *The Voyage of Life: Childhood, Youth, Manhood, and Old Age*. After finishing these four paintings, he exhibited them at the "National Academy of Design" in 1840. And "before leaving for his second trip to Europe in 1841-42, he created tracings of The Voyage of Life [...] [and] exhibited this second set twice in Europe [...] The later works were then shown in Boston, New York, Philadelphia and again in New York, from 1843-46." "About the Series: The Voyage of Life," *Explore Thomas Cole*, 18 February 2015, <<http://www.explorethomascole.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

³³⁵ Farr, *The Passion* 69.

³³⁶ Farr, *The Passion* 68-9.

³³⁷ Farr, *The Passion* 69.

³³⁸ Farr, *The Passion* 69.

³³⁹ Mary Lyon (1797-1849) was a "chemist" and "educator" who "founded Mount Holyoke College – then called Mount Holyoke Female Seminary – in 1837, nearly a century before women gained the right to vote. At the time, there were 120 colleges for men in the United States, but none for women. With the opening of Mount Holyoke, college-aged women could claim their own institution of higher education." And she "served for 12 years as the principal of Mount Holyoke before her death [...] [and] [s]he had proven that women were as intellectually capable as men and created a new model for their education." "Mary Lyon," *175 Mount Holyoke College*, 29 May 2015, <<https://www.mtholyoke.edu>>. Path: Search Esquire.

³⁴⁰ Farr, *The Passion* 70.

delight in nature.³⁴¹ Furthermore, since Cole had already been famous in New England, his most influential painting – *The Ox-Bow, or View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm* (1836) was familiar to Connecticut River Valley dwellers such as Mary Lyon and Emily Dickinson.³⁴²

Second, *Voyage* was so highly influential so that during the 1850s and 1860s there were even burlesques and caricatures of it.³⁴³ As a reader of *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, Dickinson had the chance to see the December 1858 issue of *Harper's* in which the cartoon named “Spriggins’s Voyage of Life” was published.³⁴⁴ Though it was buffoonery and did not reveal the lyrical beauty of Cole’s series, it described an unfortunate journey of an alcoholic protagonist which mirrored his series by imitating some classical elements of *Voyage*.³⁴⁵ Interestingly, another evidence shows that the sonnet “To Cole, the Painter, Departing for Europe” of Bryant “is checked on the table of contents in Susan Dickinson’s copy of Bryant’s *Poems* (1849)” and the “page on which it appears is folded over.”³⁴⁶ Considering the close relationship between Susan and the poet, one may readily understand that the two were both familiar with Cole and Bryant.

Except for *Voyage*, Farr also points out that the poet “had seen the popular *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*”³⁴⁷ by Cole, too, since it had also been widely distributed in New England.³⁴⁸ Because she used the phrase “Expulsion from Eden” in a letter to Mrs. Thomas P. Field (L552);³⁴⁹ it indicates that she was familiar with it and had her unique understanding of the image. Moreover, she used the name of Cole to write a note to Susan in 1859.³⁵⁰ The note follows:

³⁴¹ Farr, *The Passion* 70-1.

³⁴² Farr, *The Passion* 71.

³⁴³ Farr, *The Passion* 70.

³⁴⁴ Farr, *The Passion* 70.

³⁴⁵ Farr, *The Passion* 70.

³⁴⁶ Farr, *The Passion* 70.

³⁴⁷ Farr, *The Passion* 69.

³⁴⁸ Farr, *The Passion* 70.

³⁴⁹ In the letter, Dickinson wrote, “Expulsion from Eden grows indistinct in the presence of flowers so blissful, and with no disrespect to Genesis, Paradise remains.”

³⁵⁰ Farr, *The Passion* 69.

“To Susan Gilbert Dickinson

about 1859

My ‘position’!

Cole.

P.S. Lest you misapprehend, the unfortunate insect upon the left
is Myself, while the Reptile upon the right is my more immediate
friends, and connections.

As ever,

Cole.” (L 214)

This indicates that first, she knew Cole; second, she was familiar with the imagery he created in *Expulsion* because “Reptile” appeared as an allusion in the note.³⁵¹

In 1992, Farr’s book *The Passion of Emily Dickinson* was published. One year later, *The Emily Dickinson Journal* published her essay “Disclosing Pictures: Emily Dickinson’s Quotations from the Paintings of Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, and Holman Hunt.” In this essay, Farr reinforces her view that not only Cole’s *Voyage* and *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, but also Frederic Edwin Church’s (1826-1900) *The Heart of the Andes* and *Chimborazo* and William Holman Hunt’s (1827-1910) *The Light of the World* are significant for Dickinson.³⁵² Unlike the English painter Hunt, Church was born in Connecticut and was a student of Cole. Though the connection between the poet and him was not as direct as the one between the poet and Cole, Church seemed to have influenced Dickinson’s poetic creation, too.³⁵³ And certainly, Dickinson’s images of traveling reflect her desire to verbally express what she saw in the visual images of these two artists.

Farr freely confesses that there is no incontrovertible proof that Dickinson actually saw Cole’s, or Church’s, or Hunt’s paintings³⁵⁴ because none of her writings overly state, “I saw *Voyage* or *Chimborazo*”; yet, it is certain she was a part of American culture when their works were highly celebrated. Indeed, the growing interest in searching “Dickinson’s material trace” in order to reveal “a real woman whose life took

³⁵¹ Farr, *The Passion* 69.

³⁵² Farr, “Disclosing Pictures” 69.

³⁵³ Farr believed that as one of the favorite painters of Dickinson family, Church’s paintings such as *The Heart of the Andes* and *Chimborazo* inspired Dickinson in creating some poems which had the images of volcanoes or climbing mountains. And in poem 453, Dickinson used the word “Chimborazo” in describing “love,” and the scene she depicted resembled the scene of Church’s *Chimborazo*. Farr, “Disclosing Pictures” 68, 73-4.

³⁵⁴ Farr, “Disclosing Pictures” 70.

place on paper,”³⁵⁵ corresponds with the biographical and historical language of Dickinson and her works.³⁵⁶ Farr uses the example of two painters, Giorgione and Manet,³⁵⁷ for the purpose of illustrating that in both art and literary worlds there are many circumstances in which the latter was influenced by the former.³⁵⁸ Though it is difficult to prove conclusively that the work of the first has been seen by the second, the likelihood of not only the formal elements but also the point based on the content is revealed.³⁵⁹

Cole and Dickinson share at least one artistic attribute: Both were outstanding in their chosen field. They both created new and original work that was not simple imitation, and their works are viewed as the best examples of a new American identity and diversity disengaged from Europe. Barton Levi St. Armand claims that “the spirit of [...] *The Voyage of Life* (1840) lived on in the very personal and much more elaborate correspondences that Dickinson made of her passion of the mystic day.”³⁶⁰ Passion is the key word that Farr also uses in her 1992 book title. She attempts to present a different way of approaching the true emotion of Dickinson when the poet defined poetry by her physical feelings – she experienced extreme chills and stated that the top of her head had been taken off. For a nineteenth-century woman and recluse, it is imaginable that her life was fueled by her books, paintings, her room, her garden, her emotion, her imagination as well as her passion.

³⁵⁵ Osborne 72.

³⁵⁶ Farr, “Disclosing Pictures” 70.

³⁵⁷ Giorgione (ca. 1477/8-1510, Italian painter) finished the *Fête Champêtre* around 1512 and “[i]t has long been thought to have influenced Édouard Manet’s (1832-1883, French painter) arrangement of clad men and undressed women in his notorious *Déjeuner sur l’Herbe*, which Manet really called ‘The Bath’ and which created a furious uproar in 1863. There is some evidence that as a student Manet copied Giorgione’s painting at the Louvre; but art historians agree that internal evidence furnished by the painting itself — composition and theme — make clear that Manet knew Giorgione’s work. More importantly, by making his modern woman nude and sitting her insouciantly down in the Barbizon forest with men from the time of Napoleon the Third, Manet was commenting on a false contemporary age in which only artists — the men are painters — and their models understood the pastoral, erotic simplicity of Giorgione’s idyll. Manet was also implying that a liberal attitude toward sexuality could only be regarded in the modern age as sordid. His painting received the reception he had counted upon, and intellectuals eagerly pointed out how ‘depraved’ it was by comparison with Giorgione’s ‘pure’ canvas.” Cf. Farr, “Disclosing Pictures” 69-70.

³⁵⁸ Farr, “Disclosing Pictures” 70.

³⁵⁹ Farr, “Disclosing Pictures” 70.

³⁶⁰ Barton Levi St. Armand, *Emily Dickinson and Her Culture* (Cambridge: CUP, 1984) 278.

There are many indications that Dickinson had a close appreciation for painting. For example, she learned perspective and linear drawing at Mary Lyon's Seminary; she always accompanied sketches with her poems; and she also frequently referenced painting as an allusion to writing in her letters to her friends.³⁶¹ Whether as a part of the biographical or the historical challenges in exploring the poet, for Farr, painting has ramifications in Dickinson's poetic creation. She also indicates that by stressing the influence of the painters on Dickinson's work, her true focus is the "emblematic imagery" similar to the one that painters create in their works.³⁶² Cole's paintings offer a visual reference in an approach to Dickinson's travel world, and Cole's work also offers a means of contrasting and comparing the difference and uniqueness of her images of traveling.

Essentially then, under the need to establish a new identity of America and its culture, nineteenth-century artists and writers cooperated in finding an American Eden as expressed in nature by honoring its beauty and power in a new way. In an era when technology had not overtaken the country, paintings and writings helped form images that enriched people's hearts, minds, souls, and lives. Whether they traveled or stayed at home, written and visual images offered an opportunity for citizens to dream through their imagination. In the onrush of societal change, more interactions and interrelations between art and literature were discovered in order to express the greatness of the era. Born into that period, Dickinson was no exception to this influence. She was obviously a part of the academic, artistic, and social influences of her day and reflected her Weltanschauung in her writings. The ways she articulated her imagery and responded to cultural influences make her unique in American literature.

2.2 Passionate Voyage

In his "By the Seaside: The Secret of the Sea," Longfellow describes the sea in the following way:

[...]

Like the long waves on a sea-beach,
Where the sand as silver shines,

³⁶¹ Farr, "Disclosing Pictures" 76.

³⁶² Farr, "Disclosing Pictures" 74.

With a soft, monotonous cadence,
Flow its unrhymed lyric lines;
[...]³⁶³

Whitman expands on Longfellow's ideology in his "In Cabin'd Ships at Sea" with these words: "[...] The boundless blue on every side expanding, / With whistling winds and music of the waves, the large imperious waves [...]." ³⁶⁴ Hawthorne personifies the sea as follows:

The Ocean has its silent caves,
Deep, quiet, and alone;
Though there be fury on the waves,
Beneath them there is none.
[...]³⁶⁵

And Emerson praises the "opaline" sea, which is "plentiful and strong," as

[...] beautiful as is the rose in June,
Fresh as the trickling rainbow of July;
Sea full of food, the nourisher of kinds,
Purger of earth, and medicine of men;
Creating a sweet climate by my breath,
[...]³⁶⁶

Whether from the aspects of color or shape, all these authors employ specific words and descriptions to present the image of the sea. In contrast to these concrete descriptions, Dickinson's sea image appears much more abstract and metaphorical.

William C. Spengemann believes that the most important of Dickinson's words are not only highly charged with personal significance; they are also offering a variety of interpretations.³⁶⁷ For example, the word "sea" has different meanings and significance in Dickinson's oeuvre:

[...] The sea represents this world – change and trouble (1235), mortality (16), life itself (125). It stands for death (514, 685), which is "escapeless" (1284) and "recllless [sic]" (1654). As a possible resting place, the sea is sometimes "abhorrent" (1446), sometimes "Better than the Tombs" (1255). It prefigures the afterlife: eternity (143,720), immortality (750, 1250), something known to faith (800), or

³⁶³ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "By the Seaside: The Secret of the Sea," www.poemhunter.com, 15 February 2019.

³⁶⁴ Walt Whitman, "In Cabin'd Ships at Sea," *The Walt Whitman Archive*, 15 February 2019, <<https://whitmanarchive.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

³⁶⁵ Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Ocean," www.poetryfoundation.org, 15 February 2019.

³⁶⁶ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Seashore," www.poemhunter.com, 15 February 2019.

³⁶⁷ Spengemann 91.

altogether unknown (32, 59).

The sea may signify some aspect of the speaker herself: her desires (712), her redeemed heart (757), her hopeless condition (737), her attachment to a loved one (387), human or divine. But it can just as easily stand for another person: the anonymous beloved (206, 219), a lover (349, 969), a suitor (1275), a seducer (152, 1766), a sexual predator (656), a heartless destroyer (746), or a savior (1542). Or the sea can represent the space or time that lies between the speaker and some desired object: a distant loved one (940), absent friends (898), eternity (713). And the sea can assume the rarer form of air, either in the speaker's immediate surroundings (359, 1295, 1297, 1647), in the spiritual realm (1362), or in the fleeting space of time where these two worlds join (1599).³⁶⁸

Privacy is an important feature of Dickinson's poetry.³⁶⁹ Given that most of her poems remain unpublished; though some of them might be written to "serve a larger audience,"³⁷⁰ basically Dickinson did not intend to please any readers. Hence, it is harder for her to create in a more common, standard, unambiguous, and coherent way.³⁷¹ However, if the reader expends some energy to comprehend her works in light of her life, they still have chances to get into her "almost total privacy," in which only the speaker of each poem has the authority to decide "what is being said."³⁷²

Thus, maintaining privacy in her writing causes an inevitable consequence: There will be more individual qualities than the reader thought, and these qualities become either obstacles or sparkles in the process of reading her poems. For example, her attitude towards the sea is, so to speak, metaphorical on the one hand; it also bears the weight of her personal emotion as well as her unique understanding, on the other hand. Though the reader may not comprehend all the meaning or significance on the first reading, the diversity of understandings brings a kaleidoscopic effect in reading her sea image.

Generally, there are two categories of voyage. One is realistic, such as Melville's "We Fish" – voyage is used for hunting whales;³⁷³ or Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Arrival

³⁶⁸ The numbers of these poems are based on Ralph W. Franklin's edition of Emily Dickinson's poetry. Spengemann 92.

³⁶⁹ Spengemann 84.

³⁷⁰ Spengemann 86.

³⁷¹ Spengemann 85.

³⁷² Spengemann 85.

³⁷³ Cf. Herman Melville, "We Fish," www.poemhunter.com, 20 February 2019.

in the Land of Freedom” – people voyage to seek freedom;³⁷⁴ or Joaquin Miller’s “Columbus” – voyage is for leaving a name in history, meanwhile, being remembered and extolled by posterity.³⁷⁵ The other one relates to the spiritual world, such as Dickinson’s voyage poems. Though the images Dickinson creates in her voyage poems are open to diverse interpretations, the poet’s expectation or purpose upon arriving at a final destination, or say immortality, is consistent.

Interestingly, the forth poem of Johnson’s edition is on voyage, meaning the sea is one of the early images Dickinson brings to her poetry, and the theme of voyage is among her early interests in creating destination:

On this wondrous sea
Sailing silently,
Ho! Pilot, ho!
Knowest thou the shore
Where no breakers roar –
Where the storm is o'er?

In the peaceful west
Many the sails at rest –
The anchors fast –
Thither I pilot *thee* –
Land Ho! Eternity!
Ashore at last!

In her book *The Passion of Emily Dickinson*, Judith Farr states that some of Dickinson’s letters and poems “directly” brought *The Voyage of Life* (*Voyage*) into her creation of a narrative which describes human beings’ process of developing “through time to immortality.”³⁷⁶ In this poem, images such as “breakers” and “storm” credibly indicate that the poet gained inspiration from Cole’s *Manhood*.

When viewed in its entirety, *Voyage* portrays a voyager who travels in a boat with a guardian angel on the river of life from childhood through youth and middle age into old age. *Manhood* particularly portrays the theme of a “trail by the waters of the flood”,³⁷⁷ as follows:

³⁷⁴ Cf. Harriet Beecher Stowe, “Arrival in the Land of Freedom,” www.poemhunter.com, 20 February 2019.

³⁷⁵ Cf. Joaquin Miller, “Columbus,” www.poemhunter.com, 20 February 2019.

³⁷⁶ Farr, *The Passion* 78.

³⁷⁷ Farr, *The Passion* 74.



Manhood (First Set, 1840) (Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute)



Angel



Evil Spirits

The landscape in this painting reveals overwhelming fear and suffering: Dark clouds fill the sky above grotesquely shaped reefs with twisted and withered trees. Compared to *Childhood* and *Youth*, the peaceful, glassy water changes to floods, and the dark, turbulent water appears ready to flow down from a cliff as an angel watches over man. Between the man and angel, evil spirits control both darkness and torment. The angel, the evil spirits, and the man are in three visual levels, presenting their different classes as irresistible predestination of mortals.

Without a tiller, the man is begging and praying instead of steering the boat as the following close-up image on the left side presents. The close-up on the right side depicts the second set of *Voyage* that Cole created before he left on his second trip to Europe between 1841 and 1842.³⁷⁸ In contrast to the first set, the second set depicts a more

³⁷⁸ “About the Series: The Voyage of Life.”

pious man who kneels in prayer as he looks up heavenward:



The Man (First Set)



Manhood (Second Set, 1842)

(National Gallery of Art)

Such a perilous, desperate situation is also presented in one of Frederick Goddard Tuckerman's poems, and this poem seems to provide an interpretation for the man's lamentation in Cole's *Manhood*:

[...]
Ah! 'tis for this I mourn: too long I have
Wandered in tears along Life's stormy way,
Where, day to day, no haven or hope reveals.
Yet on the bound my weary sight I keep,
As one who sails, a landsman on the deep,
And, longing for the land, day after day
Sees the horizon rise and fall, and feels
His heart die out, – still riding restlessly
Between the sailing cloud, and the seasick sea.³⁷⁹

The word “mourn” reveals the miserable situation of the speaker: As the one who suffers from long-term solitude and desperation on the voyage, self-mourning is the only thing that the speaker can do. Nonetheless, it is captivating that, though *Manhood* is the only image with an unpleasant landscape and fearful story, there is a warm, sunset-like glow behind a dark, stormy scene. That seeming glimmer of hope makes the dark image less intimidating and desperate. Through his vibrant visual imagery, Cole either communicates to his audience that there is hope amid moments of darkness, or he implies that there will be a final destination in life as indicated by the sun's afterglow. Cole successfully interpreted his traditional Christian ideas³⁸⁰ through his vivid

³⁷⁹ Ben Mazer, ed., *Selected poems of Frederick Goddard Tuckerman* (Cambridge: The Belknap P of HUP, 2010)110.

³⁸⁰ Alfred H. Marks, “Thomas Cole as Poet,” *The Hudson Valley Regional Review* 1.2 (1984): 92-6, at 72

imagination on this seeming journey to immortality.

Though there are several images which represent danger and hardship in the poem, rather than complete desperation or shimmery hope, optimism and confidence are more noticeable in Dickinson's "On this wondrous sea." More importantly, as David Preest claims, this poem is the first one that contains the poet's flood subject or life after death.³⁸¹ In a letter to Higginson, Dickinson stated, "You mention Immortality. That is the Flood subject" (L319); she uses immortality as a central theme in her poetry, and it inevitably involves death, afterlife, and other religious traditions. Hence, some scholars interpret the flood as an allusion of the "great punishing flood of Genesis that, though ultimately purifying, wrought death and destruction" as Don Gilliland wrote in his essay "Textual Scruples and Dickinson's 'Uncertain Certainty.'"³⁸² Furthermore, some scholars such as Sam S. Baskett writes at the beginning of his "The Making of an Image: Emily Dickinson's Blue Fly" that he already equated the flood subject with death.³⁸³ Nevertheless, when people pay more attention to what the flood subject is or what it symbolizes, they may overlook the reason Dickinson chose the word "flood" to describe her perception of immortality.

An exploration of the word "flood" as a noun yields various results. First, it refers to the "Flood in the Bible"; second, it is a "large amount of water that covers an area that was dry before"; third, it can describe a "large number of people or things that

92.

³⁸¹ Emily Dickinson wrote the "Write! Comrade, Write!" letter to Susan Gilbert in order to encourage her to write poems. According to David Preest's attempted explanations of this poem, "[i]n the first stanza she asks the Pilot, who is God or one of his angels, if he can guide her through the wondrous life to the safe haven of eternal rest. The second stanza is the pilot's confident reply." Preest also mentioned that since Dickinson was gradually closed with Sue after Sue came to Amherst in 1850, and she often wrote "passionate" letters to express her love to Sue, "[t]he heading *Write! Comrade, Write!* could be one such appeal for a letter, with Emily in the poem saying that if Sue asks where she can find a safe haven, the answer is that she can find it in 'the peaceful west' with Emily." Therefore, Dickinson herself believed that she will find "the peaceful west," the "eternity." Therefore, this poem appears as the first evidence on Dickinson's "flood subject," the "Immortality." Preest 2.

³⁸² Don Gilliland, "Textual Scruples and Dickinson's 'Uncertain Certainty,'" *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 18.2 (2009): 38-62, at 38, *Project MUSE*, 10 February 2018.

³⁸³ Sam S. Baskett, "The Making of an Image: Emily Dickinson's Blue Fly," *The New England Quarterly* 81.2 (2008): 340-4, at 340, *JSTOR*, 10 February 2018.

move somewhere or arrive somewhere at the same time.”³⁸⁴ When used as a verb, the *Macmillan English Dictionary* offers a different, vivid approach in the following words: “[I]f an emotion floods through you or you are flooded with an emotion, you suddenly feel it strongly.”³⁸⁵ This coincidentally echoes the situation when Dickinson was flooded with her physical feelings about poetry as if her whole body was too cold to be warmed and the top of her head was taken off.

Regardless of whether Dickinson chose the word “flood” to modify “subject” or to use the term to define “immortality,” her subjective, intense, and sometimes even eccentric emotions are fully expressed; meanwhile, she also engages the reader with the mood of the poem. Taking “On this wondrous sea” as an example: Dickinson copied two poems from her first fascicle. The first one is “Adrift! A little boat adrift!”, and the second one is “On this wondrous sea.”³⁸⁶ She did not arrange the order of these two poems chronologically in her fascicle; however, “On this wondrous sea” would have been her first options though she obviously had limited thoughts of publishing it. With the exception of some poems that have no writing dates, “On this wondrous sea” holds the first position in Johnson’s edition because of its “chiliastic optimism.”³⁸⁷

To begin, the fifth and sixth lines of the first stanza reveal that it is not a peaceful sea of which she speaks; the roaring ocean waves and an endless storm indicate danger and hardship. Furthermore, sibilance (such as “this,” “sea,” “Sailing,” “silently,” “thou,” “shore,” “storm”) of this stanza – the hissing sounds – creates tensional atmosphere. Three long-sound words (“shore,” “roar,” “o’er”) on the one hand reveal the endlessness of the voyage; on the other hand, it imitates the speaker’s shout mixed with the sound of waves and storm. The voyager and the pilot are “sailing silently” on a boat or ship, and the silence not only becomes a contrast to the noisy sea; it also reflects fear and anxiety. Thus the voyager asks the pilot, “Knowest thou the shore / Where no breakers roar – / Where the storm is o’er?” However, as the only adjective which appears in the first line of the poem, Dickinson uses “wondrous” to tell the reader that even though the

³⁸⁴ *Macmillan English Dictionary* 530.

³⁸⁵ *Macmillan English Dictionary* 530.

³⁸⁶ Farr, *The Passion* 79.

³⁸⁷ Roland Hagenbüchle, “Emily Dickinson’s Poetic Covenant,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 2.2 (1993): 14-39, at 23, *Project MUSE*, 12 February 2018.

environment is terrible, this voyage is destined to be epic and sublime.

Farr claims that this poem is an immature effort for Dickinson in connecting Cole's images to her own.³⁸⁸ She believes that the first stanza might imitate the situation of *Manhood*, and the voyager asked the desperate question because her/his life was in danger.³⁸⁹ If we take a closer look, this poem was written under the sentence, "Write! Comrade, write!" in an 1853 letter to Susan Gilbert when Dickinson was twenty-two or twenty-three years old. And it is commonly known that Susan performed a vital role in Dickinson's life and "career." Thus, if Dickinson wrote this poem in order to encourage Susan to write, and meanwhile as Preest accurately observes, that the second stanza is the confident reply of the pilot, then Dickinson envisions herself not as a voyager but as a pilot or guide who leads the voyager Susan to a final destination is true.

First, though there are roaring waves and violent storms, and the natural environment is not suitable for sailing; instead of using *On this dangerous sea* or *On this dreadful sea*, Dickinson chose "wondrous" to prelude the voyage. Thus, positive emotions are somehow connoted, especially the excitement. Second, in Johnson's edition of Dickinson's poems and letters, "thee" is italicized in the line "Thither I pilot *thee* –"; and tracing back to her manuscripts, "thee" is underlined.³⁹⁰ Thus, as an emphasis, the poet wants to attract Susan's attention that she will pilot her to the final destination. Third, in order to show her resolution, the poet uses three exclamation points in the last two lines, thereby creating the impression that the pilot will arrive at the land of "eternity" regardless of any difficulties encountered in the voyage.

Finally, Dickinson only uses a "call and response"³⁹¹ form in this poem. The questions that the voyager poses in the first stanza are answered in the second stanza, and the way in which they ask and answer is special. The interjection "ho" combined with an exclamation mark in both stanzas creates a special intimacy in addition to the "call and response" format. The relationship between the voyager and the pilot is not

³⁸⁸ Farr, *The Passion* 80.

³⁸⁹ Farr, *The Passion* 80.

³⁹⁰ "Emily Dickinson Archive," www.edickinson.org, 20 May 2018.

³⁹¹ "The Prowling Bee."

what Cole portrayed in his *Voyage*. Essentially, the relationship between the voyager and the angel in *Manhood* is unequaled because basically the voyager represents mortality, and the angel, who has a superior status, represents immortality. *Manhood* serves as a specific example: When the man is struggling in the floods, the angel is watching over him from the sky far beyond; they do not intersect in that scene, and the man has to face everything by himself. Praying is the only thing he can do, and he has to kneel down to show his piety. In contrast, the “call and response” form in this poem reveals that the voyager and the pilot are in the same boat as they try to reach their final destination together. Additionally, the pilot reassures the voyager that there is a final port, and the voyager will also be an escort to safety.

Optimism and resolution are also revealed in Bayard Taylor’s “Storm Song”; the alternate rhyme presents a combat between voyagers and the sea:

[...]
Brothers, a night of terror and gloom
Speaks in the cloud and gathering roar;
Thank God, He has given us broad sea-room,
A thousand miles from shore.

[...]
Yet, courage, brothers! we trust the wave,
With God above us, our guiding chart:
So, whether to harbor or ocean-grave,
Be it still with a cheery heart!³⁹²

Though the dangerous situation would take the voyagers’ life at any time, they continue sailing “[i]n the teeth of the whelming spray.”³⁹³ Similar to Cole’s *Manhood*, these voyagers also pray to God; nevertheless, rather than praying for help, they are grateful because God has already given them a shelter – the “broad sea-room” – to help them escape from the “night of terror and gloom.” With the shelter and God’s lead, even death would not affect their spirit. God in this voyage still performs a divine, superior role, rather than the role of a companion.

In Chapter 82: “They Sail from Night to Day” of Melville’s *Mardi: and a Voyage Thither*, a similar situation occurred: After a heavy storm, those frightened voyagers,

³⁹² Bayard Taylor, “Storm Song,” *Poems of Home and Travel* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1855) 120-1.
³⁹³ Taylor 121.

who planned to continue sailing until they reached their target, were persuaded and led by an old man who “miraculously” appears on the water (“[...] floating from the east, a lone canoe; in which, there sat a mild, old man [...]”) to an isle called “Serenia” – the land of love.³⁹⁴ They were welcomed by a group of local residents with a song which praised the isle beauty and advised them to “[b]e not deceived; renounce vain things.”³⁹⁵ Melville also used the same device in the last stanza of the poem:

[...]
Hail! voyagers, hail!
Time flies full fast; life soon is o'er;
And ye may mourn,
That hither borne,
Ye left behind our pleasant shore.³⁹⁶

Nonetheless, these four long-sound words in the same rhyme – “o'er,” “mourn,” “borne,” and “shore” – creates a persuasive tone and emphasizes the persuasion, on the one hand: Life is short; staying in such a beautiful place is a judicious choice. On the other hand, they connote the voyagers’ hesitation of whether they should stop sailing and dwell in the isle as the old man suggests. The safety and optimism seems undependable.

Whether Cole’s *Manhood* or Taylor and Melville’s voyage poems contain positive elements or a seemingly happy ending; whereas, they all lack intimacy between the guide and the voyagers. In one word, the brave, joyful emotion, the confidence, the optimism, and the firm resolution in “On this wondrous sea” are rare to see in Dickinson’s other images of traveling. She seems as an epic hero who determines to steer the boat, guiding it to a final destination without doubts and hesitation. Therefore, the poem is the representation of “chiliastic optimism.”³⁹⁷ Both Dickinson and Cole present sublime water and the protagonists in both works arrive at the final destination; though Dickinson may connect to Cole on her own, the images in her “On this wondrous sea” are created because of the strong determination that floods her when she encourages Susan Gilbert.

³⁹⁴ Herman Melville, “Chapter LXXXII: They Sail from Night to Day,” *Mardi: and a Voyage Thither*, Volume II (1849), 25 February 2019, <<https://en.wikisource.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

³⁹⁵ Melville, “Chapter LXXXII.”

³⁹⁶ Melville, “Chapter LXXXII.”

³⁹⁷ Hagenbüchle 23.

Her emotion, confidence, optimism, and resolution are also revealed in another poem, “Wild Nights – Wild Nights!” (J249/Fr269), in which not only does the intimacy reach the peak; her expression of sexual feelings is also unrestrained:

Wild Nights – Wild Nights!

Were I with thee

Wild Nights should be

Our luxury!

Futile – the Winds –

To a Heart in port –

Done with the Compass –

Done with the Chart!

Rowing in Eden –

Ah, the Sea!

Might I but moor – Tonight –

In Thee!

In such a condensed poem, Dickinson not only arranges the lines in dimeter quatrains; she also intends to make them as rhyming couplets, especially the first stanza. Major discussions treat this poem as a love poem and arguably the “most passionate”³⁹⁸ of Dickinson’s poetry.

Though there is much speculation over whom the “thee” may be, at least one thing is obvious: The speaker is sailing in the “sea of love.”³⁹⁹ The “love” shares some similarity with what Dickinson wrote in some of her letters to Catherine Scott Turner Anthon, “I am pleasantly located in the deep sea, but love will row you out if her hands are strong” (L 209); or to Otis P. Lord, the “exultation floods me – I can not [sic] find my channel – The Creek turned Sea at thoughts of thee –” (L 559). However, the “water imagery” particularly represents the “sexual intensity,”⁴⁰⁰ and the “unmistakeable [sic] erotic tone and language”⁴⁰¹ of the poem step far beyond shyness. Dickinson expresses or announces her statement of love frankly and nakedly; and, whether “thee” represents

³⁹⁸ Harriet F. Bergmann, “‘A Piercing Virtue’: Emily Dickinson in Margaret Drabble’s *The Waterfall*,” *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 36.2 (1990): 181-193, at 190, *Project MUSE*, 22 September 2016.

³⁹⁹ Preest 78-9.

⁴⁰⁰ Bergmann 190.

⁴⁰¹ Preest 79.

an “imaginary figure” or her “secret beloved,” or “male or female,”⁴⁰² she vividly conveys her intense feelings.

Critics typically agree that Dickinson was influenced by the writings of Emily Brontë. Gary Lee Stonum found that though Dickinson was never identified as a man, an orphan, or a gypsy, some of her lyrics echo Heathcliff’s predicament in the second half of *Wuthering Heights*.⁴⁰³ Compared to how Heathcliff treats his beloved, both Dickinson and Brontë reside at the extreme; they treat their beloved ones as gods who can bestow their lover with full being.⁴⁰⁴ Moreover, they believe that “heaven and hell [are] dependent upon reunion with a beloved who will complete or fulfill one’s being.”⁴⁰⁵

Dickinson’s “Wild Nights” is one such poem that depicts the scene of reunion. As the poet claims in her letter that the “exultation floods me,” this poem was written based on the feeling of being flooded by strong emotions such as exultation, confidence, and sexual desire. The repetition of “Wild Nights” presents the exclamation of the speaker, and the image of ecstasy becomes the ultimate key in the poem. The word “luxury” as a description of the reunion indicates how priceless it is to the speaker. In order to express such ecstasy and sense of treasuring, the poet likens it to a bold voyage. Whether the wind is violent or the voyage is dangerous, difficulties are “futile” to the speaker. At the same time, the voyage could be completed even without a compass and a chart. It reveals that, by flooding of emotions, the speaker gives up her/his reason. The destination, or say, the consequence is of no concern, for such extreme emotions which are caused by reunion as well as adoration of the beloved are too sublime to be narrated calmly and logically.

Ultimately then, the image of an irrational voyage is likely the best description for the poet to present her ecstasy of being together with her beloved, and such extreme emotion has even surpassed the question of who the “thee” is. Dickinson frankly and freely expresses her emotions not only because she had a “god” who inspired her, but

⁴⁰² Gary Lee Stonum, “Emily’s Heathcliff: Metaphysical Love in Dickinson and Brontë,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 20.1 (2011): 22-33, at 22, *Project MUSE*, 22 September 2016.

⁴⁰³ Stonum, “Emily’s Heathcliff” 24.

⁴⁰⁴ Stonum, “Emily’s Heathcliff” 26.

⁴⁰⁵ Stonum, “Emily’s Heathcliff” 31.

also because such extreme physical feelings flood through her more violently than a traditional setting of a couple in love. Considering the aforementioned details, Dickinson's emotions are externalized unreservedly within these two condensed poems. On the one hand, readers might be surprised and sometimes even confused on what the poet presents in her poems; on the other hand, they are attracted to the strong, vigorous emotions with which they may not only identify; they may also be overwhelmed by it. Flooded with emotions is likely one element that helps Dickinson describe the imagery of immortality as well as of other subjects as voyage and others. Voyage is possibly one impressive image through which she chose to reveal her flooded emotions.

2.3 Voyage of the Boat

Dickinson is clearly interested in a boat image, for six out of nine selected voyage poems contain such an image as in "Adrift! A little boat adrift," "Whether my bark went down at sea –," "Exultation is the going" (J76/Fr143), "Twas such a little – little boat" (J107/Fr152), "Down Time's quaint stream" (J1656/Fr1721), and "It tossed – and tossed –" (J723/Fr746). Among them, "It tossed – and tossed –" depicts a shipwreck. It presents Dickinson's concentration on an imaginative accident:

It tossed – and tossed –
A little Brig I knew – o'er took by Blast –
It spun – and spun –
And groped delirious, for Morn –

It slipped – and slipped –
As One that drunken – stept –
Its white foot tripped –
Then dropped from sight –

Ah, Brig – Good Night
To Crew and You –
The Ocean's Heart too smooth – too Blue –
To break for You –

She witnesses the sinking of the brig as if she participated in a dying process of an acquaintance; with the use of personification, this acquaintance seems to be struck by an incurable disease ("o'er took by Blast").

Sibilance in the second stanza (“slipped,” “that,” “stept,” “foot,” “from,” “sight”) implies that the situation becomes more unpleasant and unfortunate. The whole dying process is uninterruptedly recorded as a lengthy experience with not only repetition of the verbs, but also the repetitive sentence structures: “It tossed – and tossed –,” “It spun – and spun –,” and “It slipped – and slipped –”; then it “tripped” as a drunken man, and finally “dropped from sight.” The tone of the poet is calm and peaceful rather than sad and depressed, and the last stanza reveals the reason: With a sigh of relief (“Ah, Brig –”) and instead of saying “goodbye” or “farewell,” Dickinson used “good night,” for the ocean, which will mourn the brig with a “too smooth” and “too blue” heart, might be a better and appropriate place for it to rest in peace.

Except for this story of a shipwreck, many scholars consider the image of Dickinson’s boat as the soul of human beings. Indeed, authors such as Melville and Richard Henry Dana, who had an indissoluble bond with the sea, describe a more realistic experience of sea voyage as well as different emotions for the ship or boat. For example, in Melville’s “Song of the Paddlers (excerpt),” the ship likens to a shark:

Dip, dip, in the brine our paddles dip,
Dip, dip, the fins of our swimming ship!
How the waters part,
As on we dart;
Our sharp prows fly,
And curl on high,
As the upright fin of the rushing shark,
Rushing fast and far on his flying mark!
Like him we prey;
Like him we slay;
Swim on the foe,
Our prow a blow!⁴⁰⁶

Spondee, sounding as drumbeat, is used to stress the imposing manner of the ship; perfect rhyme such as “dip” and “ship,” “part” and “dart,” “shark” and “mark” emphasizes the flawlessness of the ship; and similes express strength and invincibility of the ship as a shark which is a perfect creature for the sea. What is more, strong masculinity is revealed by the pronoun (“his,” “him”) and the image of a shark.

⁴⁰⁶ Herman Melville, “Song of the Paddlers (excerpt),” www.poets.org, 22 February 2019.

Aspiration, ambition, confidence, and resolution are completely presented in this poem; the poet endows the ship with all these positive emotions as well as invincible qualities.

Dana's affection to the boat is revealed by his feminine description:

[...]

The ripples lightly tap the boat.
Loose! – Give her to the wind!
She flies ahead: – They're all afloat:
The strand is far behind.

[...]

Now, like the gull that darts for prey,
The little vessel stoops;
Then, rising, shoots along her way,
Like gulls in easy swoops.

[...]

The winds are fresh – she's driving fast.
Upon the bending tide,
The crinkling sail, and crinkling mast,
Go with her side by side.

[...]⁴⁰⁷

To begin, contrast to Melville's masculine pronoun, Dana uses "she" to present not only a grace and delicate image of the boat; it also reveals his fondness to it. Then he uses eye rhyme ("wind," "behind") and perfect rhyme ("fast," "mast," "tide," "side") to visually emphasize the perfection of the boat. There are no storms and gales; the water treats the boat tenderly; and the wind is trustworthy. The agility of the boat is presented by the simile of the gull and the lissomeness is auditorily presented by "crinkling sail" and "crinkling mast." The boat is depicted as a favorite and its voyage seems to be a perfect performance.

Clearly, Dickinson shares different notions compared to Melville and Dana; if their figurative devices intend to present a vivid image of the boat, Dickinson's boat is the figure of speech which can be easily tied to Cole's boat. Additionally, Cole's intention is even clearer because the shape and the condition of his boat changes through the man's journey of life as he grows from childhood into old age. In *Childhood* and *Youth*, the boat is new and shiny, maintaining its shape and condition; however, as

⁴⁰⁷ Richard Henry Dana, "The Pleasure Boat," *Poets' Corner*, 25 February 2019, <<http://www.theotherpages.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

time elapses, the boat suffers in *Manhood*. Thus in *Old Age*, after the life-long journey the boat is damaged and loses its splendor.

Whitman also seems to similarly share the symbolism of the boat. It is generally known that Whitman's maternal sea is a famous image in his water imagery. Because he lived near the seashore during his early life, that image remained with him through the rest of his life: For example, a sea-borne life and Manhattan Island's economy were depicted in his "Mannahatta" (1860); mackerel fishing, whaling, lobstering, and boating are described in his "Song of Joys" (1860); "the sail and steamships of the world" appears as a half-page catalog in "Salut au Monde" (1856); and an extended narration on an unfortunate swimmer is included by his 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*.⁴⁰⁸

Not only did his poetry depict American sea history and develop new myths of heroism for American democracy; it is also a description of his personal and poetic biography: For instance, an idealized version of his past is presented in his "Starting from Paumanok" (1860); in his "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" (1859), images such as sea, tides, and two birds, as well as a tale of life and death allude to his awakening pact with an integrated vision of his poetic destiny as a singer of both life's pains and joys; his own impending death is revealed by a classical vision of the western seas in his "Facing West from California's Shores" (1860); and paralleling with Alfred Tennyson's "Ulysses" (1842), his "Old Age's Ship and Crafty Death's" (1890) determines to keep on the good fight in the face of declining resources and advancing age.⁴⁰⁹

Most importantly, in contrast to his description of the land as a realm of apparent stasis and certainty, his ocean is depicted as reflection of, for example, the ongoing change or uncertain outcomes.⁴¹⁰ Hence, aspiration, reality, adventure, and heroism are combined with his voyagers,⁴¹¹ as Whitman described in his "In Cabin'd Ships at Sea" (1871):

⁴⁰⁸ Philip A. Greasley, "Whitman, Walt," *Searchable Sea Literature*, 27 February 2019, <<https://sites.williams.edu>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁴⁰⁹ Greasley, "Whitman, Walt."

⁴¹⁰ Greasley, "Whitman, Walt."

⁴¹¹ Greasley, "Whitman, Walt."

[...]

*Here are our thoughts, voyagers' thoughts,
Here not the land, firm land, alone appears, may then by them
be said,*

*The sky o'erarches here, we feel the undulating deck beneath our feet,
We feel the long pulsation, ebb and flow of endless motion,
The tones of unseen mystery, the vague and vast suggestions of
the briny world, the liquid-flowing syllables,
The perfume, the faint creaking of the cordage, the
melancholy rhythm,*

The boundless vista and the horizon far and dim are all here,

[...]

Speed on my boat! spread your white sails my little bark athwart the
imperious waves,

Chant on, sail on, bear o'er the boundless blue from me to every sea,

[...]⁴¹²

Capturing the realities of both sea and shore, he poetically presents their multifaceted tones, rhythms, and ever-changing forces from the voyagers' perspective.⁴¹³ Though the poet intends to compare his *Leaves of Grass* to the voyage of a sailing ship,⁴¹⁴ his description tactiley, visually, auditorily, olfactorily, and dynamically portrays a changeable, unpredictable image of the sea; therefore, such unpredictability definitely requires the voyagers' ambition, adventure, and heroism.

Nonetheless, David Kuebrich argues that the sea appears as a major religious symbol in *Leaves of Grass*, and it establishes the thematic center of a larger pattern of aquatic symbolism in *Leaves*, including sea-breezes, rain, rivers, and other bodies of water.⁴¹⁵ Generally, the sea serves as a “symbol of the divine source of humanity and the rest of creation.”⁴¹⁶ For example, envisioning the entities of the natural world as having emerged from a divine sea, Whitman’s spiritual unity with the soil of Long Island was formed by pointing to their common emergence out of the mysterious water in his “As I Ebb’d with the Ocean of Life”; in order to establishing a sense of a timeless spiritual realm, the symbolic power of the waters of the harbor was used in his

⁴¹² “In Cabin’d Ships at Sea.”

⁴¹³ Greasley, “Whitman, Walt.”

⁴¹⁴ Greasley, “Whitman, Walt.”

⁴¹⁵ David Kuebrich, “Sea, The,” *The Walt Whitman Archive*, 28 February 2019, <<https://whitmanarchive.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁴¹⁶ Kuebrich, “Sea, The.”

“Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”; and most interestingly, his “To Old Age” discussed human beings’ death and the soul’s return to God, and it is analogized as follows, “I SEE in you the estuary that enlarges and spreads itself grandly as / it pours in the great sea.”⁴¹⁷

As Kuebrich points out, Whitman frequently draws a comparison between death and the soul’s journey into the afterlife and a ship’s voyage into the open sea.⁴¹⁸ In his “Joy, Shipmate, Joy!” he presents his merry calling to his soul at the moment of death:⁴¹⁹

JOY, shipmate, joy!
(Pleas’d to my soul at death I cry,)
Our life is closed, our life begins,
The long, long anchorage we leave,
The ship is clear at last, she leaps!
She swiftly courses from the shore,
Joy, shipmate, joy.⁴²⁰

The poet likens the soul’s human existence to a ship at anchor; the lifting of the anchor indicates that the soul is liberated and allowed to voyage to a higher stage of existence.⁴²¹ Kuebrich even argues that Whitman’s symbolism of voyage reveals his concern of adapting traditional symbols to the contemporary evolutionary science, for he creates a “new understanding of the afterlife as an ongoing process.”⁴²² Hence, the soul’s voyage after human death is never the final journey to the poet; contrarily, it is the entrance for the soul to enter a higher spiritual state.⁴²³

Even though Dickinson might share the same idea with Cole or Whitman on the implication of a boat, rather than finally reaching the final port or entering a higher realm, the tone and imagery in her boat stories reveal her complicated emotions toward the expectation of arriving at the final destination, or say, immortality. To begin, Dickinson utilizes the image of a boat for the first time around 1858 with her “Adrift! A little boat adrift!” in her voyage poems. The tone is positive and relatively optimistic:

⁴¹⁷ Kuebrich, “Sea, The.”

⁴¹⁸ Kuebrich, “Sea, The.”

⁴¹⁹ Kuebrich, “Sea, The.”

⁴²⁰ Walt Whitman, “Joy, shipmate, joy,” *The Walt Whitman Archive*, 28 February 2019, <<https://whitmanarchive.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁴²¹ Kuebrich, “Sea, The.”

⁴²² Kuebrich, “Sea, The.”

⁴²³ Kuebrich, “Sea, The.”

Adrift! A little boat adrift!
And night is coming down!
Will *no* one guide a little boat
Unto the nearest town?

So Sailors say – on yesterday –
Just as the dusk was brown
One little boat gave up its strife
And gurgled down and down.

So angels say – on yesterday –
Just as the dawn was red
One little boat – o’erspent with gales –
Retrimmed its masts – redecked its sails –
And shot – exultant on!

Farr claims that this poem is unaccomplished and the style is purposely naive; she also mentions that Dickinson was interested in the subject of shipwreck.⁴²⁴ Except for the anthropomorphic presentation of the boat, Farr elaborates on Dickinson’s seemingly identical use of the brown dusk, the red dawn, and the angels which Cole presented in his *Manhood* and *Old Age*.⁴²⁵



Old Age (First Set, 1840) (Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute)

⁴²⁴ Farr, *The Passion* 79.

⁴²⁵ Farr, *The Passion* 79-80.



Angles in the Sky



The Angel Leads the Old Man

“God’s covenant with humankind signaled by attending angels”⁴²⁶ is the recapitulation of *Old Age*. Its way of expression shares one similarity with *Childhood*: In *Childhood*, the angel steers the boat and protects the baby on its way out of the dark cave into the sunlight; here, the angel leads the old man from the dark sea into heavenly light. The boat loses its shiny and vivid color and becomes old and shabby; without the tiller and the figure of the angel, who lifts the hourglass, the damaged boat not only symbolizes the flickering stage of life; it also indicates suffering and tribulation. In the sky, there are many angels waving their hands to welcoming the old man. Rather than standing, the old man is sitting in the boat as he looks forward to being led to heaven. In order to create a sublime image, Cole uses dark colors with a plain landscape devoid of plants. Attention is specifically drawn to the sky and the boat which is sailing toward it.

Such a scene also appears in Lucy Larcom’s “A Strip of Blue”:

[...]
Sometimes they seem like living shapes, –
The people of the sky, –
Guests in white raiment coming down
From heaven, which is close by;
I call them by familiar names.
As one by one draws nigh.
So white, so light, so spirit-like,
From violet mists they bloom!
The aching wastes of the unknown
Are half reclaimed from gloom,
Since on life’s hospitable sea
All souls find sailing-room.
[...]⁴²⁷

⁴²⁶ Farr, *The Passion* 74.

⁴²⁷ Lucy Larcom, “A Strip of Blue,” *Great Poems by American Women: An Anthology*, ed. Susan L. 87

Sibilance is frequently used in this stanza to emphasize amazement, especially in the line “So white, so light, so spirit-like.” Though angels come from the sky and approach to the speaker, rather than intimacy, the speaker seems to be surrounded by a divine, friendly atmosphere but still has a sense of distance. And the distance is explained in the last stanza:

[...]
Here sit I, as a little child;
The threshold of God’s door
Is that clear band of chrysoprase;
Now the vast temple floor,
The blinding glory of the dome
I bow my head before.
Thy universe, O God, is home,
In height or depth, to me;
Yet here upon thy footstool green
Content am I to be;
Glad when is oped unto my need
Some sea-like glimpse of Thee.⁴²⁸

Even if the speaker obtains immortality, she/he still maintains humbleness. After all, as the contrast between the speaker’s “little” and the vastness, “blinding glory” of God, divinity is the essential difference. One conclusion can be drawn that both Cole and Larcom’s are pious religious believers than “pagan” Dickinson.

On Dickinson’s “Adrift,” ostensibly, the imagery of dusk, red dawn and angels can easily be related to Cole’s paintings. Preest considers the motif of this poem easily interpreted because the boat is treated metaphorically as the soul of a man that is sailing on life’s wondrous sea.⁴²⁹ Kornfeld concludes that all the images in this poem are created using conventional allusions.⁴³⁰ Concurrently, the poem may be read from a different perspective. For example, as a travel poem for children, alternate interpretations are possible. First, Dickinson is capable of being a story-teller who applies personification to tell adventures on a little boat. The first stanza creates a tense atmosphere through the use three exclamation marks to emphasize that it is getting

Rattiner (New York: Dover Publications, 1998) 75.

⁴²⁸ Larcom 76.

⁴²⁹ Preest 11.

⁴³⁰ “The Prowling Bee.”

dark but the little boat continues to float without directions. Again in the third line, the word “no” is in italics in Johnson’s edition and underlined in the poet’s manuscript as well.⁴³¹ It functions in a manner similar to the exclamation marks, for they stress a dangerous situation while creating anxiety and urgency that can be visually emphasized. Though Dickinson uses a question to end the first stanza, it is used as a begging request rather than an inquiry.

The second stanza continues by narrating an unfortunate ending: Sailors said that the boat gave up its will and sank in the dark. The third stanza stands in contrast by narrating a diametrically opposed ending in the following manner. First, the speaker changes from sailors to angels, thus moving them from mortal to immortal status. Second, the environment is transformed from brown dusk to red dawn; additionally, the attitude of the little boat is changed from giving up its struggle to overcoming difficulties in these words: “Retrimmed its masts – redecked its sails – / And shot – exultant on.” The third stanza repeats the structure of the second in order to present two different attitudes toward the little boat in a form of expression that mimics a simple, conversational child’s song. The pleasant ending to this poem offers a kind of relief and solace. At the same time, Dickinson’s words offer some educational value for children: To those who are pessimistic, she offers brown dusk and a dead boat; to those who are more optimistic, they find inspiration in bright colors.

Dickinson seems to have satisfied her writing goal in this poem. It is likely she held the same vision presented by Cole in *Old Age*: The boat was saved and sailed under the guidance of an angel. Whether it expresses conventional imagery or a naïve way of viewing the world, the poem shares the same positive attitude and faith with “On this wondrous sea,” meaning the boat will survive and arrive at its final destination. Though she creates two voices as she did in “On this wondrous sea,” the last stanza of each poem offers a determined response.

Written later the same year as “Adrift,” Dickinson seems powerless to control her boat in “Whether my bark went down at sea –”:

⁴³¹ “Emily Dickinson Archive.”

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

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

Helplessness and gentle sadness fill this poem; an 8676 stanza followed by a shorter 6575 stanza reveals low spirit. On the surface, the speaker is worried whether the bark went for a voyage, how its voyage was, and where it stopped. She has indeed already known that on the feat of the bark, she/he is powerless. The past tense of the first stanza and the present tense of the second stanza indicate that the speaker lost contact with the bark since it began its voyage with arriving at a destination. The last two lines present conflicting emotions. On the one hand, disappearing without a trace is an irrefutable fact, and to look “Out upon the Bay” is the only thing a helpless heart can do. On the other hand, the poem depicts the journey of the bark with images like “sea,” “gale,” “isles enchanted,” and “mystic mooring” – here the poet seems to accept the traditional idea and sequence that Cole presents in *Voyage*. Though she reveals a certain expectation through an “errand” for “the eye,” she seems still haunted by uncertainty.

Uncertainty weakens the expectation. Written around 1859, “Exultation is the going” is another poem that expresses contradictory emotions:

Exultation is the going
Of an inland soul to sea,
Past the houses – past the headlands –
Into deep Eternity –

Bred as we, among the mountains,
Can the sailor understand
The divine intoxication
Of the first league out from land?

Two 8787 stanzas reveal the contradiction and suspicion. Cristanne Miller, a panel member at a conference named “Dickinson’s Encounters with the East,” points out that

the “deep eternity” undoubtedly represents death.⁴³² In one of her poems, “Across the River,” Larcom also showed anxiety toward death:

WHEN for me the silent oar
Parts the Silent River,
And I stand upon the shore
Of the strange Forever,
Shall I miss the loved and known?
Shall I vainly seek mine own?

Mid the crowd that come to meet
Spirits sin-forgiven, –
Listening to their echoing feet
Down the streets of heaven, –
Shall I know a footstep near
That I listen, wait for here?
[...]⁴³³

Though the speaker does not fear to cross the river in the end, sibilance, dashes, question marks, repetition of the sentence structure, and the capitalized “Forever” reveal the intense hesitation and uncertainty.

Gender might be a reason for both Dickinson and Larcom’s trepidation; additionally, in Dickinson’s “Exultation is the going,” Miller also claims that there is a veiled allusion here which is considered as an archetype of Westerners’ travel to a timeless East.⁴³⁴ To Paul Giles, Dickinson’s poetry not only documents the prevalence of volcanoes and earthquakes; it also returns frequently to the idea that there is somewhere a mutation in which the wider ocean erodes human perspectives.⁴³⁵ It is as the poet once wrote to Susan, “I live in the Sea always” (L306), or as she offered an interface between geocentric perspectives and anthropocentric perspective, which helps the poet locate her metaphorically-presented vision in this poem.⁴³⁶

⁴³² Georgiana Strickland, “Dickinson’s Encounters with the East,” *Emily Dickinson International Society Bulletin* 19.2 (2007):12, 34, at 34, 15 October 2014, <<http://www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁴³³ Lucy Larcom, “Across the River,” *American Verse Project*, 27 February 2019, <<https://quod.lib.umich.edu>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁴³⁴ Strickland 34.

⁴³⁵ Paul Giles, “The Earth reversed her Hemispheres”: Dickinson’s Global Antipodality,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 20.1 (2011):1-21, at 6, *Project MUSE*, 20 August 2017.

⁴³⁶ Giles 6.

Though the image of a boat is not mentioned in “Exultation is the going,” Dickinson maintains visions of Cole’s *Voyage* through the following connections. She references the “interface” as “an inland soul” and “sea”; “houses,” “headlands,” and “deep Eternity”; and “among the mountains” and “out from land.” The poet clarifies her notion of exultation through various stages. Generally speaking, it is a distant journey which involves the alternating places that are completely different. In order to further portray distance, three images reveal geographic alteration: “Houses” represent human habitation that the “inland soul” has to pass to enter unfrequented places like the “headlands.” In spite of these watery allusions, the sea is not the final destination which will be reached when they continue to the “deep Eternity.”

As Jed Deppman explains in his essay, “Exultation is the going” the expression should belong to Dickinson’s definition poetry. As an important component of her poetry, the definition poems have Dickinson’s “most focused and topical thinking.”⁴³⁷ She uses essentials to “seize and present the fundamental essence or component parts of an experience or concept.”⁴³⁸ For example, she wrote “The Truth – is stirless –”

⁴³⁷ Jed Deppman, “‘I Could Not Have Defined the Change’: Rereading Dickinson’s Definition Poetry,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 11.1 (2002):49-80, at 49, *Project MUSE*, 1 May 2016.

⁴³⁸ Deppman also introduces Dickinson’s other eight “definitional gestures” in his essay, and except for “essentials,” they are “dialecticals,” which means “two opposing terms are introduced and defined by interdependent contrast and comparison,” for example: “Life is death we’re lengthy at / Death is the hinge to life” (Fr502); “differential,” which means the analysis of “fine distinctions between neighboring concepts,” for example: “Suspense – is Hostiler than Death –” (J705/Fr775); “surprising facts,” which means “the poems announce and inform, asking and teaching us to see what we otherwise might have missed. Often they can be implicitly prefaced by a clause such as ‘Did you know that . . . ?’ or ‘Would you believe that . . . ,’” for example: “Did we fully realize, for example, that ‘God is a distant, stately lover’, that ‘Pain – has an Element of Blank –’” (J650/Fr760); “self-corrections,” which means “poems circle around a topic without ever reaching a conclusive statement,” for example: in “‘Nature’ is what we see –” (J668/Fr721) the poet corrects herself several times during the definition before remarking that ‘our wisdom’ is ‘impotent’ to ‘her simplicity’”; “multiple entries,” which means “Dickinson devoted several different definition poems” for some important topics, and those “‘flood subjects’ include, among others, death, grief, shame, God, hope, fame, nature, and forms of ecstasy”; “shades of meaning,” which means the “poems treat several forms of the same concept or feeling and demonstrate both Dickinson’s dissatisfaction with received categories and meanings and her willingness to work with and polish them, like Webster, rather than seek refuge in neologisms,” for example: “There is another loneliness” (J1116/Fr1138); “anti-definitions,” which means “Dickinson sometimes defines ideas or experiences on the paradoxical grounds that they are, precisely, ineffable or undefinable,” for example: “Heaven is what I cannot reach” (J239/Fr310); and “embedded definitions,” which means Dickinson frequently “includes

(J780/Fr882), and another example is how she defines exultation. Indeed, the “most undefinable of concepts and experiences” such as exultation can activate the definitional impulse of Dickinson.⁴³⁹

Therefore, the process of “the going / Of an inland soul to sea, / Past the houses – past the headlands – Into deep Eternity” is the fundamental essence or component parts in experiencing exultation, which cannot be changed. Hence, the contradictory emotion arises in the second stanza and also has two interpretations: On the one hand, Dickinson expresses her distrust because she does not think that the sailor who might only focus upon the voyage can be on the same emotional stage with her while also truly understanding the significance and the “divine intoxication” of traveling to “deep eternity.” On the other hand, her trepidation is revealed not only because “Bred as we, among the mountains,” but also because no one has a second chance to experience the so-called immortality, meaning it is the one and only chance to experience exultation. She is therefore unwilling to feel any disappointment.

In “’Twas such a little – little boat,” also written around 1859, a sarcastic tone is revealed in describing the misfortune of a boat:

’Twas such a little – little boat
That toddled down the bay!
’Twas such a gallant – gallant sea
That beckoned it away!

’Twas such a greedy, greedy wave
That licked it from the Coast –
Nor ever guessed the stately sails
My little craft was *lost*!

Instead of showing any kind of expectation or focusing upon exultant experience or eternity, the poem presents an unusual image of seas toward the misfortune of the little boat. The repetition of sentence structure (“’Twas such a”) and of adjectives (“little,” “gallant” and “greedy”) offers a notable characteristic. On the one hand, the poet repeats the word “little” to present the powerless, innocent nature of the boat; on the other hand,

short, definitional thrusts in other poems,” for example: “Power is only Pain / Stranded – thro’ Discipline / Till Weights – will hang –” (J252/Fr312). Deppman, “Definition Poetry” 53-6.

⁴³⁹ Deppman, “Definition Poetry” 52.

she repeats words such as “gallant” and “greedy” to create a negative image of the sea which is about to absorb the little craft. Ostensibly, the repetition creates an impression of a nursery rhyme, but the tone is perfunctory rather than simple-hearted. Dickinson uses “gallant” to stress the greatness and supremeness of the sea; nonetheless the word “greedy” indicates that the boat does not travel voluntarily. It is instead seduced by the gallant sea, for Dickinson uses “toddled down” to personify the boat as a toddler, new and fresh to the world, inexperienced at voyaging, and is “licked” by the waves. Rather than arriving at the final destination, the little boat becomes “*lost*” (Johnson italicized the word in his edition and Dickinson underlined it in her manuscripts).⁴⁴⁰

Seduction is also revealed in Cole’s *Youth*. The painting is described as “sin and suffering through pride and ambition”⁴⁴¹ as follows:



Youth (First set, 1840)
(Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute)



The Angel and the Young Man

Exotic trees flourish along the river under a clean, blue sky where a white castle hovers, as a mirage. A young man steers the boat by himself on a river while the angel is on the shore waving goodbye. The young man seems eager to journey because his “forward-thrusting pose and billowing clothes”⁴⁴² reveal his purpose. The peaceful water and the luxuriant plants symbolize a smooth and prosperous life; thus, youth is easily seduced by pride and ambition. Whether it is the naivety that causes the suffering in *Manhood*, the young man has finally saved by the angel as he reached his destination.

⁴⁴⁰ “Emily Dickinson Archive.”

⁴⁴¹ Farr, *The Passion* 74.

⁴⁴² Sandra L. Bertman, “Cole, Thomas, Voyage of Life: Childhood/Youth/Manhood/Old Age,” *Art Annotations*, 16 February 2015, <<http://litmed.med.nyu.edu>>. Path: Search Esquire.

Nonetheless, rather than presenting the sin of the self, Dickinson's imagery describes the sin of the sea. If the sea in this poem still represents immortality, the misfortune of the young soul is not because of its innocence; instead, it is magnificence and greed which lures the soul to self-destruct. Sarcasm is not only revealed by the contrast between littleness and grandeur or innocence and sophistication, but also by the final "lost." Dickinson intends to visually impress the reader with the astonishing nature of the final result by using the combination of italicization and exclamation. To her, immortality seems too sublime to be known, and it even becomes the origin of seduction to mortals as her.

And in the undated "Down Time's quaint stream," the sarcasm becomes even more obvious, though the poet expresses the voyage in a humorous way:

Down Time's quaint stream
Without an oar
We are enforced to sail
Our Port a secret
Our Perchance a Gale
What Skipper would
Incur the Risk
What Buccaneer would ride
Without a surety from the Wind
Or schedule of the Tide –

First, she creates an ambiguity in the first line of this poem. Either "time" represents "life" or it indicates "mortality."⁴⁴³ Hence, there are at least two interpretations: Firstly, if the former meaning is applied, it could be a description of the transcendental experience to the poet.⁴⁴⁴ Moreover, as R.C. Allen claims, Dickinson depicts "her own experience as a transcendentalist in situ, as it were" because though some transcendentalists such as Thoreau chose to live a secluded life, Dickinson decided to share her life with her family and some close friends.⁴⁴⁵ Therefore, she thinks that she is "enforced to sail" while the "port" remains secret for her just as "her growing stash of poems"⁴⁴⁶ remains unknown to the world.

⁴⁴³ "Emily Dickinson Lexicon."

⁴⁴⁴ R.C. Allen, *Emily Dickinson: Accidental Buddhist* (Indiana: Trafford, 2007) 196.

⁴⁴⁵ Allen 196.

⁴⁴⁶ Allen 196.

Secondly, if the latter is applied, the voyage is set to travel into immortality. In contrast to “time’s *quaint* stream” (emphasis mine), it seems that “we” have no preparation (“Without an oar”) but begin a dangerous (“Our Perchance a Gale”) and unknown (“Our Port a secret”) journey by force (“We are enforced to sail”). Suspicion and unwillingness are revealed in a couple of ways. Neither a skipper nor a buccaneer would accept the hazards and difficulties. At the same time, “without an oar” and “enforced to sail” indicate that there is no choice for mortals who have only one destination for their afterlife. The sarcasm is humorously presented by asking a rhetorical question that even a skipper and a buccaneer, two of the most experienced people on a voyage, can answer quickly: The voyage is reckless “Without a surety from the Wind / Or schedule of the Tide.”

Regardless of Dickinson’s ironic or suspicious attitude, she still seems to believe there will be a real though secret port. As she wrote, “If my Bark sink / ’Tis to another sea – / Mortality’s Ground Floor / Is Immortality –” (J1234/Fr1250). Whether how those contradictory emotions linger, “immortality” is a consolation which might exist in the subconscious. As in a letter to Higginson which was written around 1881 when she was about fifty years old, the following words finish her thoughts:

“Go traveling with us!”
Her travels daily be
By routes of ecstasy
To evening’s Sea – (J1513/Fr1561)

The poem was written as a greeting to Higginson’s newborn daughter Margaret on July 25, 1881. After expressing her joy and her best wishes, Dickinson wrote this poem with the first line as a call to presumably speak to the baby.⁴⁴⁷ “Us” represents the parents and herself⁴⁴⁸ to bless the baby that her journey of life will be on the “routes of ecstasy” and will finally arrive at the “evening’s sea.”

In his first painting *Childhood*, Cole portrayed a baby who starts its journey by the lead and guardianship of an angel:

⁴⁴⁷ Preest 458.

⁴⁴⁸ Preest 458.



Childhood (First Set, 1840)
(Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute)



The Angel and the Baby

Roughly two-thirds of the canvas is filled with a cave enveloped by dark, heavy clouds thus creating a state of solemnity. It may be the morning sunshine that breaks up the clouds and gilds the rocks which brings warmth to the land. Some critics claim the blooming flowers on and around the water symbolize “spring” and an “awakening.” *Manhood* and *Old Age* stands in contrast with the flower-filled boat in *Childhood*. With the angel standing behind to steer the boat while looking at the baby with tender care, the baby raises its arms to express excitement as it begins a new journey. On the prow, a statue of an angel holds an hourglass while the boat is sailing and without oars in peaceful water.

With or without intending to express any religious belief, this four-line poem coincidentally conforms to the theme of Cole’s *Voyage*. Firstly, the tone of the first line reveals a joyful, energetic spirit. Not only does Dickinson use quotation marks to make this sentence stand out in the poem; she also uses an exclamation point to emphasize excitement. Her words imply an optimism and confidence over the journey they are about to begin. Secondly, the word “us” provides the reader with a sense of intimacy. With the cordial tone, the first line reveals an image of a delightful journey similar to the one Cole portrays in *Childhood*. The journey is even more joyful and safer because the newborn is under the protection and guidance of more friends and relatives. Moreover, the image of “routes of ecstasy” and “evening’s sea” resembles what Cole depicted in *Youth* and *Old Age*.

Nevertheless, if Cole's four paintings represent a complete religious process of human beings' development through time to immortality that one might expect, there are two different meanings why Dickinson avoids mentioning the imagery in *Manhood*. As a congratulatory note, she naturally extends her best wishes, meaning the baby is honored with the wish that it might have smooth, ecstatic sailing in her journey of life without any suffering or difficulty. Hence, she avoids the imagery in *Manhood*. At the same time, though she reveals apprehension, irony, disappointment, and suspicion in different "stories" of the boat, in this one, Dickinson presents the confidence and optimism which was seen for the first time in the last stanza of "Adrift! A little boat adrift." It implies that except for politeness, she might hold that immortality could be reached through voyage. For her, voyage is an imaginative travel in reality, but it is a real travel in her mind.

To sum up, from the poems that are discussed above, Dickinson's complicated emotion toward the expectation of arriving at the final destination, or say immortality, is revealed by the imagery of contrast, contradiction, sarcasm, and optimism. Unlike Melville and Dana's direct, specific depiction of a boat, Dickinson's boat image bears the weight of her contradictory emotion and expectation. Compared to Larcom's piety and Whitman's joy, it is hesitation that ligers in Dickinson's verses. Whether the boat symbolizes the development of human beings' life from beginning to end or embodies the poet's hope, Dickinson's complicated expectation revealed by the changing tone and description contains her personal philosophy on whether mortals similar to her might arrive at the final destination.

In short, this chapter intends to explore Dickinson's early years' creation of travel. Voyage poems present her passion; they also reveal her deep thinking on life's journey and eventual immortality. Though voyage remains in her imagination, one inspiration that encourages her is "the going / Of an inland soul to sea," for it is in the going that she might have chance to experience so-called "exultation." The first section of the chapter attempts to analyze a dynamic process of how her emotion floods through her and affects her creation; whether the resoluteness in "On this wondrous sea" or the ecstasy in "Wild Nights – Wild Nights," Dickinson's passionate desire is fully revealed

by the imagery of tempestuous water and brave voyage. The second section collects poems on the image of a boat, revealing her rumination on the afterlife. Though immortality is one of her primary concerns, her emotions on her final arrival are complicated; and all this passion and its related difficulty work together to accomplish her voyage imagery.

3. Sky Travel: Dickinson and Aesthetics

During Dickinson's frequent periods of isolation in her bedroom, one wonders what she thought as she looked out her window toward the sky. Brad Ricca argues that her imagery on sky was more than simply a pastime; it was also a deeply poetic and a highly semiotic enterprise.⁴⁴⁹ Though her only astronomy textbook during her school time was *A Compendium of Astronomy* (1841) by Denison Olmsted, a Yale professor who was engaged in the study of natural philosophy,⁴⁵⁰ the brightness of her cosmic lexicon⁴⁵¹ is strong proof of her enthusiasm toward the stellar phenomenon. There are numerous examples of her thinking in her poetry: "As if no soul the solstice passed / That maketh all things new –" (J322/Fr325), "The Earth reversed her Hemispheres – / I touched the Universe –" (J378/Fr633), "I reckon – when I count at all – / First – Poets – Then the Sun – / Then Summer – Then the Heaven of God –" (J569/Fr533), "When the Astronomer stops seeking / For his Pleiad's Face –" (J851/Fr957), "Unto Us – the Suns extinguish – / To our Opposite – / New Horizons – they embellish –" (J972/Fr839), "Aurora is the effort / Of the Celestial Face" (J1002/Fr1002), etc.

As Whitman proclaimed, a more interesting and meaningful way of learning astronomy was to abandon the "proofs," the "figures," all kinds of "charts" and "diagrams," and even the "astronomer" who lectured, though the lecture seemed successful with full knowledge and applause; then to wander off "[i]n the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time, / Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars."⁴⁵² Whitman pursued the accuracy, impressiveness, and feeling of being involved in nature. Dickinson too followed these pursuits because of her lifestyle and the influence of

⁴⁴⁹ Brad Ricca, "Emily Dickinson: Learn'd Astronomer," *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 9.2 (2000): 96-108, at 96, *Project MUSE*, 18 June 2017.

⁴⁵⁰ Ricca 98.

⁴⁵¹ Ricca 96.

⁴⁵² See Whitman's "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer."

Transcendentalism. Thus, her cosmic lexicon reveals more of her belief regarding the sky as a natural affirmation to words and meaning through which she can express her metaphorical depictions doubtlessly and unhesitatingly.⁴⁵³

3.1 A Little Road in the Sky

People of the nineteenth century were less familiar with the sky than the land; nonetheless, its colorfulness, changeableness, and immensity can be easily observed by raising one's head. Since it is an enterprise for Dickinson to fully practice her skyward poetic views, it is imaginable that she would incorporate the sky into her writing. For example, in "A little Road – not made of Man –" (J647/Fr758), she describes an image of a road which is too delicate to be accessed by human beings:

A little Road – not made of Man –

Enable of the Eye –

Accessible to Thill of Bee –

Or Cart of Butterfly –

If Town it have – beyond itself –

'Tis that – I cannot say –

I only know – no Currie that rumble there

Bear Me –

Christopher D. Morris suggests that Dickinson's meditation on a road might be taken as feminist manifesto, for the little road she describes is not made of man.⁴⁵⁴ Preest carries it a step further by stating that Dickinson might be looking at the sky and imagining that there is a little road which is not made by human beings; nevertheless, that little road may lead to Heaven.⁴⁵⁵ The "town" in the above poem is subject to various interpretations. It may be an ideal place for female freedom if the poet presented her feminist manifesto; it could be heaven if she expressed her uncertainty over whether she could reach it; or, it could be the home of bees and butterflies or any elves of nature that live somewhere in the sky if only she could envision such a wonderland.

In this poem, the first stanza specifically states that the road does not belong to the human realm because it cannot be walked. Furthermore, in order to explain how

⁴⁵³ Ricca 103.

⁴⁵⁴ Christopher D. Morris, *The Figure of the Road: Deconstructive Studies in Humanities Disciplines* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007) 47.

⁴⁵⁵ Preest 218.

non-human the road is, the poet presents two examples on which only “till of bee” or “cart of butterfly” can travel. However, the second stanza does not continue the magical, mysterious process of depiction; instead, it expresses depression and doubt as the tone changes from joyful to satiric. If the first stanza describes a sort of Fairyland atmosphere, it is interrupted by the fact that “no Currie that rumble[s] there” to take the poet to the place she expects.

It is captivating that Dickinson uses three different words to present the method of transport. First, she applies synecdoche, using “thill” to represent the wagon of bees; second, she then uses “cart,” another simple wagon for butterflies; finally, she imagines that there may be a currie as her mode of transportation if it is willing to take her to the “town.” It is commonly known that some insects such as bees or butterflies are the poet’s favorite subjects. In this poem, they are personified again as having natural privileges to travel on the road. They have proprietary traveling tools, for “thill,” “cart,” and “currie” convey that idea. “Thill of bee” and “cart of butterfly” are apt descriptions for travel; at the same time, “currie” could be the poet’s travel tool, but she doubts it will take her to travel on the little road.

Whether it is the reason that causes her ironic and slightly pessimistic tone in the second stanza (a long line with twelve syllables followed by a short line with two syllables to some degree reveals a sarcastic tone), the image of the sky route is vividly portrayed on both an auditory level (sound of bees) and a visual level (color of butterflies). This image of a road stands in contrast to the situation she creates in her poem for her favorite creatures. She cannot travel on this little road because she has no wings and she seems to be abandoned by her only possible means of transportation. Furthermore, her regret contrasts with the unattainable route which is privileged for “someone,” and such regret is even more important than the destination she claims to know but in reality remains unknown to her. Though she apparently has failed in her travel attempt, the reader is left to imagine a fancy, exceptional route.

Succinctly then, the poem demonstrates that Dickinson extends the possibility of travel to the sky. At the same time, sky represents the other space that is the opposite of land. It symbolizes the different celestial bodies and astronomical phenomena of the sky

which bears little resemblance to human activities, but it offers a source for poets to practice their art. Additionally, in the literary tradition, sky is a particular space that indicates freedom and heaven. Therefore, as many nineteenth-century American travel writers, Dickinson attempts to portray her adoration for this destination as well, regardless of what she might believe or seek.

3.2 The West Sea

It is always exhilarating to envision if human beings have wings as birds hovering in the sky. When airplanes had not become one of the mass transportations, birds seemed to be a major symbol of sky conquerors. Walt Whitman's "To the Man-of-War-Bird" is a convincing example.⁴⁵⁶ After a stormy night on the sea, the speaker seemed frightened and weak ("Myself a speck, a point on the world's floating vast."); whereas, the frigate bird "hast slept all night upon the storm, / Waking renew'd on they prodigious pinions."⁴⁵⁷ It was not defeated by the storm; it enslaved the sky and made it its cradle.⁴⁵⁸ In contrast to the speaker, it was "a blue point, far, far in heaven floating"; more importantly, it "born[ed] to match the gale, [...] / To cope with heaven and earth and sea and hurricane."⁴⁵⁹ Whitman not only specifically and vividly described the frigate bird from its flight; he also expressed his amazement, envy, and glorification for its capability of flying in the sky and of confronting the perilous nature.

Moreover, birds represent the power of nature as Henry David Thoreau wrote in his "To a Marsh Hawk in Spring." Though a marsh hawk might be seen as a "modern-winged antique" and even be questioned, "[w]as thy mistress ever sick", the poet claims that

There is health in thy gray wing,
Health of nature's furnishing.
[...]
In each heaving of thy wing
Thou dost health and leisure bring,
Thou dost waive disease and pain

⁴⁵⁶ Walt Whitman, "To the Man-of-War-Bird," *The Walt Whitman Archive*, 20 January 2019, <<https://whitmanarchive.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁴⁵⁷ "To the Man-of-War-Bird."

⁴⁵⁸ "To the Man-of-War-Bird."

⁴⁵⁹ "To the Man-of-War-Bird."

And resume new life again.⁴⁶⁰

The hawk will be reborn only if it uses its talent and takes a flight. Birds are blessed and represent fearlessness and faith in William Cullen Bryant's "To a Waterfowl." Based on a biblical prototype, the poet praised that

[...]

There is a Power, whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast, –
The desert and illimitable air
Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold thin atmosphere;
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
Though the dark night is near.

[...]⁴⁶¹

The alternating rhyme scheme reveals a suffering but uncompromising progress of traveling to a final destination. Birds also represent souls which should be free but are trapped and tortured in Richard Henry Dana's "The Little Beach-Bird." After describing the bird's miserable situation through the aspects of its voice ("melancholy voice," "boding cry," "Thy cry is weak and scared"), movements ("Thy flitting form comes ghostly dim and pale, / As driven by a beating storm at sea"), and habitat ("both sepulchre [sic] and pall," "thy gloomy cell"), the poet invited the bird to "quit with [him] the shore, / For gladness and the light, / Where birds of summer sing."⁴⁶²

Mostly, birds in Dickinson's poetry play the role of a singer, as she described in "A feather from the Whippoorwill / That everlasting – sing!" (J161/Fr208), "The Birds begun at Four o'clock – [...] / A Music numerous as space –" (J783/Fr504), "The most triumphant Bird I ever knew or met [...] sang for nothing scrutable / But intimate Delight" (J1265/Fr1285), "[...] Nature imparts the little Blue-Bird – assured / Her conscientious Voice will soar unmoved / [...] Her panting note exalts us – like a friend –" etc.; or a messenger, as she depicted in "The Birds reported from the South / A News express to Me –" (J743/Fr780), "The Robin is the One / That interrupt the Morn / With

⁴⁶⁰ Henry David Thoreau, "To a Marsh Hawk in Spring," www.poetryfoundation.org, 20 January 2019.

⁴⁶¹ William Cullen Bryant, "To a Waterfowl," www.poetryfoundation.org, 21 January 2019.

⁴⁶² Richard Henry Dana, "The Little Beach-Bird," *Early American Poets*, ed. Louis Untermeyer (NE: iUniverse.com, 2001) 74.

hurried – few – express Reports” (J828/Fr501) etc.

It seems that Dickinson’s birds are portrayed as a returner rather than an adventurer who eagerly expects to travel. Her sky is in fact occupied by another “object” – the picturesque sunset; the west sky provides her possibilities to travel the ethereal sea. To begin, most of her sky travel poems create impressive visual imagery, or say, sublime. In her 2004 book *The Gardens of Emily Dickinson*, Judith Farr emphasizes that Dickinson was greatly influenced by nineteenth-century landscape paintings.⁴⁶³ She claims the poem “Bloom upon the Mountain – stated –” (J667/Fr787) for example is a most painterly poem.⁴⁶⁴ She additionally indicates the sunset images by painters of the Hudson River School are known to Dickinson.⁴⁶⁵ Among those works, one can include *Sunset* (1856) by Frederic Edwin Church, *A Lake Twilight* (1861) by Sanford Gifford, and *Twilight on Shawangunk Mountain* (1865) by Worthington Whittredge.⁴⁶⁶

Though the poet’s fondness for these paintings was unproved, the fact is that many painters of her time were influenced by the aesthetics of Edmund Burke.⁴⁶⁷ For example, the right half of Cole’s *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* practices Burke’s principles of beauty. There are impressive waterfalls, beautiful gardens, and luxuriant tress, all indicating grace and delicacy of Eden.⁴⁶⁸ At the same time, the left half of the painting is filled with dark colors, dangerous animals, blasted trees, and grotesque rocks, all indicating the suffering and exile of Adam and Eve⁴⁶⁹ as follows:

⁴⁶³ Judith Farr (with Louise Carter), *The Gardens of Emily Dickinson* (Massachusetts: HUP, 2004) 202.

⁴⁶⁴ Farr, *The Gardens* 202.

⁴⁶⁵ Farr, *The Gardens* 202.

⁴⁶⁶ Farr, *The Gardens* 202.

⁴⁶⁷ Farr, *The Passion* 82. First of all, “the single most important concern of eighteenth-century British aesthetics” was the discussion of the “sublime,” and generally speaking, “sublime” was used as a “category” that critics “could place aesthetic pleasures exclude from neoclassical ideas of beauty.” And Edmund Burke contributed significantly because “he explained the opposition of beauty and sublimity by a physiological theory;” and “[h]e made the opposition of pleasure and pain the source of the two aesthetic categories, deriving beauty from pleasure and sublimity from pain.” His use of “this physiological theory of beauty and sublimity makes him the first English writer to offer a purely aesthetic explanation of these effects,” which means “Burke was the first to explain beauty and sublimity purely in terms of the process of perception and its effect upon the perceiver.” Cf. “The Sublime,” *The Victorian Web*, 1 August 2015, <<http://www.victorianweb.org/philosophy/sublime/sublimeov.html>>.

⁴⁶⁸ Farr, *The Passion* 82.

⁴⁶⁹ Farr, *The Passion* 82.



Expulsion from the Garden of Eden (1828) (Museum of the Fine Arts)

Cole thereby utilizes Burke's theory of the sublime.⁴⁷⁰ According to the principles of the sublime, anything that stimulates thoughts of pain, danger, or anything terrible, can be considered a source of the sublime; the mind feels the strongest emotion that is caused by those terrors.⁴⁷¹ Further, since terror causes unnatural tension and certain violent emotions of the nerves, anything that causes a tension can be seen as a source of terror and may exist without the feeling of danger; at the same time, it causes sublime.⁴⁷²

Except for the influence of the Anglo-Irish philosopher, painters especially from the Hudson River School were also affected by transcendental principles. For example, as the first man of the American Sublime,⁴⁷³ Emerson claimed that for a poet,

[t]hou shalt have the whole land for thy park and boarders. Thou true land-lord! sea-lord! air-lord! Wherever snow falls or water flow or birds fly, wherever day and night meet in twilight, wherever the blue heaven is hung by clouds or snow with stars, wherever are forms with transparent boundaries, wherever are outlets into celestial space, wherever is danger, and awe, and love, – there is Beauty, plenteous as rain, shed for thee, and though thou shouldest walk the world over,

⁴⁷⁰ Farr, *The Passion* 82.

⁴⁷¹ Farr, *The Passion* 82-3; Edmund Burke, "A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful," 1 August 2015, <<https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁴⁷² "Sublime and Beautiful."

⁴⁷³ Joanne Feit Diehl, *Women Poets and the American Sublime* (Indiana: Indiana UP, 1990) 1.

thou shalt not be able to find a condition inopportune or ignoble.⁴⁷⁴

Interestingly, American sublime experienced an ideological sea-change crossing the Atlantic.⁴⁷⁵ As Rob Wilson further explains, one might well speculate that the Enlightenment sublime represented the “unrepresentable, confronted privation”; it forced language to reach the utmost limits in order to envision the immense nature and “stellar infinitude as the subject’s innermost ground.”⁴⁷⁶ Therefore, the Americanization of this sublime rhetoric represented the “interiorization of national” which is regarded as an “inalienable ground” of the Americanized oneself.⁴⁷⁷ Through representation of a landscape which was immense and wide open to multiple identifications, the consolidation of an American identity was helped by the American sublime.⁴⁷⁸ Therefore, as Emerson described, from every part of nature to whatever feelings of danger, awe, and love, there is beauty.⁴⁷⁹ And Americans own the beauty while at the same time feeling the sublime because the whole land is their park and boarders; they are the land-lords, sea-lords, and air-lords.⁴⁸⁰

Dickinson was, as Shawn Alfrey observes, a “partisan of the sublime.”⁴⁸¹ While Farr names Dickinson’s poems of sunrise, sunset, storm, and snowfall, the landscape poems, she believes that the moments of beauty or sublimity, which are revealed in these poems, are also contemporaneously presented in some the works of the Hudson River School⁴⁸² as represented by artists such as Cole, Church, Gifford, and Whittredge. Meanwhile, due to the special significance of Cole and the Hudson River School on

⁴⁷⁴ “Essays, Second Series.”

⁴⁷⁵ Rob Wilson, “Introduction,” *American Sublime: The Genealogy of a Poetic Genre* (Wisconsin: The U of Wisconsin, 1991) 4.

⁴⁷⁶ Wilson 5.

⁴⁷⁷ Wilson 5.

⁴⁷⁸ Wilson 5.

⁴⁷⁹ “Essays, Second Series.”

⁴⁸⁰ “Essays, Second Series.”

⁴⁸¹ Critics discuss Dickinson sublime in various aspects. For example, except for Shawn Alfrey, Jed Deppman examines “the limit of being” in poem 1558, “Of Death I try to think like this –” of his essay “Dickinson, Death, and the Sublime;” and having realized the “tremendous affective intensity” of Dickinson’s poetry, Dominic Luxford writes the essay, “Sounding the Sublime: The ‘Full Music’ of Dickinson’s Inspiration” to explore “the effects of the sonic quality of language” in her poems. Cf. Shawn Alfrey, “Against Calvary: Emily Dickinson and the Sublime,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 7.2 (1998): 48-64, at 48, *Project MUSE*, 15 April 2018; Jed Deppman, “Dickinson, Death, and the Sublime,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 9.1 (2000): 1-20, *Project MUSE*, 15 April 2018; Dominic Luxford, “Sounding the Sublime: The ‘Full Music’ of Dickinson’s Inspiration,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 13.1 (2004): 51-75, *Project MUSE*, 15 April 2018.

⁴⁸² Farr, *The Passion* 82-3.

defining the American identity, Dickinson was certainly influenced by the Americanized sublime. Still, Alfrey claims that the poet's well-known previously mentioned statement of poetry distinguished her work by her physical feelings is "clearly a sublime shock."⁴⁸³ This sort of sublime shock is the so-called tension. Burke further explained it by a physiological theory of pleasure-pain, opposite feelings which belong to different categories of aesthetics.⁴⁸⁴ Beauty derives from pleasure, while sublimity derives from pain, for the pleasure of beauty is able to relax the fibers of the body; consequently, sublimity tightens those fibers.⁴⁸⁵

Therefore, as Alfrey points out, though Dickinson was strongly enthusiastic in sublimity, it is still troublesome for critics who must decide which mode of sublime she intended to relate.⁴⁸⁶ Whether Dickinson's sublime is Americanized or physiological, they are not contradictory to one another when reading her poems. In fact, in her sky travel poems, one mode interacts with the other, and both of them enrich the reading of the images of traveling. The following paragraphs explore the imagery in the sky travel poems and the poet's thinking of temporality and eternity through discussion of mingled sublime and her notion of circumference.

3.2.1 The Mingled Sublime: Color and Astonishment

Apparently Dickinson extends her voyage to the sky. Poems such as "Where Ships of Purple – gently toss" (J265/Fr296), "This – is the land – the Sunset washes" (J266/Fr297), and "A Sloop of Amber slips away" (J1622/Fr1599) vividly describe the oceanic sky of which the archetype is in fact the sunset. Generally speaking, the most noticeable feature of a sunset is its magnificent array of colors. As Dickinson portrayed in "Of Yellow was the outer Sky" (J1676/Fr1733), the repetition of the word "yellow" on the one hand emphasizes the purity of the sunset color; on the other hand, it indicates that the golden sunlight penetrates the yellow "background" and enriches the layers of color. Furthermore, she captured the gradation of the color from saffron to vermillion as the sun descended. As a whole, the poem is filled with saturated, warm colors precisely

⁴⁸³ Alfrey 48.

⁴⁸⁴ "The Sublime."

⁴⁸⁵ "The Sublime."

⁴⁸⁶ Alfrey 48.

selected to present the imagery of a sunset.

Nevertheless, according to Burke, the cheerful colors as a shining green turf on a mountain, the blue sky, or white, yellow, light red, violet, or spotted in materials and ornaments of buildings cannot create grand images; at the same time, they cannot produce the sublime.⁴⁸⁷ Contrary to expectations, a gloomy and dark mountain, a cloudy sky, or black, brown, grey, or deep purple colors that represent sadness as in buildings are more solemn.⁴⁸⁸ To some degree, they have the potential to be sources of the sublime⁴⁸⁹ (Cole's *Expulsion* offers a good visual example). Therefore, seeking sublime color needs more attention, for anything that is light and riant will lessen the quality of the sublime.⁴⁹⁰

Compared to other sky travel poems, the color appears in "A Sloop of Amber slips away" to some degree reveals Burke's theory of color:

A Sloop of Amber slips away
Upon an Ether Sea,
And wrecks in Peace a Purple Tar,
The Son of Ecstasy –

Preest likens the cloud to a purple sailor who is enjoying his part in the wonderful sunset rapturously.⁴⁹¹ And his interpretation on the "purple tar" is proved in another poem:

Where Ships of Purple – gently toss –
On Seas of Daffodil –
Fantastic Sailors – mingle –
And then – the Wharf is still!

Clouds in this poem are "ships of purple" depicted as "fantastic sailors" in the third line. Dickinson described a scene of a harbor where ships "gently toss" and finally "mingle" with one another before the harbor returns to peace. "Fantastic sailors" not only indicate anthropomorphism; they also reveal wonderment of the poet. Generally, the tone of the poem is calm but with a sense of delight because the words Dickinson chose to modify "sailors" and to describe the "seas" are picturesque and indicate heavy approval.

⁴⁸⁷ "Sublime and Beautiful."

⁴⁸⁸ "Sublime and Beautiful."

⁴⁸⁹ "Sublime and Beautiful."

⁴⁹⁰ "Sublime and Beautiful."

⁴⁹¹ Preest 496.

In these two poems, picturesque sunsets are dynamically shown within the lines. In contrast to that picturesqueness, Edith Wharton presented a different scene in the first part of her “An Autumn Sunset”:

Leaguered in fire
The wild black promontories of the coast extend
Their savage silhouettes;
The sun in universal carnage sets,
And, halting higher,
The motionless storm-clouds mass their sullen threats,
Like an advancing mob in sword-points penned,
That, balked, yet stands at bay.
[...]⁴⁹²

The autumn sunset was also envisioned as the sea. Different from Dickinson’s condensed verse with an abcb rhyme scheme in the two poems, this poem was written in a more complicated rhyme scheme (abccacbddeedceec) and long lines with more syllables, meaning it is more descriptive. Indeed, Wharton not only likened the sky to the sea; she also anthropomorphically likened the sunset scene to a massacre. Images in this poem are specifically portrayed. In the “fire” sea, clouds are like “wild black promontories” in “savage silhouettes.” The sun and storm-clouds are also anthropomorphic: The former is described as someone who refuses to be drawn in “universal carnage”; the latter “mass[es] their sullen threats / Like an advancing mob in sword-points penned” – a vivid simile which presents a crowded, dangerous situation. In a word, sublime is revealed straight by Wharton’s colors and her rhetorical devices.

Due to the condensed form, Dickinson’s sunsets are metaphorically displayed, meaning all objects of her sunset scene contain colorful imagery (a “sloop of Amber,” an “Ether sea,” a “Purple Tar,” the “Son of Ecstasy,” “Ships of Purple,” “Seas of Daffodil,” “Fantastic Sailors,” and the “Wharf”). The four lines of “Ships of Purple” have no break; instead, dashes connect every action, stopping to present a flowing course. Nonetheless, from both the form and the subject, “A Sloop of Amber” is as a twin to “Ships of Purple,” but the dash in “A Sloop of Amber” does not contribute to the smoothness. First, in contrast to the “sloop of amber,” the poem ends with the image

⁴⁹² Edith Wharton, “An Autumn Sunset,” www.poetryfoundation.org, 24 January 2019.

of “a purple tar.” Dickinson leaves the imagination to the reader by not mentioning the size of the cloud, but it could be a flat, horizontal surface in the sky which is covered with dark-colored clouds. Whether from the exoticness and the mysteriousness that “purple” implies,⁴⁹³ or the thickness of the outward appearance of the cloud (the image of tar), the “ether sea” is portrayed solemnly instead of being described generally as beautiful, golden sunlight in the sky. Second, “wreck” as one of only two verbs of this poem indicates the sublime. The destruction of the sinking sloop that went down peacefully on the evening “sea” is a quintessential example of the sublime as people of Dickinson’s age viewed it.

Nevertheless, the only dash at the end of the poem acts either as an ellipsis, or as an indication of incompleteness, which to some degree intrigues readers’ associations. Especially in the last line, one wonders whether the word “ecstasy” has deeper meanings other than an adjective as Preest interpreted. Given that Dickinson wished Higginson’s newborn daughter to travel by “routes of ecstasy” on her life journey, “ecstasy” is not only important as a blessing for friends, but also vital for her because she claimed that, “Take all away from me, but leave me Ecstasy, / And I am richer then than all my Fellow Men” (J1640/Fr1671). According to Paula Bennett, the meaning of the French word *jouissance* equates with what the poet called “ecstasy” or “bliss” or “transport,” and she has various sources to experience it.⁴⁹⁴ For instance, in the literary world, she might be ecstatic by reading Elizabeth Barrett Browning and by creating poems; in nature, she might be in an ecstasy of delight by watching a robin take flight, by gazing at a sunrise or sunset, or by watching witch-hazel’s stems.⁴⁹⁵ Such experience enables her to be the agent of her own desire as well as the creator of her own discourse; meanwhile, it provides opportunities to her to reach an orgasm which is produced by poetry and love.⁴⁹⁶

Interestingly, by studying Dickinson’s manuscripts, one fragment appears not only on a small piece of brown wrapping paper; it also appears at the very end of “A

⁴⁹³ See the definition of “purple.” “Emily Dickinson Lexicon.”

⁴⁹⁴ Bennett 181.

⁴⁹⁵ Bennett 181.

⁴⁹⁶ Bennett 181.

Sloop of Amber" as a variant.⁴⁹⁷ The fragment is "A Woe / of Ecstasy." As Marta L. Werner puts it, it seems inappropriate to the poem either from the aspect of material or syntax.⁴⁹⁸ She further explains that by attentive observation, though the variant migrates into the poem, the line disconnects from the rest of the poem because it seems disoriented with the rest of the poem.⁴⁹⁹ Instead, it exists as the "paradoxes and antinomies" which expounds the "inner contradictions" of Dickinson's oeuvre.⁵⁰⁰ As a matter of fact, based upon the clue "Please accept a sunset" in a letter, "A Sloop of Amber slips away" was prepared as a gift to a Prof Tuckerman probably; nonetheless, "A Woe of Ecstasy" was not included in the gift.⁵⁰¹ According to Kristen Kreider, in different copies of the poet's manuscripts, this one without the variant seems neater than others,⁵⁰² meaning rather than a draft, this one could be a final version.

Furthermore, Kreider's analysis indicates that though it appears as a variant line choice⁵⁰³ at the end of the poem and the poet did not present it in the letter to Professor Tuckerman, the juxtaposition of "The Son of Ecstasy" and "A Woe of Ecstasy" offers a way in understanding the fragment that was written on the small piece of brown wrapping paper.⁵⁰⁴ And the contrast is as follows: Firstly, "the" indicates the particular and the definite while "a" signifies unspecified and indefinite.⁵⁰⁵ Secondly, the word "son" means the "offspring of a father and mother, gendered masculine," and with "the" and the capitalized "s," Jesus might be the connotation of "The Son," meaning the Son of God.⁵⁰⁶ Whereas, "woe" represents a feeling, an emotion, or a state of mind, which is indefinite and non-specific; therefore, she argues that the two variants present different meanings.⁵⁰⁷

⁴⁹⁷ Marta L. Werner, "'A Woe Of Ecstasy': On the Electronic Editing of Emily Dickinson's Late Fragments," *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 16.2 (2007): 25-52, at 44, *Project MUSE*, 25 September 2016.

⁴⁹⁸ Werner 45.

⁴⁹⁹ Werner 45

⁵⁰⁰ Werner 46.

⁵⁰¹ Kristen Kreider, "'Scrap,' 'Flap,' 'Strip,' 'Stain,' 'Cut': The Material Poetics of Emily Dickinson's Later Manuscript Pages," *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 19.2 (2010): 67-103, at 75, *Project MUSE*, 25 September 2016.

⁵⁰² Kreider 75.

⁵⁰³ Kreider 76.

⁵⁰⁴ Kreider 77.

⁵⁰⁵ Kreider 77.

⁵⁰⁶ Kreider 77.

⁵⁰⁷ Kreider 77.

However, even if “A Woe of Ecstasy,” as Kreider puts it, is “more akin to the deep purple,”⁵⁰⁸ “The Son of Ecstasy” is more appropriate to Burke’s theory of color. Given that “ecstasy” means “intense emotion”⁵⁰⁹ which is an indication of the sublime; hence the “purple tar,” namely the “son of ecstasy,” is the prelude of night because the dark color can easily evoke the sublime. If the poem is divided into two parts, the first part takes almost three lines to specifically depict a dynamic process of how the sloop disappears on the sea; while the second part only mentions a “purple tar” but presents an infinite state. In such a condensed form, the sublime is plenarily revealed by the “intensity of speed” (“slips away”), the “violence of the event” (“wrecks in peace”),⁵¹⁰ and the dark color (“amber,” “purple”). Furthermore, the figurative meaning of the word “ether” provides another reading. As an adjective, it means “spiritual,” “immortal,” or “heavenly”⁵¹¹ according to *Emily Dickinson Lexicon*; hence, some imagery in this poem overlaps some of the imagery in Cole’s *Old Age*. For example, the setting of the poem is the “ether sea” and in *Old Age*, it is the final destination of the old man. The sky in *Old Age* is dark but with holy light from heaven in which angles wave to the old man, indicating the ecstatic afterlife. In this poem, the “purple tar” is the prelude of “ecstasy.” Finally, the “sloop of amber” and the golden boat of *Old Age* become a part of the immortality.

In her 1996 essay “The System of Colors in Emily Dickinson’s Poetry: Preliminary Observations,” Andrea Mariani argues that Dickinson uses the language of colors to create many “seemingly absurd images” such as “There seemed a purple stile / That little Yellow boys and girls / Were climbing” (J318/Fr204), “If White – a Red – must be” (J689/Fr284), and “The Heaven below the Heaven above – / Obscured with ruddier Blue –” (J756/Fr767).⁵¹² Furthermore, the poet’s chromatic technique helps to create “synesthesia” which is revealed in poems such as “With Blue – uncertain stumbling Buzz – / Between the light – and me –” (J465/Fr591), “Let no Sunrise”

⁵⁰⁸ Kreider 77.

⁵⁰⁹ “Emily Dickinson Lexicon.”

⁵¹⁰ Kreider 76.

⁵¹¹ “Emily Dickinson Lexicon.”

⁵¹² Andrea Mariani, “The System of Colors in Emily Dickinson’s Poetry: Preliminary Observations,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 5.2 (1996): 39-44, at 40, *Project MUSE*, 27 September 2016.

yellow noise / Interrupt his Ground –” (J829/Fr804), “A Resonance of Emerald – / A Rush of Cochineal” (J1463/Fr1489), and “And a Green Chill upon the Heat / So ominous did pass” (J1593/Fr1618).⁵¹³

Moreover, it is inevitable to mention the symbolic effect of Dickinson’s colors. For instance, Wesley King claims that the word “white” appears in approximately thirty of Dickinson’s poems in his essay “The White Symbolic of Emily Dickinson.”⁵¹⁴ His observation encourages the reader to observe plentiful “white things” in her poems. For example, she writes the “blank landscapes,” “marble,” “bone,” the gown of a bride, “the death shroud” and many other descriptive terms to enhance her poetic imagery.⁵¹⁵ Not only is “white” a color to Dickinson, it is also a “valuation, and a category of being, of subjective identity.”⁵¹⁶

However, from a perspective of Imagism, whether the colors are directly used or indirectly presented by objects such as “daffodil,” “orioles” etc., they are what they are and fulfill their function visually in a picturesque sunset. More importantly, the colors Dickinson chose to depict the “ether sea” reveal not only her physical experience of sunsets, but also her amazement, for most of her sky travel poems are written passionately with phrases such as “Where Ships of Purple – gently toss,” “This – is the land – the Sunset washes,” and “‘Red Sea,’ indeed! Talk not to me” (J1642/Fr1681). When the magnificence and impressiveness reaches its highest point, it causes astonishment.⁵¹⁷ It is a kind of feeling that leaves the mind overwhelmed; neither can it entertain, nor can it reason.⁵¹⁸ Moreover, it is superior to other effects such as respect, reverence, and admiration that the sublime produces.⁵¹⁹

The “astonishment” is presented in the first stanza of the following poem:

This – is the land – the Sunset washes –
These – are the Banks of the Yellow Sea –
Where is rose – or whither it rushes –

⁵¹³ Mariani 43.

⁵¹⁴ Wesley King, “The White Symbolic of Emily Dickinson,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 18.1 (2009): 44-68, at 44, *Project MUSE*, 27 September 2016.

⁵¹⁵ King 44.

⁵¹⁶ King 45.

⁵¹⁷ “Sublime and Beautiful.”

⁵¹⁸ “Sublime and Beautiful.”

⁵¹⁹ “Sublime and Beautiful.”

These – are the Western Mystery!

Night after Night
Her purple traffic
Strews the landing with Opal Bales –
Merchantmen – poise upon Horizons –
Dip – and vanish like Orioles!

The tone of the first stanza indicates amazement. “This” and “these” are separated from the rest of the lines by dashes which function as introductory signs. The reader is expressly informed that the land is covered by the sunset glow which becomes the shore of the “yellow sea”; however, where the sea originates and where it will go cannot be explained by the poet because she is overwhelmed by the magnificence of the “yellow sea” and attributes of the daily, natural phenomenon that becomes the “western mystery.” In a word, the sea is too grand to be clarified in a scientific manner.

Kornfeld claims that the “western mystery” is an allusion of death because if the sunrise in the east symbolizes life and new birth, the sunset in the west symbolizes the vanishing of life.⁵²⁰ Therefore, as a further description, in the second stanza the merchantmen which load with opal bales “fall below life’s horizon,” actually vanish from life.⁵²¹ It is reasonable to associate sunset with the end of life’s journey; nevertheless, the most notable quality of this poem is in fact how the poet creates a visual shock of a sunset image. If “A Sloop of Amber” and “Ships of Purple” are two landscape paintings of traditional household size, “This – is the land – the Sunset washes” is one that is extremely large. The poet proudly presents the picturesque “landscape” to her reader as if she owned the beautiful scenery for a very long time. Meanwhile, her way of introducing it is unpremeditatedly coincident with Emerson’s principles of American sublime: “[t]hou shalt have the whole land for thy park and boarders. Thou true land-lord! sea-lord! air-lord!”⁵²²

Compared to Dickinson, Whitman’s sunset becomes part of his celebration of joys of life and simple miracles of daily living.⁵²³ As a consistent theme which repeatedly

⁵²⁰ “The Prowling Bee.”

⁵²¹ “The Prowling Bee.”

⁵²² “Essays, Second Series.”

⁵²³ Frederick J. Butler, “Song at Sunset,” *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Walt Whitman*, eds. J.R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings (New York: Routledge, 1998) 651.

appears in the poet's work, the celebration is arranged as a simple, yet rich and elegant song entitled "Song at Sunset" which extolls the profound, sheer nature of life.⁵²⁴ Both of the two poets were astonished by the power of nature. Nevertheless, unlike Dickinson's third person point of view, Whitman combined the first (lyrical "I") and second person point of view ("you" = sunset) to express his perception and glorification to the sunset; meanwhile, the mixed point of view reveals intimacy:

SPLENDOR of ended day floating and filling me,
Hour prophetic, hour resuming the past,
Inflating my throat, you divine average,
You earth and life till the last ray gleams I sing.
[...]
Wonderful how I celebrate you and myself!
How my thoughts play subtly at the spectacles around!
How the clouds pass silently overhead!
How the earth darts on and on! and how the sun, moon, stars, dart on
and on!
[...]
O setting sun! though the time has come,
I still warble under you, if none else does, unmitigated adoration.⁵²⁵

The astonishment is revealed by the capitalized "SPLENDOR," the exclamation marks, and the humbleness of the last two lines. Whitman identifies human beings with the beautiful natural scenery; he was astonished by the power of nature as well as the splendor of humankind. Not only does he own the scenery; he is also part of it.

The second stanza of Dickinson's poem continues with the praise of the beautiful scenery in detail, and a more complicated rhyme scheme (cdefe) rather than the alternate rhyme (abab) of the first stanza indicates change and alternation. As a matter of fact, it can be seen as an expanded version of "A Sloop of Amber." Firstly, "night after night" indicates the non-stopping cycle, meaning such magnificent scene appears every day but more importantly, the poet's astonishment is emphasized again. In order to stress the dynamic state of the "purple tars," the poet uses the word "traffic," and because of the space among these "merchantmen," the dock is spread with "opal bales." Secondly, on the image of the orioles, Preest provides an interesting interpretation that it

⁵²⁴ Butler 651.

⁵²⁵ Walt Whitman, "Song at Sunset," *The Walt Whitman Archive*, 26 January 2019, <<https://whitmanarchive.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

is an apt comparison, for when the birds make a quick downward movement, the black feathers on its wings and upper tails are inconspicuous.⁵²⁶ Nonetheless, if Dickinson continues to depict the speed of the setting sun, the simile of the last line is a dynamic description that the speedy sunset likens to the agile disappearance of orioles. The poet expresses her astonishment not only by depicting the endless, magnificent scene which happens every day, but also by describing its temporality which causes a despondent mood.

In short, two types of sublime add hues to her portrayal of the west sky in Dickinson's sky travel poems. The poet continues her vision of the sea, and the imagery she uses to depict the sea contains colors which cause the sublime. Though Wharton more straightly practices the European sublime theory, Dickinson also presents part of it within her condensed form. Both Dickinson and Whitman were astonished by the beauty of sunsets: The former portrays the western mystery through frequent use of temporal and eternal symbolism; the latter praises how the secret of nature is perceived and absorbed by human beings. Meanwhile, both of them passionately practice the American sublime through her proud presentation of the sunset. The mingled sublime offers the reader multiple experiences in reading Dickinson's colorful images of the "west sea."

3.2.2 Circumference

In "Red Sea," indeed! Talk not to me," except for the astonishment, the poet boldly expresses her ambition and her thinking on circumference:

"Red Sea," indeed! Talk not to me
Of purple Pharaoh –
I have a Navy in the West
Would pierce his Columns thro' –
Guileless, yet of such Glory fine
That all along the Line
Is it, or is it not, Marine –
Is it, or not, divine –
The Eye inquires with a sigh
That Earth sh'd be so big –
What Exultation in the Woe –

⁵²⁶ Preest 84.

What Wine in the fatigue!

At first glance, “Red Sea” refers to the geographic name. By associating it with the image of “purple pharaoh,” it could be an allusion of the story of *Exodus*.⁵²⁷ The poet is confident in her ability to outshine the Red Sea and pharaoh’s armies because of the “navy in the west,” meaning the sunset.⁵²⁸ Nevertheless, by following the emphasis of the word “indeed” with an exclamation mark, the quotation marks visually inform the reader that the image of “Red Sea” implies something different. According to *Emily Dickinson Lexicon*, a figurative use of “Red Sea” is to allude to a “colorful sunset.”⁵²⁹ Hence, “‘Red Sea,’ indeed!” is arguably an exclamation of the speaker to the scenery of the sunset.

In this poem, clouds are not likened to sloop, ships, or merchantmen. In order to present fierceness and invincibility, the poet uses the image of “navy” which represents well-trained, disciplined forces to declare her authority as a monarch. Even the armies of the pharaoh cannot compare with it. However, the ambitious declaration is followed by queries and sighs: “Is it, or is it not, Marine – / Is it, or not, divine.” It seems the splendors of the New England sunset cannot satisfy the poet or convince her to accept the idea that nature is adequate proof of God’s existence; instead, she is overwhelmed by a sense of “impotence.”⁵³⁰

Nevertheless, from a different perspective, such a feeling of lacking power or control implies the poet’s favorite business – circumference. Among many interpretations, Farhang Erfani mentions Dickinson’s existential phenomenology of intimacy.⁵³¹ She claims that for existentialists, intimacy means the “close pursuit of a life of authenticity,” and love is involved in it, for only in the context of a world of others, can a person’s quest be pursued.⁵³² Nonetheless, it does not mean that people have to “lose or divert” their individual characteristics; rather, when brute existence begins to be “meaningfully narrated and plotted,” the intimate self will realize that the

⁵²⁷ Preest 501.

⁵²⁸ Preest 501.

⁵²⁹ “Emily Dickinson Lexicon.”

⁵³⁰ Mariani 41.

⁵³¹ Farhang Erfani, “Dickinson and Sartre on Facing the Brutality of Brute Existence,” *Emily Dickinson and Philosophy*, eds. Jed Deppman, et al. (New York: CUP, 2013) 175-87, at 187.

⁵³² Erfani 187.

“narrating and giving meaning” is accomplished by co-authorship with others; and love as an understanding helps to affirm this “shared creative endeavor.”⁵³³ Therefore, Erfani believes that when Dickinson claims, “My business is to love” (L269) – the same phrase she uses in “My business is to sing” (L269) and the famous “My business is Circumference” (L268) – it in fact indicates the same business.⁵³⁴ They all aim to “encompass” what people truly know “in an act of love.”⁵³⁵

Yet, in a discussion of Dickinson’s notion of space, time and perspective, Lilach Lachman claims that if Emerson’s circumference concerns an immobile and eternal idea or form which has to be “actualized in matter as flux,” as the “infinite expansion of the eye,”⁵³⁶ Dickinson’s business refers to the work of recording, situating and relocating the fragmented subject which is presented as “shifting points along the boundary between the void and the circuit world.”⁵³⁷ This stands in contrast to a focus on God as the missing center, or interpreting man as a “fixed, unified, and transcendental core” as Emerson did.⁵³⁸ Lachman also imports an idea of degree zero of spatiality⁵³⁹ to conclude that Dickinson’s circumference is an implication of a subject in which the “opposed perspectives and identities” could be embraced and altered continuously.⁵⁴⁰

To encompass in an act of love as well as to embrace and to alter the identities and opposed perspective reveals that Dickinson’s circumference is another important expression to her passion and philosophical thinking. Hence, rather than expressing the feeling of impotence, the changed tone from the line “That all along the Line” indicates

⁵³³ Erfani 187.

⁵³⁴ Erfani 187.

⁵³⁵ Erfani 187.

⁵³⁶ Lilach Lachman, “Time-Space and Audience in Dickinson’s Vacuity Scenes,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 12.1 (2003): 80-106, at 88, *Project MUSE*, 8 March 2018.

⁵³⁷ Lachman 90.

⁵³⁸ Lachman 90.

⁵³⁹ Lachman explains that firstly, the circumference’s margin “as a boundary that represents the limit of the self in relation to both infinity and the circuit world, spatially defines the subject as a focal point from a static and objective perspective”; secondly, due to the fact that “in Dickinson’s world the whole is not given in the eternal order of form, the subject replaces God as the empty center of the circuit.” For Dickinson, she shifts “back and forth from an external view located on the circumference to an internal one drawn to the empty center of the circuit forms another kind of dynamism that opens up ‘the whole’ and re-situates its parts in new relationships.” Therefore, Lachman calls Dickinson’s “subversive and temporalized ‘translation’ of Emerson’s model” which “entails a self-constitution,” the “degree zero” of spatiality, meaning “a point from which reality [...] is lived both from the inside and in relation to an external other.” Lachman 90.

⁵⁴⁰ Lachman 90.

the poet's reflection on her business. If the first half of the poem presents the poet's passion and adoration for the sublime scene, the second half, the perceptual description switches to rational penetration. The scene is then depicted in the following way with the notion of circumference.

From the appearance, the same rhyme of the end words "fine," "Line," "Marine" (eye rhyme), "divine," and "sigh" seem to form a circle if "Marine" represents the center due to its middle position and the other four words represent north, east, south, and west. Furthermore, the "line" on the one hand presents the location of the "red sea"; on the other hand, it indicates "limit" and "boundary."⁵⁴¹ Thus "marine" reveals a concrete and finite sense. Nonetheless, as a double metaphor, the "line," meaning "circumference,"⁵⁴² reveals an image of extension in contrast to the image of center; thus, the poet wonders if it is "divine." Such a magnificent scene and such intriguing wonderment can only be searched by an inquiring eye with exclamation. And the next line states the reason: If the earth represents circumference, it is too immense to be known, and both tangibility and intangibility exist in the boundary. The last two lines continue describing the poet's contradictory emotions that linger in the ecstasy, unknown, and melancholy powerlessness. At the same time, though the "opposed perspectives" ("exultation" and "woe," "wine" and "fatigue") are juxtaposed in the poem; instead of revealing a contrasted relationship, the poet attempts to present a sense of encompassing. They are interdependent in the void and the circuit; hence, it is hard to distinctively discern them, as if ecstasy lives with misery, and refreshment⁵⁴³ accompanies exhaustion.

And in "As if some little Arctic flower" (J180/Fr177), the imagery of circumference seems to be more concretely portrayed. To begin, a frequent and intensely displayed astronomical phenomenon affected New England between 1835 and 1860.⁵⁴⁴ Based on Dickinson's biography, people of Amherst were reminded by the

⁵⁴¹ See the definition of "line." "Emily Dickinson Lexicon."

⁵⁴² See the definition of "line." "Emily Dickinson Lexicon."

⁵⁴³ See the definition of "wine." "Emily Dickinson Lexicon."

⁵⁴⁴ Carol Quinn, "Dickinson, Telegraphy, and the Aurora Borealis," *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 13.2 (2004): 58-78, at 58, *Project MUSE*, 4 October 2016.

church bell in order not to miss this spectacle in 1851.⁵⁴⁵ It had an influence on the new technology of telegraphy, according to the article with the title “The Aurora Borealis” of the December 1859’s *Atlantic Monthly*.⁵⁴⁶ Dickinson was probably a witness to this most powerful auroral event; therefore, the image of the aurora borealis was presented in some of her poems⁵⁴⁷ such as “Of Bronze – and Blaze –” (J290/Fr319), “I saw no Way – The Heavens were stitched –” (J378/Fr633), and “Aurora is the effort” (J1002/Fr1002). In discussing Dickinson’s auroral poems, Carol Quinn claims that “As if some little Arctic flower” is perhaps her first attempt on the imagery of the northern lights.⁵⁴⁸

Written around the summer of 1860, the “little Arctic flower” is considered as an enigma.⁵⁴⁹ Quinn points out that unlike “Of Bronze – and Blaze – / The North – Tonight –” which presents some qualities of a flower as a mimetic response to the aurora borealis, the poet compares some unidentified thing to the equatorward descending “Arctic flower.”⁵⁵⁰

As if some little Arctic flower
Upon the polar hem –
Went wandering down the Latitudes
Until it puzzled came
To continents of summer –
To firmaments of sun –
To strange, bright crowds of flowers –
And birds, of foreign tongue!
I say, As if this little flower
To Eden, wandered in –
What then? Why nothing,
Only, your inference therefrom!

If Dickinson’s circumference refers to the work of recording, situating and re-locating the fragmented subject which is presented as “shifting points along the boundary between the void and the circuit world,”⁵⁵¹ this poem is a vivid example.

⁵⁴⁵ Kirk xviii.

⁵⁴⁶ Quinn 58.

⁵⁴⁷ Quinn 58.

⁵⁴⁸ Quinn 73.

⁵⁴⁹ Quinn 73.

⁵⁵⁰ Quinn 73-4.

⁵⁵¹ Lachman 90.

To begin, if four lines are a stanza, the rhyme scheme – abcb / adad / aeed – presents a coherent movement of the flower because of the repetitive rhyme a. “As if” indicates that the “little Arctic flower” is only a metaphor. This unidentified thing begins its journey “Upon the polar hem –,” and wanders down as a free faller to a paradise of tropical summer.⁵⁵² If the images of “polar,” “latitudes,” and the equator which are represented by “continents of summer” implies the earth, then the circumference of the earth can be seen as the “boundary between the void and the circuit world,”⁵⁵³ and the unidentified thing as a fragmented subject, “shifting” along the Latitudes.

As a matter of fact, the unidentified thing becomes less important because its movements have pictured the abstract description of Dickinson’s notion of circumference. Preest points out that the poet omits an important particular in this poem; hence the reader is challenged “to guess the particular which she omits” in the last two lines.⁵⁵⁴ However, the poet might present the particular indirectly by changing the point of view from sky to earth, from the “polar hem” and the “latitudes,” to the “continents of summer” and the kingdom of “strange, bright crowds of flowers” and “birds, of foreign tongue.” It indicates that something particular could be gained when people “exchange earth for the Eden of heaven.”⁵⁵⁵

Normally, Dickinson uses images such as immortality, eternity, Eden, or the sea to refer to the final destination without further concrete or specific description. In contrast, the colorful, exotic image of the place with flowers and birds from lines five to eight of this poem specifically present a picture of a place which resembles Eden. As Kornfeld puts it, this place is especially beautiful, even more beautiful than the heaven of previous poems where the poet “scavenges the traditional images of hosts of angels on golden streets.”⁵⁵⁶ It seems Eden in this poem serves as a contrast to the beautiful place she depicts, for the imagery she presents in this place shares one thing in common: They are earthly rather than divine. The questions she poses as well as the final exclamation point in the last two lines not only intrigue but also encourage the reader to explore the

⁵⁵² Preest 56.

⁵⁵³ Lachman 90.

⁵⁵⁴ Preest 56.

⁵⁵⁵ Preest 56.

⁵⁵⁶ “The Prowling Bee.”

“particular”; and the tone of the poet reveals an optimistic spirit that if the reader appreciates the beauty of the earth as she does, they will sense the “particular.”

Herman Melville wrote “Aurora Borealis” with a subtitle “Commemorative of the Dissolution of armies at the Peace” to liken the armies to the northern lights:

What power disbands the Northern Lights
After their steely play?
The lonely watcher feels an awe
Of Nature’s sway,
As when appearing,
He marked their flashed uprearing
In the cold gloom –
Retreatings and advancings,
(Like dallyings of doom),
Transitions and enhancings,
And bloody ray.

The phantom-host has faded quite,
Splendor and Terror gone
Portent or promise – and gives way
To pale, meek Dawn;
The coming, going,
Alike in wonder showing –
Alike the God,
Decreeing and commanding
The million blades that glowed,
The muster and disbanding –
Midnight and Morn.⁵⁵⁷

The first stanza is written in the abcbddefefb rhyme scheme and the second stanza repeats this pattern. Unlike Dickinson’s enigmatical ending which is presented by an unpredictable 9558 stanza after the 9696 and 7676 stanzas, the first four lines in the first and the second stanzas of this poem have different number of syllables (9583 vs. 8684), but they share the same number of syllables (5747674) in the rest of the lines, which to some degree creates a predictable solemnity.

Same as Wharton, Melville also presented a detailed depiction. In order to commemorate the armies, he expressed his “awe” as a “lonely watcher” through the following aspects. First, the short-lined verses not only enhance a definite tone; it also

⁵⁵⁷ Herman Melville, “Aurora Borealis,” www.poemhunter.com, 30 January 2019.

reveals agility and fierceness of the armies. Second, the contrasts between “Retreatings and advancings,” “coming and going,” “muster and disbanding,” “Transitions and enhancings,” “Splendor and Terror,” “Portent or promise,” and “Midnight and Morn” present flexibility, strength, and valorousness of the armies, as the simile shows, “Like dallyings of doom.” Third, it is noticeable that a lot of verbs are in the “ing” form, and this form represents active voice and ongoing movements. To some degree, it reveals that the spirit of the armies will remain forever, as the poet intended to express and commemorate in this poem. Finally, two “Alike” similes attempt to explain the reason of the armies’ valorousness; however, as the poet put it at the beginning of the poem, “Nature’s sway” could be the only power which can disbands such armies.

In contrast, Dickinson’s journey of the little flower is displayed by imagery which is more abstractive and impressionistic, rather than Melville’s analogy which is presented by associations between the armies and aurora borealis from its colors, speed, and movements. In brief, Dickinson attempts to pursue a dimension which seems to exist cosmically, and this notion is partly presented by the thinking of the magnificence of sunsets and by the imagination of a dynamic process of something resembling an Arctic flower as well. Through the internal and external revelation, the earth, one of her more important subjects representing circumference, presents the poet’s sigh for the sublime and her embodying the abstract dynamics of circumference.

Ultimately, this chapter has attempted to explore Dickinson’s envision of the sky as her observation of astronomical phenomena. Focusing largely on the beauty of nature, she uses images of traveling to present a picturesque “landscape,” reflecting the dynamic change in the sky. She only fancies an image of the little road in the sky which may not lead her to the destination, but she creates more imagery that emphasizes sublime sunsets. Rather than involving the magnificent sky as the final destination, the poet concentrates on portraying a spectacular sky through her affection for color and astonishment, thereby confidently owning such beautiful “landscape” in the sky. Through the presentation of her notion of circumference, she locates her sky travel poems in a wider discussion of nature and universe.

4. Journey: Dickinson and Her Flood Subject

If the voyage is mainly based on her imagination, and the sky travel still portrays an image of the sea, part of Dickinson's journey pieces could be read in more realistic terms with less imaginative creation because she in fact had travel experience before her secluded life. Her first travel experience centered on a visit to Monson, a town in Hampden County, Massachusetts; it was a carriage ride with her Aunt Lavinia Norcross at a time when Dickinson was two years old.⁵⁵⁸ As any child, Dickinson visited her relatives who lived around Amherst in towns such as Enfield and Middletown from time to time; later in her teen years, she traveled to South Hadley in order to pursue more academic work at Mount Holyoke where she only stayed for one year.⁵⁵⁹ In 1842, she traveled to Boston to visit Aunt Lavinia where she witnessed the deathbed scene of her friend Sophia Holland in 1844 and later visited her relatives in 1846 and 1851.⁵⁶⁰ Aside from the 1855 out-of-state trip to Washington, D.C., Mount Vernon, and Philadelphia, the poet also traveled to Springfield, Massachusetts two times from 1853 to 1854 to visit Dr. Josiah Holland and his wife Elizabeth.⁵⁶¹ She also visited and lived in Cambridge where she had special treatment for her eyes from April to November, 1864 and from April to October, 1865.⁵⁶²

Dickinson's journey apparently deals with different tasks that involved daily life. Those efforts were events in which she felt obligated to participate. These travels were unlike those which dealt with escaping from routine life, exploring the world, reconsidering the meaning of life, or finding the true identity that many travel writers and poets pursued in their journeys. Dickinson rarely mentioned her personal feelings toward those journeys or trips, and detailed descriptions on them are seldom seen. For example, she wrote a letter to Susan Gilbert when she was in Washington in which her only reference to travel was, "We think we shall go to Philadelphia next week, tho' father has'nt [sic] decided" (L 178). She also wrote one condensed poem which, as scholars suggest, might be inspired by the loneliness when she was on a treatment for

⁵⁵⁸ Kirk 57.

⁵⁵⁹ Kirk 58.

⁵⁶⁰ Kirk 66-7.

⁵⁶¹ Kirk 58-9.

⁵⁶² Kirk 68-9.

her eye in Cambridge: “Away from Home are some and I” (J821/Fr807) depicts a difficult living experience in such a “metropolis” as Boston.⁵⁶³ Nonetheless, evidence indicates that the poet recorded some journey she took or some events that related to train journey. The following section thus explores not only the poet’s realistic portrayal of train trips and railroads; it also attempts to reveal the imagery on her imaginative journey.

4.1 On Railroads

4.1.1 A Narrative to a Freight Car

As a recluse, her experience on any travel offers personal and poetic value. One such trip is revealed in an 1851 letter after the poet and her sister Lavinia returned home from Boston for visiting Austin and some relatives.⁵⁶⁴ This descriptive piece survives perhaps because the Dickinson sisters had good memories of their journey. They not only visited the newly opened Boston Museum; they also enjoyed Shakespeare’s Othello while they were there.⁵⁶⁵ Perhaps of equal importance for young girls, they were able to enjoy ice cream at a new, fashionable ice cream salon at a time when ice cream was beginning to be mass produced and was cheaper than the homemade treat because of quick train delivery of fresh milk and “improved freezers.”⁵⁶⁶ The Dickinson sisters were obviously fond of going to the salon, and according to Lavinia’s diary, “they went there three times during the hot September of their 1851 visit.”⁵⁶⁷

Railroads flourished during this period as indicated by different route and time schedules for this journey. For example, it could be the Boston and Worcester or the Western;⁵⁶⁸ or it could be Boston through the Fitchburg, the Vermont, and finally, Massachusetts as Johnson suggested (L52). Various railroad routes reflect the progress and improvement of railroad transportation; Dickinson herself revealed in her description that she had already been “caught up in the flux of that mobility.”⁵⁶⁹ For instance, after complaining about the loneliness of staying at home, the following

⁵⁶³ Preest 277.

⁵⁶⁴ Kirk 66.

⁵⁶⁵ Kirk 66.

⁵⁶⁶ Kirk 67.

⁵⁶⁷ Kirk 67.

⁵⁶⁸ Mitchell, *Monarch* 56.

⁵⁶⁹ Mitchell, *Monarch* 56.

passage describes an interesting event she saw and heard in a freight car:

[...] It was fortunate for the freight car, that Vinnie and I were there, our's [sic] being the only baggage passing along the line. The folks looked very funny, who travelled with us that day – they were dim and faded like folks passed away – the conductor seemed so grand with about *half a dozen* tickets, which he dispersed, and demanded in a very small space of time – I judged that the *minority* were travelling that day, and could'nt [sic] hardly help smiling at our ticket friend, however sorry I was at the small amount of people, passing along his way. He looked as if he wanted to make an apology for not having more travellers to keep him company.

The route and the cars seemed strangely – there were no boys with fruit, there were no boys with pamphlets – one fearful little fellow ventured into the car with what appeared to be publications and tracts – he offered them to no one, and no one inquired for them, and he seemed greatly relieved that no one wanted to buy them. (L52)

It is unusual that many minutiae of nineteenth-century railroad travel appear in this letter, for in her life Dickinson seemed not to be attracted by “social details.”⁵⁷⁰ Nevertheless, if she had written travel books, this short passage would have appeared in one of her travel scenes.

Courtney Carpenter suggests that several basic elements should be included in travel writing, such as “lead,” “where,” “who,” “why,” “how,” “what,” and “end.”⁵⁷¹ Though they are not necessarily based on a specific order or all appear in one article or work,⁵⁷² in Dickinson’s two short paragraphs, most of them still appear, and their existence simultaneously reveals creative and informative details in two condensed paragraphs. First, there is an attractive “opening”⁵⁷³ as a lead to arouse the reader’s interest. The word “fortunate” is not used to describe Dickinson’s (who) feeling of being on a railroad trip; instead, the word indicates that the freight car is lucky because the Dickinson sisters honored that car with their presence. In this freight car (where), Dickinson sat together with a group of “dim and faded” passengers who were “like folks passed away.” And she was attracted by two interesting people: One was the ticket conductor, and the other was a little boy.

⁵⁷⁰ Mitchell, *Monarch* 57.

⁵⁷¹ Courtney Carpenter, “Breaking into Travel Writing: The 5 Elements of Writing Travel Articles,” *Writer’s Digest*, 20 August 2016, <<http://www.writersdigest.com>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁵⁷² “Breaking into Travel Writing.”

⁵⁷³ “Breaking into Travel Writing.”

It is unusual that Dickinson paid no attention to the landscape outside the window; because of this, the significance of this letter as a valuable historical document is revealed not only by “what she mentions,” but also by “what she leaves out.”⁵⁷⁴ Dombnall Mitchell explains that there may be two “possibilities” for it: First, the journey through the countryside or the experience of journeying had no novelty for the poet because train journey had already become routine for her.⁵⁷⁵ She might therefore have been more engaged in conversation with her sister than with the landscape.⁵⁷⁶ Second, compared to the stagecoaches, the train has much greater speed; therefore, it might be less comfortable viewing the outside landscape.⁵⁷⁷ That explains why Dickinson was more interested in observing what happened inside the freight car, and why the boy would have been able to sell reading materials to the passengers.⁵⁷⁸

Therefore, if the journey was uncomfortable because of the speed, noise, or vibration of the train, so that most of the passengers looked “dim and faded like folks passed away,” the poet was certainly stood in contrast to other travelers. The humorous tone and the word choice reveal her excitement. For example, she uses “folks,” a less formal word instead of “people” or “travelers” to eliminate distance and to sound somewhat friendlier. In spite of the fact that the passengers looked tired, boring, and lifeless, they were very amusing for her. This reveals her good mood in a public place, for she also called the conductor “our ticket friend” and the boy who was trying to sell the publications and tracts, a “little fellow.” Perhaps the conductor and the boy were the only moving people in that freight car; hence the poet was attracted by them and described them in detail. These details formed the “what” element of travel writing, meaning “story details,” “anecdotes,” or “facts”⁵⁷⁹ which play an important role in order to make her narrative more interesting.

She observed not only the movements, but also the subtle expressions of the conductor and the boy. Though Dickinson speculated upon the thoughts of the

⁵⁷⁴ Mitchell, *Monarch* 57.

⁵⁷⁵ Mitchell, *Monarch* 57.

⁵⁷⁶ Mitchell, *Monarch* 57.

⁵⁷⁷ Mitchell, *Monarch* 57.

⁵⁷⁸ Mitchell, *Monarch* 57-8.

⁵⁷⁹ “Breaking into Travel Writing.”

conductor and the boy, the humorous tone and word choice make the description vivid and convincing. Her use of the key word “grand” portrays the conductor’s sense of arrogance and superiority, as if he were the only one who had importance or power. Nonetheless, he displays an opposing lack of importance by his having only five or six tickets; his proud attitude could therefore not be completely shown in such a short time. Whether her observations were accurate or simple conjecture is open to some speculation because the expressions she used in reference such as “seemed so grand,” “I judged,” and “he looked as if” indicate assumptions. Regardless, the poet enjoyed observing him and interpreting his thoughts. Her description creates an embarrassing atmosphere; nevertheless, she intended to dissipate another embarrassing situation in the next paragraph as she describes another character.

Just as the conductor who appeared alone in the freight car, a “little fellow” dared to venture into the group of “lifeless” passengers, though he was “fearful.” Perhaps his timidity was the result of the fact that he was the only boy selling fruits or pamphlets. It may also have been the first time for this “little fellow” to sell things to the public. Regardless as the poet interpreted the situation, it did not cause additional attention; the boy seemed greatly relieved because no one inquired. His fear was unfounded, and a potentially embarrassing situation was dissolved, though the poet once again used “appeared to be” and “seemed” to envision the situation and the mental activity of the boy.

After the portrayal of the freight car story, the poet described her stay at Sunderland. Different from the former depiction, she no longer had any interest in describing others. After all, it was simply a letter. She continued reporting about the people she intended to meet and conveyed their greetings to her brother. It is perfunctory to conclude that Dickinson creates a contrast between the conductor and the boy in order to exhibit a certain comic or ironic point of view. This piece of travel writing offers significant value because it presents not only a historical, factual scene of railroad journey in Dickinson’s time; it also presents her experience during the train journey as many may have experienced it in her time. Though part of the protagonists’ action was speculated, the poet’s concentration and humorous description vividly

presents the situation and the most interesting and intriguing things that happened during her observation. Her letter reveals a contrast between her title of a recluse and her interest in being a traveler who could observe and depict the scenes in which she participated as she continued on her journey.

4.1.2 The Iron Horse

Most of the major nineteenth-century writers wrote books concerning their travel experiences because all of them traveled to European countries except for Thoreau, Whitman, and Dickinson. Among the three writers, Thoreau claims that

What's the railroad to me?
I never go to see
Where it ends.
It fills a few hollows,
And makes banks for the swallows,
It sets the sand a-blown,
And the blackberries a-growing.⁵⁸⁰

It seems that railroad did not attract the recluse of the Walden Pond, for images as “a few hollows,” “sand,” and “blackberries” are too insignificant to describe such a scientific innovation. Whereas, Whitman not only wrote “Passage to India” to celebrate the achievement of material science and industry;⁵⁸¹ his “To a Locomotive in Winter” is also considered a thrilling example which presents his vivid description of something mechanical by utilizing personification and humanization.⁵⁸²

In this poem, as Michael Collier claims, Whitman imbues details of the locomotive with his “all-encompassing, inclusive, idiosyncratic, obsessive, and modern sensibility”⁵⁸³ to the reader:

[...]
Thy black cylindric body, golden brass and silvery steel,
Thy ponderous side-bars, parallel and connecting rods, gyrating,
shuttling at thy sides,
Thy metrical, now swelling pant and roar, now tapering in the
distance,
Thy great protruding head-light fix'd in front,

⁵⁸⁰ Henry David Thoreau, “What's the Railroad to Me?,” www.poets.org, 2 March 2019.

⁵⁸¹ John B. Mason, “‘Passage to India,’” *The Walt Whitman Archive*, 2 March 2019, <<https://whitmanarchive.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁵⁸² Michael Collier, “On Whitman's ‘To a Locomotive in Winter,’” *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 81.2 (2005): 202-5, at 205, *JSTOR*, 2 March 2019.

⁵⁸³ Collier 205.

Thy long, pale, floating vapor-pennants, tinged with delicate purple,
The dense and murky clouds out-belching from thy smoke-stack,
Thy knitted frame, thy springs and valves, the tremulous twinkle of
thy wheels,
Thy train of cars behind, obedient, merrily following,
Through gale or calm, now swift, now slack, yet steadily careering;
Type of the modern – emblem of motion and power – pulse of the
continent,
[...]⁵⁸⁴

In fact, though personification and humanization are utilized, more interestingly, Whitman realistically and even scientifically “dismembers” the locomotive, so that even if it is personified, the reader cannot skip the process of appreciating every mechanical part of the conveyance. For example, words such as “cylindric,” “brass,” “steel,” “side-bars,” “protruding head-light,” “smoke-stack,” “springs and valves,” and “wheels” accurately present its outside structure; and phrases such as “gyrating, shuttling at thy sides,” “floating vapor-pennants,” “out-belching from,” “tremulous twinkle,” “obedient, merrily following,” and “steadily careering” capture its movement. An image of the “modern – emblem of motion and power – pulse of the continent” is completely revealed by the description.

The intimate appellation (“Thy”) and masculine depiction indicates Whitman’s affection and worship for the power of science. Dickinson was also interested in the scientific innovation, and her interest in the image of trains can be found in poems such as “I never saw a Moor –,” “I thought the Train would never come –” (J1449/Fr1473), and “A train went through a burial gate” (J1761/Fr397). In “I never saw a Moor –,” the checks, as Johnson explains, is a colloquial word for railway tickets.⁵⁸⁵ Whether it indicates that Dickinson believes in the existence of heaven, it is interesting that heaven to her is a *spot* in this poem where she can arrive by train. The whistle of the train in “I thought the Train would never come” is the only attraction to the poet because she expects the arrival of Judge Otis Lord, her provoking lover.⁵⁸⁶ Though she waits restlessly and uneasily, she still thinks that “the Train would never come” and the

⁵⁸⁴ Walt Whitman, “To a Locomotive in Winter,” *The Walt Whitman Archive*, 2 March 2019, <<https://whitmanarchive.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁵⁸⁵ Preest 334.

⁵⁸⁶ Preest 440.

whistle sings slowly. Thus, the whistle of the train connects to the emotions of the poet and represents the arrival of her love or beloved. Finally in “A train went through a burial gate,” the train bears the weight of death from the churchyard to the graveyard; a bird, as one of the poet’s favorite images, says good-by to men.⁵⁸⁷ Hence, the train is an important image, not only in Dickinson’s images of traveling, but also in her other categories such as faith, love, and death.

One of her best-known poems that causes many discussions is “I like to see it lap the Miles –.” It is widely discussed not only because it is mainly based on what Dickinson sees and hears, meaning her real experience is the foundation of this poem; it also reveals historical and factual details of the activities of the Amherst railroad of her time. The Industrial Revolution brought many different booms to society of that day. Train, trade, and profits were tightly bound together to create the Industrial Revolution in nineteenth-century America.⁵⁸⁸ Their emergence and expansion established, as Emerson described, a new “Universal Monarchy more tyrannical” than Babylon or Rome.⁵⁸⁹ In this case, as one of the economic elites of Amherst, Dickinson’s father, Edward Dickinson was certainly intrigued by being part of the railroad network and national business.⁵⁹⁰ Though there were a few industries and manufacturers in Amherst, most of them gradually and continuously lost their influence.⁵⁹¹ Productions such as carriages, wagons, machinery, and metal tools could bring the town a “fairly secure” economic base; nonetheless, the slight profit could not withstand the flood of the industrial age, and for Amherst leaders, it was important to create more opportunities to stimulate economic growth by drawing their town on the map of major railroad routes.⁵⁹²

Therefore, after two failed attempts, in 1851 the Amherst elites including Amherst College president Edward Hitchcock, juristic expert Ithamar Conkey, a leading merchant Luke Sweetser who had a close relationship with the Dickinson family, and

⁵⁸⁷ Preest 525-26.

⁵⁸⁸ Mitchell, *Monarch* 15.

⁵⁸⁹ *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1838-1842*, ed. A. W. Plumstead and Harrison Hayford (Cambridge: HUP, 1969) 268.

⁵⁹⁰ Mitchell, *Monarch* 15-6.

⁵⁹¹ Mitchell, *Monarch* 16.

⁵⁹² Mitchell, *Monarch* 16.

Edward Dickinson became the trustees of the Amherst railroad project under the support of House Act 137 of the General Court of Massachusetts and the Amherst and Belchertown Railroad Company.⁵⁹³ A letter Edward Dickinson wrote to his son in 1852 reflects his ambition and joy for the railroad project:

You will see by the Editor's glorification in to-day's "Express," that the Am. & Bel. r.road is "a fixed fact." The contract is made – the workingmen will be digging, in "Logtown," next week – & we shall soon see those animating shanties, smoking through an old flour barrel, for a chimney, before many days. The boys fired a few guns – old folks looked on approvingly – and the whole thing seems so much like a dream....

The two great eras of the history of Amherst, are

1. The founding of the College.
2. The building of the railroad.

We here "set up our Ebeneezer."

HaHa!!!⁵⁹⁴

Interestingly there are many dashes in this short excerpt, too; this phenomenon leaves an open question whether the poet's affection on using dashes might be to some extent influenced by her father. The tone, the punctuation marks, and the way he lists the two important eras of the Amherst's history completely reveal his exultation. Edward Dickinson uses many modal verbs such as "will see," "will be," and "shall soon see" to emphasize the certainty of building a railroad. He also uses quotation marks to stress the important information such as "Express," "a fixed fact," and "Logtown." The dashes here reveal his thinking which had been overwhelmed by joy and positive expectations; moreover, they also represent words, descriptions, and details which are omitted because the father had too much that he wanted to share with his son. The conclusion of all the information – "the whole thing seems so much like a dream" – is to emotionally exclaim that for the moment everything was as beautiful and ideal as a dream which he knew would come true.

The other part of this excerpt was written in a chronological way. Edward Dickinson used "1" and "2" to number the historical events that happened in his life,

⁵⁹³ Mitchell, *Monarch* 16.

⁵⁹⁴ Millicent Todd Bingham, *Emily Dickinson's Home: Letters of Edward Dickinson and His Family* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955) 219.

and he called them “our Ebeneezer” (Ebenezer). According to the Bible, “Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer” in order to remember his victory over the Philistines.⁵⁹⁵ For Edward Dickinson, these two events were distinctively remarkable so that they deserved to be the Ebenezer as well as the great contribution to the modernization of Amherst. At the end of this excerpt, “HaHa!!!” expresses the double joy of expecting the modern technology and celebrating the milestones that the Dickinson set in their hometown’s history.

Finally, in 1853, a new railroad was completed from Palmer to Amherst, and its establishment became a shining achievement for the poet’s father.⁵⁹⁶ It was a sensation, and on May 3rd, there was a march with Edward Dickinson “at its head”⁵⁹⁷ to celebrate this event. His daughter was not one of the marchers, but the celebration of the steam engine was too sensational and exciting to ignore; hence Dickinson “still observed it [...] from the woods.”⁵⁹⁸ It is revealed in a letter she wrote to her brother in the same year on June 13th:

The New London Day passed off grandly – so all the people said – it was pretty hot and dusty, but nobody cared for that. Father was as usual, Chief Marshal of the day, and went marching around the town with New London at his heels like some old Roman General, upon a Triumph Day. Mrs [sic] Howe got a capital dinner, and was very much praised. Carriages flew like sparks, hither, and thither and yon, and they all said t’was fine. I spouse [sic] it was – I sat in Prof Tyler’s woods and saw the train move off, and then ran home again for fear somebody would see me, or ask me how I did. (L127)

Mitchell points out the comic tone and a “sneaking sense of admiration”⁵⁹⁹ of this excerpt. Sometimes a comic tone is an amusing way to express irony; however in this excerpt, the comic tone reveals that all things happened on that New London Day was “as usual.” First, the day “passed off grandly.” Though the poet emphasized her absence and tried to distance herself from the public by saying “all the people said” so, she additionally remarked that no people paid attention to the “pretty hot and dusty” weather, for all of them were engaged in celebration. As usual, her father was the “Chief

⁵⁹⁵ *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (Illinois: Crossway, 2001) 230.

⁵⁹⁶ Mitchell, *Monarch* 17.

⁵⁹⁷ Mitchell, *Monarch* 17.

⁵⁹⁸ Mitchell, *Monarch* 17.

⁵⁹⁹ Mitchell, *Monarch* 17.

Marshal,” and that day was his “Triumph Day.” Wearing “New London at his heels,” he was at the head of the march⁶⁰⁰ as “some old Roman General.” The streams of horses and carriages moved fast and everywhere, and all the witnesses enjoyed themselves in the ceremony, even Dickinson confessed that she supposed it was quite a spectacle. The tone is comic; however, from word choice and figure of speech, the “sneaking sense of admiration” and pride for her father who played a “dominant political and civic”⁶⁰¹ role in Amherst is not hard to notice.

Nevertheless, there is still one thing that is interesting enough for her to observe, even under the risk of being seen and questioned by others. In Prof Tyler’s woods, she sat there and saw a train move off.⁶⁰² Since the Amherst Station was “just across the road from the bottom of the Dickinson garden,”⁶⁰³ the poet had the chance to see trains; she could also experience all the sounds normally associated with the railroad in that era. This experience enriched her imagination of the railroad to a certain extent:

I like to see it lap the Miles –
And lick the Valleys up –
And stop to feed itself at Tanks –
And the – prodigious step

Around a Pile of Mountains –
And supercilious peer
In Shanties – by the sides of Roads –
And then a Quarry pare

To fit its Ribs
And crawl between
Complaining all the while
In horrid – hooting stanza –
Then chase itself down Hill –

And neigh like Boanerges –
Then – punctual as a Star
Stop – docile and omnipotent
At its own stable door –

⁶⁰⁰ Mitchell, *Monarch* 17.

⁶⁰¹ Mitchell, *Monarch* 17.

⁶⁰² Preest 195.

⁶⁰³ Preest 195.

Mitchell claims that this poem is Dickinson's most celebrated work on trains.⁶⁰⁴ Altogether, there are four major discussions of this poem. First, without mentioning a train or a horse or any other objects by name, Dickinson created a riddle. It may be not hard for the reader to find the answer, but it makes this poem interesting and adds comic elements to her writing at the same time. Second, anthropomorphism, the "animation of an inanimate object"⁶⁰⁵ is used in the poem. Kornfeld describes that, in this poem the protagonist is a cartoon train; it laps, licks, feeds itself, chases, neighs etc. as an "old Disney black and white."⁶⁰⁶ Meanwhile, different from Whitman's concentration on each part of the locomotive, Dickinson chose the complete train as her focus. Third, the sound of the train or the "iron horse" is also one of the focuses of this poem. Dickinson wrote a letter to her brother in 1853 with a positive tone as she described her aural impression of the train, "While I write, the whistle is playing, and the cars just coming in. It gives us all new life, every time it plays. How you will love to hear it, when you come home again" (L 123). Finally, the excitement of witnessing a new change around her definitely aroused her admiration for her father who was the advocator and backer of the railroad project. This poem proves her support for her father.

With regard to the analysis of this poem, Helen Vendler uses the term "chromatic" of musicology to explain it in a sense of sound.⁶⁰⁷ She claims that the structure of the poem, "I like to see it do X and Y [...] And then [...] And then [...] Then [...] And [...] Then," resembles a musical scale that uses steps and half steps in an exhaustive sequence.⁶⁰⁸ On the perspective of Imagism, this chromatic structure reveals how the poet gives full play of her ability of concentration, and it is different from Whitman's concentration which is formed by parallelism and a listing structure. To begin, modifiers of this poem such as "prodigious," "supercilious," "punctual," "docile," "omnipotent," and "stable" set a basic tone of this poem which is proud and exultant. The speaker also directly presents her/his attitude – "I like to see it" – in the first line. Then, Dickinson's concentration on the movement of the train is revealed by the use of "and" and "then"

⁶⁰⁴ Mitchell, *Monarch* 17.

⁶⁰⁵ Mitchell, *Monarch* 19.

⁶⁰⁶ "The Prowling Bee."

⁶⁰⁷ Helen Vendler, *Poets Thinking: Pope, Whitman, Dickinson, Yeats* (Massachusetts: HUP, 2006) 66.

⁶⁰⁸ Vendler 66.

which function as a camera lens: It follows and records all the movement of the train. Dickinson does not depict a train that is passing by; instead, she records its complete journey. In contrast to the perspective of a passenger, the poet's angle of view seems higher as a bird's eye view. The train may begin its journey from a train station, and then it runs freely through different geographical conditions. It has to "feed itself" or to "crawl" up on the mountains with "horrid" and "hooting" complaint; whereas, when it punctually arrives at its destination with the shrill whistle as "Boanerges," meaning the "Mighty shouter,"⁶⁰⁹ it shows the *docile* and *stable* side and is *omnipotent* as well.

What is more, the poet concentrates on the train's speed. In the first stanza, "lap" means "gulp" and "swallow," and "lick" with a similar meaning of "devour" and "eat up" according to Dickinson's *Lexicon*.⁶¹⁰ Hence, "lap the Miles" and "lick the Valleys up" indicate that the speed of the train is fast. Moreover, the train keeps moving superciliously and prodigiously without obstacles not only in the natural environment such as "valleys" and "mountains," but also in manmade settings such as "Shanties – by the sides of Roads." It again proves that the train's powerful speed impresses the speaker. What is more, this impression lasts until the last stanza of this poem in which the speaker describes the train is as "punctual as a Star." It may "stop to feed itself at Tanks" as a horse for example; however, it is still more punctual than a horse.

Therefore, whether from the description of movement or speed, or from the tone of her description, the poet's concentration reveals a kind of awe in facing such a technological innovation. All in all, this poem vividly presents a moving train not only from a dynamic description which visually presents the mobility to the reader; it also adds more sensory experience from an auditory aspect while reading it. This poem is another proof that the poet was inevitably involved in the new flood of mobility and that she was proud of her father's achievements. In short, as a precious and rare sample of Dickinson's actual travel experience, the freight car narrative and the poem of the train reveal her interest in technological innovation. Her description of what happened in the freight car and what happened to the "iron horse" that ran in mountains reveal not only

⁶⁰⁹ Preest 195.

⁶¹⁰ "Emily Dickinson Lexicon."

her concentration on a specific portrayal of a plot and an object; it more importantly displayed her ability to write travel stories if she had wanted to pursue that avenue. These attempts become sparkling contrasts that comfort the reader when they journey with her to the final destination.

4.2 Journey to the Final Destination/Immortality

4.2.1 On the Magic Perpendiculars

In contrast to the optimistic and positive attitude toward the “iron horse,” Dickinson’s cognition of journey is more complicated. As a recluse, her perception of the physical world easily relates to a spiritual one. For example, “The Road was lit with Moon and star” (J1450/Fr1474) as Preest explains, is a scene that the poet captured by looking out of her bedroom window under the moonlight.⁶¹¹

The Road was lit with Moon and star –
The Trees were bright and still –
Described I – by the distant Light
A Traveller on a Hill –
To magic Perpendiculars
Ascending, though Terrene –
Unknown his shimmering ultimate –
But he indorsed the sheen –

Preest continues to explain that in Dickinson’s imagination, the “traveler” or the “horseman” she saw in the moonlight, represents every “earthbound” person who expects to climb the “magic perpendiculars” and “shimmering ultimate” of heaven in their lifetime.⁶¹²

Seo-Young Jennie Chu further explains the “shimmering ultimate” in her essay “Dickinson and Mathematics” that there is a shimmering quality in the ultimate destination because it is unknown.⁶¹³ It exists in the imagination, lingers at the margin of abstraction in her mind.⁶¹⁴ Chu demonstrates that an *x*-axis and a *y*-axis divide the night sky, and an “ethereal grid” of the “magic perpendiculars” is formed by their

⁶¹¹ Preest 441.

⁶¹² Preest 441.

⁶¹³ Seo-Young Jennie Chu, “Dickinson and Mathematics,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 15.1 (2006): 35-55, at 47, *Project MUSE*, 12 April 2016.

⁶¹⁴ Chu 47.

intersection.⁶¹⁵ She interprets the “traveler on a hill” as “someone about to die”; his journey is from the earthly horizon to a mathematical space in the sky.⁶¹⁶ The hill becomes the traveler’s “final place” from where he ascends to the “divine scheme”; the higher he ascends, the closer he approaches the vertical asymptote (the y-axis), and then a “curve-like path” is created by him.⁶¹⁷ At the same time, he finally disappears from human view through the ascension.⁶¹⁸

Whether she saw the traveler through her window, or she imagined such a story, the poet creates a contrast between earth and immortality through the “magic perpendiculars.” From the first through the fourth line, the poet in fact describes a peaceful scene with light (“moon and star”), color (“bright”), and life (“trees” and “a traveler”). Nevertheless, from the fifth line to the end of the poem, the peaceful earthly scene changes to the unknown, misty sky. The second half of the poem is filled with a different “light,” for “shimmering” and “sheen” ostensibly present something of the mystic and glorious; in fact what they represent is something disconnected with the realistic depiction of the first four lines.

The most interesting image of this poem is “magic perpendiculars.” There are two interpretations for this term: If it means, as Chu claims, the vertical asymptote, it indicates the route to the “ultimate” which may represent heaven or immortality. Hence, the lyric I may witness an epic journey of a mortal who converts to immortality. If it means “cliff,” the lyric I may witness a tragedy because the traveler may fall from the cliff and eventually die; at the same time, it explains the “shimmering ultimate,” for the speaker cannot tell whether the traveler goes to heaven or hell. If the perpendiculars represent a cliff, the expressions such as “magic,” “he indorsed the sheen,” and even the imagery of the first two lines reveal a sense of irony. In contrast to the “shimmering ultimate,” the road presents beauty and life of the earth; whereas, it becomes a beautiful seduction that leads the traveler to the “magic Perpendiculars.” Whether he finally reaches his “ultimate,” he deserves some glory because of his “brave” attempt to enter

⁶¹⁵ Chu 47.

⁶¹⁶ Chu 47.

⁶¹⁷ Chu 47.

⁶¹⁸ Chu 47.

immortality by falling from a cliff. Perhaps, the poet implies something that contrasts to a traditional expectation of a peaceful arrival of immortality in this poem. The uncertain destiny of the traveler becomes an immortality question with the disappearance from the earth.

It is never easy to be a traveler who goes on a life journey. Conviction, seduction, and uncertainty build the road to immortality. One needs to be tested while conquering various difficulties in order to become immortal. The process is filled with ordeals, but the outcome could be joyous. Arthur Asa Berger claims that not everyone likes to be treated strictly as a tourist.⁶¹⁹ Rather than being called a tourist on the journey of life, some prefer to call themselves a traveler, for the word tourist connotes something unfavorable, so that people relate tourism to lightheartedness.⁶²⁰ Indeed, the *Online Etymology Dictionary* defines that “travail” as the origin of the word travel means “work, labor, toil, suffering or painful effort, trouble,” and “arduous journey.”⁶²¹

Though this sense of “travel” as simply a tiresome means of getting from one spot to another is outdated, it offers a different angle of consideration. It reflects less joy, less fortune, and less freedom on the way to the final destination. After all, most meaningful, significant journeys must overcome difficulties and suffering while taking the opportunity for some self-reflection. Instances of such journeys are countless in American literature; examples include some well-known representatives such as Melville’s *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*, Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises*, Kerouac’s *On the Road* etc.

Dickinson highlights the meaning of “travail” and the difficulties on journey through her rich imagery of suffering and pain in her journey poems. As Margaret H. Freeman observes, unlike the atmosphere the poet creates for her voyage poems, the imagery of her roads and journeys is “almost always negative.”⁶²² According to

⁶¹⁹ Arthur Asa Berger, *Deconstructing Travel: Cultural Perspectives on Tourism* (California: AltaMira, 2004) 7.

⁶²⁰ Berger 7.

⁶²¹ “Travail,” *Online Etymology Dictionary*, 07 February 2015, <<http://www.etymonline.com>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁶²² Margaret H. Freeman, “Nature’s Influence,” *Emily Dickinson in Context*, ed. Eliza Richards (New York: CUP, 2013) 62.

Freeman, the roads that Dickinson depicts are always lonely or described as a Scarlet way, and the travel experience is associated with pain, crucifixion, and renunciation.⁶²³ Additionally, the traveler feels ill or odd, and the “paths do not so much achieve, or lead to, or even end at, as come to a ‘stop’ at their destination.”⁶²⁴

“Life is a journey” as a “long-standing conventional”⁶²⁵ metaphor does not lend her safety or simply a distinct direction of life; rather, as Freeman claims, the poet transforms it into a refusal of the “life is a journey” image in order to express her aversion to travel as a metaphor.⁶²⁶ If this metaphor indicates that birth is the beginning of the journey, while death is the *final* (emphasis mine) destination, it is contrary to the poet’s Puritan heritage and Calvinist theology.⁶²⁷ It is because on the one hand, death can be comprehended as a point on the journey and as a gateway for puritan souls to reach their final destination of heaven or hell; on the other hand, the metaphor needs to be structured as a linear path which includes a beginning, an ending, and points along the way.⁶²⁸ Nonetheless, “to value immortality over life” is Calvinists’ viewpoint in order to maintain a trajectory.⁶²⁹ Moreover, life for Dickinson is more natural with its seasonal cycles, meaning flora and fauna around her will return annually and different natural phenomena will repeat themselves every spring.⁶³⁰ Alternate and nonlinear phrasing⁶³¹ make Dickinson’s journey different from the conventional excursion experienced by many. It is never an end; instead, it has more things unbeknown to the reader.

To some degree, Dickinson’s personal philosophy of religion can explain why she is fascinated by immortality as it often appears in different themes in her poetry. Her writing indicates a duality of “magic perpendiculards.” Though she is fascinated with the magic part, her imagery of journey is not as exultant and ecstatic as her vision of voyage; at the same time, it is not as positive and full of curiosity as her imagery of railroad

⁶²³ Freeman 62.

⁶²⁴ Freeman 62.

⁶²⁵ Freeman 62.

⁶²⁶ Freeman 62.

⁶²⁷ Freeman 62.

⁶²⁸ Freeman 62.

⁶²⁹ Freeman 62.

⁶³⁰ Freeman 62.

⁶³¹ Freeman 62.

travel. The following passages thus attempt to reveal the poet's journey to immortality through her unique imagery of roads, travelers, and methods of transport.

4.2.2 Road Image

A contemporary writing, "Song of the Open Road" by Whitman can be seen as one of the most representative journeys in American travel literature. It maintains popularity not only because of its stirring musicality and dynamic persona; it is also because of its rousing call to fraternity and freedom which offsets its insights into human frailty.⁶³² In the mid nineteenth century, the open road was a "distinctively American symbol of progress"; people could freely prosper, freely commune with nature, freely discover their selfhood, and freely undergo spiritual regeneration in which Whitman created an "imagined escape route toward the quasi-mythical open spaces."⁶³³

There are many impressive images of traveling in this poem. First, the traveler is described as a "light-hearted," "Strong and content" person who is willing to carry the "old delicious burdens" throughout the journey; second, the road is depicted as a "long brown path" which can lead the traveler to any destination, and "[i]t is safe."⁶³⁴ If the reader associates the color brown with the color of soil, it not only indicates a path in nature; it also implies a place which breeds hope. Third, the companions of the traveler are assured that "[t]raveling with me you find what never tires"; what is more, various people travel on the open road and there are no boundaries among different classes, careers, and genders.⁶³⁵ Finally, "Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, / I myself am good-fortune, / Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing [...]"⁶³⁶ presents strong confidence which is a vital condition to accomplish a successful journey. More importantly, at the end of the poem, the poet appeals to the reader to accept his love and passion, to renounce those material requirements, and to travel on the open road.

⁶³² Harold Aspiz, "'Song of the Open Road' (1856)," *The Walt Whitman Archive*, 5 March 2019, <<https://whitmanarchive.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁶³³ Aspiz, "'Song of the Open Road' (1856)."

⁶³⁴ Walt Whitman, "Song of the Open Road," *The Walt Whitman Archive*, 5 March 2019, <<https://whitmanarchive.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁶³⁵ Whitman, "Song of the Open Road."

⁶³⁶ Whitman, "Song of the Open Road."

Whitman continues his positive, passionate description on his road image to present his ideals and theory; while Dickinson's road imagery is another attempt to present hardship on her exploration of immortality. She reveals an attitude of rejection in the following two poems. First, she had seen Cole's *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, as proven in her letter to Mrs. Thomas P. Field. Therefore, some imagery in "Through lane it lay – through bramble –" (J9/Fr43) resembles the imagery in Cole's *Expulsion*:

Through lane it lay – through bramble –
Through clearing and through wood –
Banditti often passed us
Upon the lonely road.

The wolf came peering curious –
The owl looked puzzled down –
The serpent's satin figure
Glid stealthily along –

The tempests touched our garments –
The lightning's poinards gleamed –
Fierce from the Crag above us
The hungry Vulture screamed –

The satyr's fingers beckoned –
The valley murmured "Come" –
These were the mates –
This was the road
These children fluttered home.

Unlike the Italian painter Masaccio's portrayal,⁶³⁷ Cole focuses on sharp contrasts between paradise and the earthly world by portraying different landscapes. A stone arch symbolizes not only a portal to Paradise, but also a place where two opposing realms meet.⁶³⁸ The right part of the painting evokes the beauty and harmony of Eden through

⁶³⁷ Before Thomas Cole, Masaccio (1401-1428) painted the *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* which is a "fresco," and it locates "in the Brancacci Chapel inside the church of Santa Maria del Carmine in Florence." Masaccio focuses on Adam and Eve, who are "cast out of the Garden of Eden and into the world where they are forced to labor and suffer the consequences of their sin." The "emotion" of Adam and Eve is emphasized because based on the depiction, "Eve cries out and Adam cannot bear to show his face." Cf. "Masaccio's Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden," *Analysis of the Art of Renaissance Italy*, 22 May 2015, <<http://www.italianrenaissance.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁶³⁸ Thomas Cole, "Expulsion from the Garden of Eden," *Museum of Fine Arts Boston*, 20 March 2015, <<http://www.mfa.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

various flowers blooming in profusion; the left part presents a dangerous and unknown world – an abyss which is marked by blasted trees, desolate rocks, and an ominous wolf.⁶³⁹ Additionally, the portal to paradise sharply divides the boundary of the two opposing realms; the only thin line between the so-called divine and evil is ironically revealed.

According to the following two close-ups, the left one portrays a hazardous road in an unknown earthly world in which Adam and Eve walk hand in hand; the right one presents not only an ominous wolf which alludes to the danger existing along the journey of Adam of Eve:



Close-ups of Cole's *Expulsion*

It also shows a death scene with the wolf stepping on a deer and confronting a vulture-like bird which eagerly waits to steal meat. Ostensibly, Adam and Eve have to face various difficulties on the journey; nonetheless, the death scene indicates that danger and the unknown are in fact predestined.

Gothic elements of this poem are then naturally focused. The close connection between Dickinson and Gothic elements is similar to her close relationship with nature. In his book *American Gothic* (2009), Charles L. Crow regards Dickinson as one of American's finest authors who followed the tradition of writing Gothic works, as Hawthorne, Melville, Poe, and James etc.⁶⁴⁰ Being seemingly antithetical to the Gothic genre, but in fact having its own Gothic effects, poetry is unlike the Gothic novel which enables the reader to enter fear diachronically.⁶⁴¹ Meanwhile, the tension cannot be

⁶³⁹ “Expulsion from the Garden of Eden.”

⁶⁴⁰ Charles L. Crow, *American Gothic* (Cardiff: U of Wales, 2009) 1.

⁶⁴¹ Daneen Wardrop, “‘Goblin with a Gauge’: Dickinson’s Readerly Gothic,” *The Emily Dickinson*

accumulated because especially in Dickinson's poetry, it is easy to see the shape of the complete poem at one glance.⁶⁴² Nevertheless, though such condensed form cannot produce shrieks, the "ghosts" still exist at the very "bed-site" where her language is conceived, and it produces epistemic shock and phonemic fear.⁶⁴³

Even if Dickinson was inspired by Cole's *Expulsion*, she added more imagery in order to describe a perilous journey within three quatrains and one pentastich. Three 7676 stanzas are followed by an unpredictable 76446 stanza; repetition is used not only in phrases, but also in sentences. To begin, the speaker walks on a long, difficult road "through lane," "through bramble," "through clearing," and "through wood." Then "banditti," "the wolf," "the owl," "the serpent," "the tempest," "the lightning," "the Crag," and "the hungry vulture" appear along the road. The images of the mysterious "satyr's fingers" and the "valley" reach a peak in Gothic atmosphere. Rather than the proud presentation in "This – is the land – the Sunset washes," the lines with the italicized "these" and "this," which are also underlined in Dickinson's manuscript,⁶⁴⁴ represent admonishment.

Cole stresses hidden danger and hardship that Adam and Eve may encounter on their journey after banishment from Eden. If Dickinson imports Cole's imagery of danger and hardship to her journey of the mysterious "valley," she in fact adds more Gothic images, so that her readers are able to experience the journey from a visual aspect ("lane," "bramble," "clearing," "wood," "banditti," "wolf," "owl," "serpent," "lightning," and "crag"), auditory aspect ("The hungry Vulture screamed"), and tactile aspect ("The tempests touched our garments"). Not only is the road lonely and filled with danger and hardship; the destination is also vague. The poet simply describes it as "valley" which is represented by the beckoning of the "satyr's fingers." Though seduction waves to these "children," they flee to their home, for they are not only too innocent to experience such a journey; they may also be intimidated by danger and hardship. Dickinson uses seemingly unrestrained, negative imagery to depict the road to

Journal 1.1 (1992): 39-53, at 40, *Project MUSE*, 2 May 2017.

⁶⁴² Wardrop 40.

⁶⁴³ Wardrop 50.

⁶⁴⁴ "Emily Dickinson Archive."

a mysterious valley. If the valley represents paradise, or say immortality, the imagery and the last line of the poem reflects her rejection.

In “The Road to Paradise is plain” (J1491/Fr1525), she claims another rejection:

The Road to Paradise is plain,
And holds scarce one.
Not that it is not firm
But we presume
A Dimpled Road
Is more preferred.
The Belles of Paradise are few –
Not me – nor you –
But unsuspected things –
Mines have no Wings.

Preest explains that the reason for stating “The Road to Paradise is plain” is because the road to Paradise is obviously “laid out” in the teachings of the church.⁶⁴⁵ The poet contrasts two different road images as follows: The one that is through “the teachings of the church” is “plain,” while the other is “dimpled”; the plain road “holds scarce one,” while the dimpled one is “more preferred”; and the image of the “Belles of Paradise” contrast to the “Mines have no Wings.” The given road is rejected, for it does not conform to the presumption that exists because there are “unsuspected things”; and that which is unsuspected is revealed by the last line. Something buried in the ground which has no wings is certainly not the belles; it therefore does not deserve a plain road. The sharp contrast between belles and mines reveals additional opposing images. Similar images include terms such as “bright” and “dark,” “light” and “heavy,” and “white” and “black.” Basically, the poet informs the reader that the road, which is widely offered, is in fact inappropriate for most people with her humility, and the perfect rhyme of “things” and “Wings” reveal the poet’s sarcastic retort.

Essentially then, uncertainty and expectation do not exist in these two poems because the road image is too negatively depicted to contain any hesitation and ambiguity. Whether from the Gothic imagery or the ironic contrasts, the poet locates mortals in a low, weak, and small state when they travel on the road to immortality. Unlike Whitman’s open road, not only is Dickinson’s road filled with different dangers

⁶⁴⁵ Preest 452.

and hardships; it is also predestinated to be rough for ordinary people. Hence, the road image alludes to a great deal of suffering of Dickinson's traveler on the journey to immortality.

4.2.3 Lost Travelers: Her, His, and Our Journey

The poet basically presents a sense of smallness and humbleness in "The Road to Paradise is plain." In the following poems, she describes three failed experiences on the journey to immortality, and the protagonists' tragic endings are predestined by their smallness. To begin, "'Twas the old – road – through pain" (J344/Fr376) presents a heartbreak story of a girl:

'Twas the old – road – through pain –
That unfrequented – one –
With many a turn – and thorn –
That stops – at Heaven –

This – was the Town – she passed –
There – where she – rested – last –
Then – stepped more fast –
The little tracks – close prest –
Then – not so swift –
Slow – slow – as feet did weary – grow –
Then – stopped – no other track!

Wait! Look! Her little Book –
The leaf – at love – turned back –
Her very Hat –
And this worn shoe just fits the track –
Herself – though – fled!

Another bed – a short one –
Women make – tonight –
In Chambers bright –
Too out of sight – though –
For our hoarse Good Night –
To touch her Head!

The images of the "little book," the "very hat," and the "worn shoe" represent sentimentality.⁶⁴⁶ John Mack introduces a way of "measurement" according to the human body: Since antiquity, body parts such as fingers and feet were used as

⁶⁴⁶ "The Prowling Bee."

traditional measures.⁶⁴⁷ The image of feet appears frequently in Dickinson's poem in phrases such as "The feet of people walking home" (J7/Fr16), "How many times these low feet staggered –" (J187/Fr238), "The Feet, mechanical, go round – / Of Ground, or Air, or Ought –" in "After great pain, a formal feeling comes –" (J341/Fr372), and "I could not prove the Years had feet – / Yet confident they run" (J563/Fr674) etc. It is a measurement of hardship, time, or simply, long distance.

A "worn shoe" as an extended image of feet indicates a long journey. The first stanza is a typical setting of a road to heaven; the second stanza presents the girl's journey on foot. She passed the town, rested, stepped faster, walked not so swiftly, became slower and slower, and finally stopped; her footprints and her "worn shoe" reveal a long, exhausting journey. Nonetheless, when she seemed to be finally found, she "fled" and left a chaotic scene with her book, her hat, and her shoe, as if she had been robbed. One wonders if she arrived at heaven; regardless, the image of a short bed indicates that she was put in a coffin and her funeral was held "tonight." She might be finally found on the road to heaven, and the "hoarse Good Night" could be mourning for her or for the rest of us because the journey to heaven is too dangerous to be taken by small, ordinary people. The poet creates feminine, delicate imagery in order to present smallness. In "Victory comes late" (J690/Fr195), the smallness of human beings is emphasized relative to the figures of robins and sparrows.⁶⁴⁸ In contrast to an eagles' "Golden Breakfast," these small birds take cherries or crumbs as food, or have abilities to endure deprivation.⁶⁴⁹ Their starvation is caused by the "lack of God's love"; whereas they are in fact "promised" an abundant afterlife.⁶⁵⁰ By emphasizing that small creatures eat little, the speaker knows that she/he "*cannot appeal to*" (emphasis mine) God's love.⁶⁵¹

Indeed, Dickinson's protagonists not only cannot appeal to God's love; they seem lost because they do not even receive any sign that leads them to overcome their

⁶⁴⁷ John Mack, *The Art of Small Things* (Massachusetts: HUP, 2007) 53.

⁶⁴⁸ Joanna Yin, "'Arguments of Pearl': Dickinson's Response to Puritan Semiology," *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 2.1 (1993): 65-83, at 71, *Project MUSE*, 8 June 2016.

⁶⁴⁹ Yin, 71.

⁶⁵⁰ Yin, 71.

⁶⁵¹ Yin, 71.

difficulties. In “Trudging to Eden, looking backward” (J1020/Fr1031), the poet creates a boy figure whose name is Trotwood. Though she seems to create a happy ending, the reader can easily find a *sad truth* from her euphemistic expressions:

Trudging to Eden, looking backward,
I met Somebody's little boy
Asked him his name – He lisped me “Trotwood” –
Lady, did He belong to thee?

Would it comfort – to know I met him –
And that He didn't look afraid?
I couldn't weep – for so many smiling
New Acquaintance – this Baby made –

The archetype of the little boy is from the novel *David Copperfield*, one of Dickinson's favorite books by Charles Dickens (1812-1870).⁶⁵² In chapters thirteen and fourteen, Dickens wrote that young David Copperfield decided to end his present miserable life by escaping from it and by seeking help from his aunt, Miss Betsey Trotwood. Fortunately, he was finally directed to his aunt's cottage after six days traveling and inquiring about his aunt. After learning of his tragic experience, Miss Trotwood decided to accept him as part of her family; she therefore renamed him Trotwood Copperfield.⁶⁵³

Elizabeth A. Petrino discusses Dickinson's little boy from a perspective of a child's death. She explains that Dickinson witnesses a child's contentment after death and sentimentally treats death as legitimate and therapeutic.⁶⁵⁴ Jane Donahue Eberwein also focuses on the boy's role in this poem. She claims that under a background of the social constrictions of a middle-class, nineteenth-century girl, Dickinson's child role, especially on its boyish variant, is particularly attractive to literary critics as well as psychologists.⁶⁵⁵ The poet's boy figures seem to be outcasts in need of domestic nurture and protection.⁶⁵⁶ The poet demonstrates through fantasizing reveries of boys' excursions into the world that the power boys appear to enjoy was a “sadly mixed

⁶⁵² The reader of Dickens's time believed that “*David Copperfield* was thinly disguised autobiography” and “it was the first novel Dickens had written in the first person.” Cf. Holly Hughes, *Charles Dickens's David Copperfield* (New York: Barron's Educational Series, 1985) 1-7; Preest 328.

⁶⁵³ Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1992) 157-73, 174-86.

⁶⁵⁴ Elizabeth A. Petrino, *Emily Dickinson and Her Contemporaries: Women's Verse in America, 1820-1885* (New Hampshire: UP of New England, 1998) 87.

⁶⁵⁵ Jane Donahue Eberwein, *Dickinson: Strategies of Limitation* (Massachusetts: U of Massachusetts, 1985) 98.

⁶⁵⁶ Eberwein, *Strategies of Limitation* 99.

blessing.”⁶⁵⁷

Vivian R. Pollak explains that any woman would be sympathetic to a child like this; the image of that particular child – Trotwood – reveals poignancy.⁶⁵⁸ On the surface, Dickinson intends to supply a happy ending for the unfortunate orphan by finding him “companionship in heaven”;⁶⁵⁹ as a matter of fact, the first word “trudging” in this poem indicates either the unwillingness of the speaker to journey to Eden, or the hardship she/he suffered on the road. Moreover, as the word “lisped” reveals, the poet’s little boy is even younger than Dickens’s Trotwood; it thus adds more tragic atmosphere to the poem. The last two lines not only evoke more poignancy; they also reveal a contradiction, or say, the sad truth: The speaker should be happy for the little boy since he will no longer be lonely but with “many smiling new acquaintance[s]”; nevertheless, she/he knows that this is not the true ending for the boy and for all travelers on the journey, for they are still trudging on the road, and there is no sign in this poem indicating that they will arrive at the final destination – “Eden.” Even though a 9798 stanza seems to be different from the first 9898 stanza, which to some degree symbolizes the boy’s participation; this difference is still insignificant in a mass of syllables. It seems consolatory to have companions on the journey; however, sadness arises because the speaker knows such consolation is only temporary. After all, they are all small and helpless for lacking of God’s love.

Such a feeling of being exiled is also revealed in “Our journey had advanced –” (J615/Fr453):

Our journey had advanced –
Our feet were almost come
To that odd Fork in Being’s Road –
Eternity – by Term –

Our pace took sudden awe –
Out feet – reluctant – led –
Before – were Cities – but Between –
The Forest of the Dead –

⁶⁵⁷ Eberwein, *Strategies of Limitation* 99.

⁶⁵⁸ Vivian R. Pollak, “Emily Dickinson’s Literary Allusions,” *Essays in Literature* 1.1 (1974): 54-68, at 61.

⁶⁵⁹ Pollak 62.

Retreat – was out of Hope –
Behind – a Sealed Route –
Eternity’s White Flag – Before –
And God – at every Gate –

According to Leigh-Anne Urbanowicz Marcellin, Dickinson might have been attentive to the Civil War. She claims that this poem is a “dramatic monologue” of a soldier approaching his death.⁶⁶⁰ The soldier and his comrades had to face the ultimate defeat of death, and from city to city, they marched with a forest of corpses located between them; nonetheless, an “aggressive God” blocks every avenue of escape.⁶⁶¹

Moreover, a “White Flag” image arouses many thoughts; among them, Cynthia Griffin Wolff comprehensively elaborates on this image. To begin, “Eternity’s White Flag” symbolizes the talisman of surrender, and God’s face “at every Gate” indicates armament because the cities are not prepared to surrender to people who advance toward it; hence those who would dare to enter are required to surrender in order to do so.⁶⁶² Such surrender likens to the act of conversion when a Christian decides to accept the terms of God’s covenant of faith.⁶⁶³ In other words, one must lose oneself to reach “hollow sameness” in a fateful journey to immortality.⁶⁶⁴ Surrender thus means the beginning of an “appalling erosion” of human identity.⁶⁶⁵

Rather than a welcome, to those who attempt to enter the “Cities,” the “White Flag” signifies that there is a precondition for them to give up their *self* and to submit to the majesty of God. This resembles what Cole portrayed in his *Manhood: Facing the trial by flood*, the man chooses to surrender because he piously kneels down and prays. Thus, the “White Flag” is not an olive branch but an ultimatum. Kornfeld seems supportive to this. Though part of her explanation falls somewhere in the middle, she also claims that “Eternity’s White Flag” indicates surrender; eternity is therefore a place to surrendered personal will and God represents a conqueror.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶⁰ Leigh-Anne Urbanowicz Marcellin, “Emily Dickinson’s Civil War Poetry,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 5.2 (1996): 107-112, at 108, *Project MUSE*, 15 July 2018.

⁶⁶¹ Marcellin 109.

⁶⁶² Cynthia Griffin Wolff, *Emily Dickinson* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986) 338.

⁶⁶³ Wolff 338.

⁶⁶⁴ Wolff 338.

⁶⁶⁵ Wolff 338.

⁶⁶⁶ “The Prowling Bee.”

Just as “’Twas the old – road” and “Trudging to Eden,” “Our journey” unequivocally begins on a journey to immortality and ambiguously ends with an unsolved dilemma; the reader is left in situ, facing a choice and perhaps a disappointing result. The poet creates an extreme situation: First, “fork” indicates that there should be two roads, one leading to heaven and the other leading to hell; however, using “odd” to modify “fork” indicates that the route has been changed as revealed by the last line of the first stanza – only “eternity” is waiting at the end of the road. Second, though she uses no passive voice, the first two lines of the second stanza presents an unwillingness to proceed. It becomes stronger because though they have already seen eternity’s cities, there is a “forest of the dead” standing in between. Third, except for “Eternity’s White Flag,” there is no retreat, no hope, and no second choice because the only route has been sealed. They are manipulated and trampled, and their smallness contrasts to God’s omnipotence, for they only have one sealed road, while God presents himself “at every Gate.” They are defeated, and the only mercy is surrender. Though their final fate remains unknown, they indeed fail to make their own choice.

In short, for insignificantly small mortals, the journey to immortality is full of hardship. On the one hand, it is lonely and painful; on the other hand, it is unpredictable; even though the so-called final destination is around the corner, the result is still unknown. Eberwein claims that travel to Dickinson is a quest which reveals that her speaker encounters “prodigious obstacles” only to reach unspecified goals.⁶⁶⁷ Rather than quest, the three journeys in fact present a sort of forced suffering; nonetheless the prodigious obstacles and the unspecified goals are truly revealed by their failed ending in the search for immortality.

4.2.4 Journey of the Lyric I

It is not surprising that Dickinson specifically presents her ideal journey to immortality. In “Elijah’s Wagon knew no thill” (J1254/Fr1288), the poet uses “feats inscrutable” to describe Elijah’s journey,

Elijah’s Wagon knew no thill
Was innocent of Wheel

⁶⁶⁷ Eberwein, *Strategies of Limitation* 110.

Elijah's horses as unique
As was his vehicle –

Elijah's journey to portray
Expire with him the skill
Who justified Elijah
In feats inscrutable –

for the Bible describes that journey in the following way:

And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.⁶⁶⁸

Therefore, Elijah is famous for his ascending into heaven in a chariot of fire. Though the details of this miraculous journey could be portrayed by God alone and heaven was clearly its destination, the fascination is that rather than undergoing the routine tunneling of the grave, heaven can be reached by dramatic ascension.⁶⁶⁹ Eberwein claims that the story of Elijah fascinated Dickinson, and she considered herself the center of an excellent adventure.⁶⁷⁰

Perhaps, the poet admired Elijah's way of journeying to heaven; more importantly though, her boldness in putting this image into her creation is unusual for a nineteenth-century woman. Interestingly, one may realize that Elijah rises into heaven with a fiery chariot and fiery horses, but "without dying"; furthermore, just as Jesus ascended into heaven, the sudden disappearance from the ordinary world is a means by which translated saints reach heaven, and what they leave is worshipers in wonder.⁶⁷¹ Certainly, the poet does not compare herself with a saint; nevertheless, it to some degree reveals her expectation of an unusual journey to immortality, even without dying.

The fear of death is a perpetual subject of human beings. Many poets portray the final moment and they endow death with different characteristics and roles, especially female poets. For example, Lucy Larcom puts in her "Across the River":

⁶⁶⁸ "They" refers to Elijah and Elisha. *The Holy Bible* 308.

⁶⁶⁹ Eberwein, *Strategies of Limitation* 37.

⁶⁷⁰ Eberwein, *Strategies of Limitation* 37.

⁶⁷¹ Eberwein explains that "Without dying, Elijah rose – to be seen again at Christ's Transfiguration, when he and Moses appeared to the Apostles as walking and talking with Jesus, who was himself dazzling like a translate saint: 'his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light' (Matthew 17:2-3). The transfiguration itself anticipated the most wonderful example of translation, Christ's rising from the dead and ascension into heaven; and the behavior of the risen Christ exemplified the qualities of the person so favored by God." Eberwein, *Strategies of Limitation* 37.

[...]

He who on our earthly path
Bids us help each other –
Who his Well-beloved hath
Made our Elder Brother –
Will but clasp the chain of love
Closer, when we meet above.

Therefore dread I not to go
O'er the Silent River.
Death, thy hastening oar I know;
Bear me, thou Life-giver,
Through the waters, to the shore,
Where mine own have gone before!⁶⁷²

Perfect rhyme largely appears in these two hexasticha, such as “path” and “hath,” “other” and “brother,” “love” and “above” etc.; it to some degree reveals the poet’s piety and worship for such a journey. Capitalized words not only emphasize the piety and worship; it also creates a ceremonial atmosphere. Death is described as a solicitous, leading role who responsibly guides mortals to heaven. Hence, the speaker unequivocally expresses that there is no dread to cross the “Silent River,” for what death did on the road has already consoled the speaker.

Interestingly, such a consolatory figure also appears in Dickinson’s poems, just as she envisions herself not as a voyager but as a pilot or guide who leads the voyager Susan to a final destination in the poem “On this wondrous sea.” Furthermore, some consolatory figures seem more private and intimate. As Greg Miller points out in “‘Unto Me?’ I do not know you –” (J964/Fr825), Dickinson’s lover of her soul is associated with Jesus or a man with the “doomed charioteer Phaeton.”⁶⁷³ As a matter of fact, in some of her early letters, the poet envisions men who drive chariots or ride horses; sometimes her life is threatened by them, while sometimes she is wooed by them.⁶⁷⁴ Romantic love is never rare to be seen especially in females’ literary creation.

Indeed, in the mid-nineteenth-century America, it was widely approved that a healthy marriage should be built upon the solid rock which is known as romantic

⁶⁷² Larcom, “Across the River.”

⁶⁷³ Greg Miller, “‘Glorious, Afflicting, Beneficial’: Triangular Romance and Dickinson’s Rhetoric of Apocalypse,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 11.2 (2002): 86-106, at 88, *Project MUSE*, 15 March 2017.

⁶⁷⁴ Miller, “‘Glorious, Afflicting, Beneficial’” 88.

love.⁶⁷⁵ Valentine's Day, which has already been celebrated for centuries, undoubtedly became a memorial for romantic love. Though it was only entrenched in American culture in the early 1840s, when valentine cards were popular and commercially produced, it was a fashion to deliver romantic interest and to willfully express the desire for romantic love through delicately perforated and embossed lace papers.⁶⁷⁶ In such a background, young couples particularly respected courtship and considered it a special time in their lives.⁶⁷⁷ What is more, this was a period between introductions and a formal engagement; therefore, young couples could intensify their feelings of romantic love, learn the real character of the other, and insure the truthfulness of the bond which was formed by both of them as well as the fact that their attraction was based on mutual admiration and respect.⁶⁷⁸

It seems that Dickinson put the stage of courtship into her poetic creation; moreover, combined with traveling, she could safely escape from domestic constraints, for she had a “lover” to console and to protect her. For example, in “Because I could not stop for Death –” (J712/Fr479), she imagines a journey with a wooer; through her force, mortality and eternity are formed into a textual embodiment of an apocalyptic moment.⁶⁷⁹

	syllables
Because I could not stop for Death –	8
He kindly stopped for me –	6
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –	8
And Immortality.	6
We slowly drove – He knew no haste	8
And I had put away	6
My labor and my leisure too,	8
For His Civility –	6
We passed the School, where Children strove	8
At Recess – in the Ring –	6
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –	8

⁶⁷⁵ Ann Haddad, “Romance and Sweet Dreams: Mid-19th Century Courtship,” *Merchant’s House Museum*, 7 March 2019, <<http://merchantshouse.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁶⁷⁶ Haddad, “Romance and Sweet Dreams.”

⁶⁷⁷ Haddad, “Romance and Sweet Dreams.”

⁶⁷⁸ Haddad, “Romance and Sweet Dreams.”

⁶⁷⁹ Miller, ““Glorious, Afflicting, Beneficial”” 89.

We passed the Setting Sun –	6
Or rather – He passed Us –	6
The Dews drew quivering and chill –	8
For only Gossamer, my Gown –	8
My Tippet – only Tulle –	6
We paused before a House that seemed	8
A Swelling of the Ground –	6
The Roof was scarcely visible –	8
The Cornice – in the Ground –	6
Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet	8
Feels shorter than the Day	6
I first surmised the Horses' Heads	8
Were toward Eternity –	7

Many Dickinson scholars specifically and vividly reveal images of death, immortality, and eternity in this famous poem; their discussion mainly focuses on the coachman image of death, the bride image of the lyric I, the image of abstract dimension of time, and the image of tomb. Undoubtedly, as DeSales Harrison and Natalie Adler claim, the poem concerns the revelation of the change from immortality to eternity, and from deathlessness to timelessness; the reader is able to envision or even experience the journey with the speaker from immortality (the state of being without death) to eternity (the state of being without time).⁶⁸⁰

Readers may be surprised to notice that ostensibly this poem was written in irregular lines, but the number of syllables almost remains stable (four 8686 stanzas). Two changes of the syllable's number imply two significant moments: The forth stanza (6886) describes how death enters the speaker's body, and the last stanza (8687) indicates a different state that the speaker realizes and perhaps has already been within. Moreover, one of the interesting images in this poem is “carriage.” As mentioned above, the economic landscape of America was changed through increasing industrial development; great wealth was produced by the growth of big business such as

⁶⁸⁰ DeSales Harrison, “Timeless Faces and Faceless Clocks: Mortal Memory and Eternity’s Countenance in the Work of Emily Dickinson, Catherine Pozzi, and Medardo Rosso,” *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* 53 (2007): 35-49, at 37; Natalie Adler, “Dickinson’s Mastery,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 25.2 (2016): 1-23, at 12-3, *Project MUSE*, 20 March 2017.

railroads.⁶⁸¹ Therefore, in order to rival the great homes of Europe, a lot of parks were built to serve the newly wealthy urban dwellers; among them, New York City's Central Park, which was the prototype of the new urban park, had an important feature: A series of drives reserved exclusively for carriages.⁶⁸² As a precise and very visible marker of mid-century class status, people were in fact judged by their mode of travel; for example, the establishment of membership in the upper class of the New York City was through owning a carriage and driving in the park.⁶⁸³ By the 1870s, more people could afford carriages because lower prices and a flourishing economy made them more widely available.⁶⁸⁴ By the late nineteenth century, the most popular vehicle became a light, four-wheeled carriage with or without a collapsible top that seated one or two people; it was called buggy.⁶⁸⁵

Written around 1863, the poet uses the image of a carriage to present at least two things. First, due to her family background, a carriage could be a daily mode of transport for her; hence it was familiar to her and brought her a sense of security, too. Second, since a carriage was used for driving in parks, leisure and amusement become part of its characteristics. It to some degree reveals the poet's expectation: Even if it is impossible to escaping from death, at least she could be treated kindly and the journey could be amusing and easy. In contrast to the smallness of her *lost travelers*, the first stanza of the poem reveals certain superciliousness. Rather than explaining, the speaker directly claims that she "could not stop for death"; whereas, death, as a coachman, "kindly" stopped for her in the posture of a wooer. The relationship between death and the speaker seems close because the carriage is private for only "ourselves" and another friend, immortality. Their carriage drove hastelessly; thus, in order to reciprocate death's civility, the speaker put away her labor and leisure.

Such gentleness, intimacy, and thoughtfulness of death impresses the reader because they may forget that the speaker has to experience death in order to reach

⁶⁸¹ "Introduction: Transportation in America and the Carriage Age," 20 June 2016, <<https://parkcityhistory.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁶⁸² "Introduction: Transportation in America and the Carriage Age."

⁶⁸³ "Introduction: Transportation in America and the Carriage Age."

⁶⁸⁴ "Introduction: Transportation in America and the Carriage Age."

⁶⁸⁵ "Introduction: Transportation in America and the Carriage Age."

eternity. Dickinson expects not only a gentle, civil, and even relaxed way of leaving the mortal world; she also expects guidance or leadership to enable her to review her life and confront her fear of death and the unknown after death. The images of gossamer and tulle indicate that her soul gradually left her body and she became lighter; the speaker is experiencing her death. The grave is described as a house in the ground; nonetheless, they only “paused” before it as a farewell, and the last stanza indicates that the speaker finally arrived at eternity. The only suffering in this journey is when “The Dews drew quivering and chill.”

The longing of being guided tenderly and treated trustfully is also revealed in “It was a quiet way –” (J1053/Fr573).

It was a quiet way –
He asked if I was his –
I made no answer of the Tongue
But answer of the Eyes –
And then He bore me on
Before this mortal noise
With swiftness, as of Chariots
And distance, as of Wheels.
This World did drop away
As Acres from the feet
Of one that leaneth from Balloon
Upon an Ether street.
The Gulf behind was not,
The Continents were new –
Eternity it was before
Eternity was due.
No Seasons were to us –
It was not Night nor Morn –
But Sunrise stopped upon the place
And fastened it in Dawn.

Both Robert McClure Smith and Farr point out that there is a sort of seduction in this poem. As the quintessential narrative of seduction,⁶⁸⁶ John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* was

⁶⁸⁶ Smith explains that “[i]n Milton’s epic poem, as in Genesis, Satan is the first tempter of women into sin: he is the epitome of successful seduction. It is Satan’s subtle persuasion of Eve, his rhetorical seduction of her, that introduces into the discourse of humanity the possibility of using linguistic sign for the purposes of deception.” Robert McClure Smith, *The Seductions of Emily Dickinson* (Alabama: U of Alabama, 1996) 26.

even used as exam material for the graduation class in the Mt. Holyoke.⁶⁸⁷ One of its students, Emily Dickinson, was inevitably affected during her year at the college;⁶⁸⁸ meanwhile, in Dickinson's family library, there was a copy of *Paradise Lost*, too.⁶⁸⁹ Thus, Smith claims that in this poem, not only does the poet ambiguously resist a dangerous external temptation; she also connects a calling to it.⁶⁹⁰ Additionally, Farr claims that the first two lines of this poem seem to be an opening confession of a betrothal poem.⁶⁹¹

Whether through the negative imagery of the road and the lost travelers or through the positive imagery of a carriage driven by a gentleman, for Dickinson, immortality is temptation or seduction; otherwise it would not be her flood subject. In this poem, the relationship between a coachman and the speaker seems closer because of the question of the coachman ("He asked if I was his"), the expression of the speaker ("I made no answer of the Tongue / But answer of the Eyes"), and the body contact ("He bore me on"). Preest claims that Dickinson is bold enough, for the similes, "With swiftness, as of Chariots / And distance, as of Wheels," suggest that she may expect a journey like Elijah's ascent in a chariot of fire.⁶⁹² In fact, the speaker's ascent was more peaceful and graceful without suffering. "Eternity it was before / Eternity was due" indicates that there are no conceptions of seasons, day, or night at the new continents where the speaker arrived; time is endless and everything dwells in the forever sunrise.⁶⁹³ The only death scene is connoted in the line "Before this mortal noise." The noise could be mourning or wailing; nevertheless, the speaker has already journeyed to eternity.

⁶⁸⁷ Fred D. White, *Approaching Emily Dickinson: Critical Currents and Crosscurrents since 1960* (New York: Camden House, 2008) 174.

⁶⁸⁸ White 174.

⁶⁸⁹ White 174.

⁶⁹⁰ Smith 29.

⁶⁹¹ Farr, *The Passion* 7.

⁶⁹² Preest 335.

⁶⁹³ "Sunrise" and "Dawn" symbolize the beginning of a day. Judith Farr points out that "like most nineteenth-century landscape artists – poets and painters – Dickinson studied dramatic changes in day or season as evidence of sublimity [...] Emerson described himself waiting for morning to come so that its revelation of shapes and outlines might remind him of the relation between eternity and time, God and man [...] Morning marked the miracle of a new day, metaphor for the imagination and its bright creation of new life." Farr, *The Passion* 51-3.

The image of a coachman and the hidden image of a chariot are also found in “Tie the Strings to my Life, My Lord” (J279/Fr338):

Tie the Strings to my Life, My Lord,
Then, I am ready to go!
Just a look at the Horses –
Rapid! That will do!

Put me in on the firmest side –
So I shall never fall –
For me must ride to the Judgment –
And it’s partly, down Hill –

But never I mind the steepest –
And never I mind the Sea –
Held fast in Everlasting Race –
By my own Choice, and Thee –

Goodbye to the Life I used to live –
And the World I used to know –
And kiss the Hills, for me, just once –
Then – I am ready to go!

Nonetheless, rather than ascending, this chariot seems to be driven down a hill. The hill image can be associated with the *magic perpendiculars*, for imagery such as “ride to the Judgment – / And it’s partly, down Hill –,” the “steepest,” and the “sea” indicates that the speaker prepared to rush down perpendicularly. Only mentioning that eternity may be the final destination toward the image of “everlasting race,” the poet focuses mainly on presenting the determination not only by using repetition such as “never I mind” and “I am ready to go,” but also by a tone of confessing and vowing, for trochee replaces the frequently used iamb.

However, such tone does not fully contribute to the determination; rather, it seems redundant if the speaker is absolutely determined. Maurice S. Lee suggests that the theological background of this poem is the Puritan dilemma of preparation for salvation that the poet satirically connects.⁶⁹⁴ Indeed, fear is partly revealed by “Put me in on the firmest side – / So I shall never fall,” and being reluctant to leave the mortal word is revealed by the last stanza. Till there is a feeling of committing suicide for frustrated

⁶⁹⁴ Maurice S. Lee, “Dickinson’s Superb Surprise,” *Raritan* 28.1 (2008): 45-67, at 61.

love because such resolution is caused by “my own Choice, and Thee”; after all, rushing to death is terrifying and tragic. The speaker bravely announces the resolution, but fear and reluctance linger in her subconscious.

In a word, solemn and stirring in the last poem typically represent Dickinson’s main attitude toward immortality. Though created by the image of a coachman as the guide or wooer and by the image of a chariot as the mode of transport, those poems reveal that the poet was still pursuing psychological preparation in order to confront death. Nonetheless, contrasting to the imagery of her lost travelers on the road which may represent the traditional belief of people in the nineteenth century, the journey of her lyric I to some degree consoles Dickinson’s reader. In short, there are two categories of Dickinson’s journey poems. Her railroad journey presents her as a travel writer: Her freight car narrative humorously describes trivia that happened on the train; additionally, her “iron horse” vividly presents the power of technological innovation. Poems on her journey to immortality or eternity return to her imaginative world. Not only does she express her doubts and questions about the journey; she also attempts to seek a way that is more graceful and less painful to face death and to arrive at the final destination.

5. Different Toponyms in Dickinson’s Images of Traveling

5.1 Code-Like Toponyms

Many scholars notice that though she was a recluse, Dickinson mentioned various toponyms⁶⁹⁵ in her poetry. As Pollak puts it, whether in her proper name allusions or in her toponyms, the poet’s preference for foreign locations is quite clear.⁶⁹⁶ In Dickinson’s imaginative realm, she can travel anywhere she wants, for different materials such as books are vehicles that take her to her destination. Nonetheless, the reader may simply equate these toponyms to real travel destinations rather than travel allusions. In order to answer this question, Malina Nielson and Cynthia L. Hallen explain the reason in their essay, “Emily Dickinson’s Placenames.”⁶⁹⁷ The following table displays five nomenclatures:

⁶⁹⁵ Toponym is a “place name” and the “name of a natural or artificial feature of the surface of the earth.” Christopher Morris, ed., *Academic Press Dictionary of Science and Technology* (California: Academic, 1992) 2234.

⁶⁹⁶ Pollak 63.

⁶⁹⁷ Nielson and Hallen 7-16.

Area	Toponyms				
	Choronyms	Oikonyms	Hydronyms	Oronyms	Miscellaneous Toponyms
Europe	<i>Anglo-Florentine, Arragon, Austrian, Biscayan, Bohea, Bourbon, British, Burgundy, Corinthians, Danes, English, Etruscan, Finland, Greek, Italic, Italy, Lapland, Latin, Norseman, Saxon, Spartan, Swiss, Thessaly, Yorkshire</i>	<i>Athens, Birmingham, Brussels, Durham, Exeter, Frankfort, Geneva, Genoa, Ghent, Haworth, Hybla, Kidderminster, Liverpool, Manchester, Naples, Paris, Pompeii, Pyrrhenees, Vatican, Venice, Vevay</i>	<i>Baltic, Dnieper, Don, Rhine, Sicily</i>	<i>Alps, Appenine, Etna, Thermopylae, Vesuvius</i>	<i>Carrara, Lincoln, Parian, Sevres, St. James, Westminster</i>
Middle East	<i>Canaan, Judea, Nazarene, Ophir, Persian</i>	<i>Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Nazareth, Zion</i>	<i>Jordan, the Red Sea</i>	<i>Calvary, Nebo, Peniel</i>	<i>Gethsemane (a garden), Tyrian (the royal purple dye from the ancient city of Tyre)</i>
North America	the region of <i>New England</i> , the state of <i>Maryland</i>	<i>Amherst, Bethleem (in New Hampshire), Lexington (in Massachusetts)</i>	(none)	(none)	<i>Bunker Hill (battle site), Auburn (the cemetery)</i>
Africa	<i>African, Ethiopean, Lybian, Tripoli</i>	<i>Timbuctoo, Tunis</i>	<i>Zenzibar</i>	<i>Sahara, Teneriffe</i>	<i>Egyptian, the textile Fustian from a suburb of Cairo</i>
Central America	the general term <i>America</i> ,	<i>Manzanilla, Vera Cruz</i>	<i>the Bahamas, St. Domingo,</i>	<i>Popocatapetl</i>	(none)

	<i>Baliza, Mexico, the Indies of Columbus West-Indian</i>		<i>Jamaica</i>		
Eurasia	<i>Circassian, Turk</i>	<i>Gibralter</i>	<i>Azof, Bosphorus, Caspian, Mediterranean</i>	<i>Ararat</i>	(none)
Asia	<i>Asia, Asiatic, Burmah, Cashmere, India, Indiaman, Malay</i>	<i>Golconda</i>	(none)	<i>Himmaleh</i>	(none)
South America	<i>South America, Bolivia, Brazil, Peru</i>	<i>Buenos, Potosi</i>	(none)	<i>Andes, Cordillera, Chimborazo</i>	(none)
Sacred Space and the Solar System	(none) Astronyms <i>Capricorn, Saturn</i>	(none)	<i>Hesperides, Lethe</i>	(none)	<i>Eden, Elysium, Hesperian</i>
Austronesia and the North Pole	<i>Arctic</i>	(none)	<i>Van Dieman's Land</i>	(none)	(none)

Emily Dickinson's Toponyms⁶⁹⁸

European toponyms are the greatest in number. First, there were historical ties between many Amherst families and nations in Europe.⁶⁹⁹ Second, writers, who were famous in nineteenth century New England such as Emerson, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Louisa May Alcott, had experienced traveling in Europe to improve their education, writing, or literary connections.⁷⁰⁰ Therefore, influenced more or less by both American characteristics and European elements, Dickinson, as a diligent reader, also breathed this special literary atmosphere. For example, she uses three toponyms in “I think the Hemlock likes to stand” (J525/Fr400); they are Norwegian, Don, and Dnieper. Ostensibly, the “Norwegian Wines,” which are able to nourish hemlock trees and to satisfy the thirst of people by drinking it in the wilderness, are semantically and

⁶⁹⁸ Among various kinds of “topographic entities” in Dickinson’s poems, there are, for example, “choronyms such as continents, countries, and regions; oikonyms such as towns and cities; oronyms such as hills, mountains, and volcanoes; hydronyms such as seas and rivers; astronyms such as planets and constellations; and miscellaneous features such as languages, gardens, battle sites, churches, cemeteries, and quarries. Cities are the most frequent toponymic entity that Dickinson mentions, with 28 tokens. Countries are next in number, with 16 different nations mentioned in the poems.” Nielson and Hallen 7.

⁶⁹⁹ Nielson and Hallen 7.

⁷⁰⁰ Nielson and Hallen 7.

phonetically echoed by the “Northern Winds” of “Lapland”; nonetheless, the connotation here is to present Dickinson’s poetry which is figuratively and metaphorically typified by the essence of “Lapland.”⁷⁰¹ Her verses are compact, focused, spare, economical, thrifty, chaste, spiritual, and intellectual.⁷⁰²

On other toponyms, for example, it is generally known that Dickinson is very familiar with the Bible; hence, most of her Middle Eastern toponyms are Biblical allusions.⁷⁰³ For example, “Calvary,” which is the second most frequent toponym the poet uses, indicates the literal location of Christ’s crucifixion out of Jerusalem in the Holy Land”; at the same time, it can also be seen as a metonym for the ordinary people’s internal *topos* when they experience excruciating pain.⁷⁰⁴ For instance, the poet mentions “Calvary,” “Gethsemane,” and “Judea” in “One Crucifixion is recorded – only” (J553/Fr670) to map a topography of the soul and a geography of the Holy Land; in “I should have been too glad, I see –” (J313/Fr283) and “Spurn the temerity –” (J1432/Fr1485), “Calvary” and “Gethsemane” also appear to emphasize the theme of Christ’s infinite sacrifice for humanity.⁷⁰⁵ Toponyms of North America, such as “Auburn” in “When Roses cease to bloom, Sir” (J32/Fr8), may allude to Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts because the poet was impressed by its solemnity when she visited it in August 1846.⁷⁰⁶ Nevertheless, it may also refer to a European toponym which appears in William Goldsmith’s poem “The Deserted Village” as a nostalgic portrayal of “Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain.”⁷⁰⁷

Rebecca Patterson points out that most of Dickinson’s geographical names come from the maps and text of Peter Parley’s geography.⁷⁰⁸ Peter Parley is a pen name of Samuel Griswold Goodrich (1793-1860), an American author who wrote schoolbooks and children’s histories.⁷⁰⁹ Thus, Nielson and Hallen claim that the poet would have

⁷⁰¹ Nielson and Hallen 9.

⁷⁰² Nielson and Hallen 9.

⁷⁰³ Nielson and Hallen 9.

⁷⁰⁴ Nielson and Hallen 9.

⁷⁰⁵ Nielson and Hallen 9-10.

⁷⁰⁶ Nielson and Hallen 11.

⁷⁰⁷ Nielson and Hallen 11.

⁷⁰⁸ Rebecca Patterson, *Emily Dickinson’s Imagery* (Massachusetts: U of Massachusetts, 1979) 141.

⁷⁰⁹ “Samuel Goodrich, Alias Peter Parley,” *Jamaica Plain Historical Society*, 1 June 2015, <<http://www.jphs.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

read the history of the war between the North African port of Tripoli and the United States in the early eighteenth century.⁷¹⁰ Furthermore, the poet uses Central and South American toponyms to evoke exotic forces, spiritual adventures, and rich natural resources;⁷¹¹ while toponyms of Asia and Eurasia represent concepts of wealth and the beauty of nature.⁷¹² Additionally, the poet pays more attention to western Asia and does not mention toponyms in the Far East such as China and Japan.⁷¹³

Concerning the toponyms of Austronesia and the North Pole, Dickinson probably saw the Van Dieman's Land from the map of the Eastern Hemisphere by Peter Parley; she used Arctic of the North Pole to refer to Lady Franklin in

When the Astronomer stops seeking
For his Pleiad's Face –
When the lone British Lady
Forsakes the Arctic Race”
[...] (J851/Fr957)

and also in “As if some little Arctic flower / Upon the polar hem –.”⁷¹⁴ Finally, the miscellaneous toponyms of the planets, spirit world, and other heavenly bodies such as “Eden,” “Elysium,” “Hesperian,” “Hesperides,” and “Lethe” were used by the poet for alluding to a sacred, outer space.⁷¹⁵

Dickinson uses different toponyms in her poetry for two basic reasons: First, during her school time, she and her classmates took a good deal of time to study geography; they not only had to learn maps, but also history (ancient and modern), geology, botany, economics, and social and cultural relations.⁷¹⁶ Moreover, according to the school's recommendation, all students had to have their own atlas; therefore, in the Dickinson household, not one but several atlases were found.⁷¹⁷ Second, she has a remarkable ability to sense and figure out the “haunting abstractions” from the specific, concrete world in which she lives; this allows her to detach herself from the confines of

⁷¹⁰ Nielson and Hallen 12.

⁷¹¹ Nielson and Hallen 13.

⁷¹² Nielson and Hallen 13.

⁷¹³ Nielson and Hallen 13.

⁷¹⁴ Nielson and Hallen 15-6.

⁷¹⁵ Nielson and Hallen 16.

⁷¹⁶ “Precedents: Explorers and Travelers,” *The Geographical Imagination in Whitman and Dickinson*, 1 June 2015, <<http://www.classroomelectric.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁷¹⁷ “Precedents: Explorers and Travelers.”

her immediate surroundings while projecting her environment onto wider realms of thought.⁷¹⁸ Hence, as Suzanne Juhasz puts it,

[t]he mind, conceived of spatially, has properties other than that of enclosure. Its area and circumference are not fixed but, rather, changeable in dimension. The mind can expand, can grow wider and wider, under the demands of experience. To depict her sense of this kind of development, Dickinson frequently uses not an architectural but a geographical vocabulary.⁷¹⁹

It to some degree explains Dickinson's famous statement, "To shut our eyes is Travel." If she is considered to have that special ability, she would be endowed a bird's eye view; she thus is able to associate things which seem impossible to be connected and is freely wandering through different scenes or places she creates.

Therefore, from what is mentioned above, one thing is clear: Dickinson's various toponyms cannot simply be equated with the topic of travel or going abroad. Firstly, these toponyms have their own function to represent the poet's special way of depicting her sense of how the mind expands and grows;⁷²⁰ secondly, they function as a kind of *code* that she uses to describe her own emotions and views. Spengemann even suggests that,

[p]laces more remote held merely figurative existence for her. Rather than geographical entities with their own inhabitants, politics, and histories, "Buenos Ayre," "Peru," and "India" (418) all signify distant riches, an object of longing. "Finland" means *winter* (1705); "Austrian" (1703), *merciless*; and "Birmingham" is just another word for *mills*, brought to mind by a squirrel's grinding teeth (1407).⁷²¹

In fact, Dickinson is interested in using the common impressions or metaphorical meanings of these toponyms for "her own concerns."⁷²² As the "African Exuberance" and the "Asiatic rest" in "No Autumn's intercepting Chill" (J1516/Fr1563): This poem is a part of the letter which was written to Mrs. Holland after the death of Dr. Holland in 1881 (L738). Dickinson recalled the time she and her sister spent with Dr. Holland. She

⁷¹⁸ "Landscapes of the Mind in Dickinson's Writing," *The Geographical Imagination in Whitman and Dickinson*, 1 June 2015, <<http://www.classroomelectric.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁷¹⁹ Suzanne Juhasz, *The Undiscovered Continent: Emily Dickinson and the Space of the Mind* (Indiana: Indiana UP, 1983) 20.

⁷²⁰ Juhasz 20.

⁷²¹ The numbers of these poems are based on Ralph W. Franklin's edition of Emily Dickinson's poetry. Cf. Spengemann 83.

⁷²² Spengemann 83.

believed that the warm love of Dr. Holland would exist forever and “he knows the exuberant joy of an Africa and the peaceful rest of an Asia.”⁷²³

Hence, though the common impressions, or say, her stereotypes of these toponyms may not be objective and accurate, her code-like way of writing is still one of the most important features of Dickinson’s poetry. Apart from some that Spengemann mentions, there are many poems of this type. Take the year 1860 as an example: Cristanne Miller observes that thirty of the fifty-four poems (based on Franklin’s edition) Dickinson wrote in that year mention the imagery of foreign places or people as well as the imagery of travel and escape.⁷²⁴ It reveals that Dickinson is interested in borrowing different foreign elements in the creation of her poetry; at the same time, according to the poems Miller selects, foreign places and travel even fall into two different categories.⁷²⁵

However, it is also too perfunctory to conclude that Dickinson’s toponyms are all for her own concerns and merely figurative for her. More interesting focuses could be, if there is an intersection between different toponyms and travel imagery, how Dickinson combined them; if immortality is still her pursuit, how she reveals it through those toponymical images. Images of traveling which concern sacred space such as Eden, heaven, eternity, immortality, paradise etc.⁷²⁶ have already been discussed above; yet,

⁷²³ Preest 460.

⁷²⁴ Miller, *Reading in Time* 201.

⁷²⁵ In her book *Reading in Time: Emily Dickinson in the Nineteenth Century*, Cristanne Miller names her “Appendix B” – “Poems Mentioning Travel, Escape, or Foreign places or People (1860).” It is obvious that Miller does not connect “travel” or “going abroad” to “foreign places,” meaning they are two different categories. The poems she selects reflect this subtitle. For example, (Miller’s selection is based on Ralph W. Franklin’s edition) poems on “escape,” “foreign places,” and “foreign people” are “Tho’ my destiny be Fustian –” (Fr131), “Just lost, when I was saved!” (Fr132), “Mute – thy coronation –” (Fr133), “Did the Harebell loose her girdle” (Fr134), “A little Bread – A cruse – a crumb –” (Fr135), “Who never lost, are unprepared” (Fr136), “Bring me the sunset in a cup –” (Fr140), “She died at play –” (Fr141), “Cocoon above! Cocoon below!” (Fr142), “I never hear the word ‘Escape’” (Fr144), “A little East of Jordan” (Fr145), “All overgrown by cunning moss” (Fr146), “Will there really be a ‘morning’?” (Fr148), “Great Caesar! Condescend” (Fr149), “She went as quiet as the Dew” (Fr159), “The Daisy follows soft the Sun –” (Fr161), “Some Rainbow – coming from the Fair!” (Fr162), “I have never seen ‘Volcanoes’ –” (Fr165), “Wait till the Majesty of Death” (Fr169), “At last – to be identified –” (Fr172), “If I could bribe them by a Rose” (Fr176), “As if some little Arctic flower” (Fr177), “To learn the Transport by the Pain –” (Fr178), “If the foolish, call them ‘flowers’ –” (Fr179), “In Ebon Box, when years have flown” (Fr180), and “I met a King this Afternoon!” (Fr183). And poems mention the images of “travel” she selects are “Exultation is the going / Of an inland soul to sea” (Fr143), “‘Twas such a little – little boat” (Fr152), “I have a King, who does not speak –” (Fr157), “Except to Heaven, she is nought.” (Fr173), and “As if some little Arctic flower” (Fr177). Cf. Miller, *Reading in Time* 201.

⁷²⁶ Nielson and Hallen 17.

oronyms such as Teneriffe in “Ah, Teneriffe!” (J666/Fr752), Etna in “When Etna basks and spurs” (J1146/Fr1161), and Vesuvius in “Volcanoes be in Sicily” (J1705/Fr1691) are used to secretly express the poet’s love to Susan Gilbert. The following passages will examine how images of traveling are related to the four categories – they are divided by names of continents, countries, and regions; cities and towns; and seas, rivers and islands. Finally, two poems will introduce a mixture of toponyms.

5.2 Poems on the Four Categories

5.2.1 “The Siren Alps” and “The Eastern Exiles”

In the early and mid-nineteenth century, Europe played a special role in Americans’ lives; as a result, Dickinson could not escape learning about European political and cultural events, especially since she was one of the educated, middle-class in the country.⁷²⁷ First, the nations of Western Europe were originally responsible for exploring the new world; therefore, early Americans were steeped in the culture and tradition of England and the rest of the Old World where art and philosophy were thriving.⁷²⁸ Hence, it is easy to understand why the poet held the idea as other Americans that the other side of the Atlantic was the cradle of the most famous and accomplished artists who were admired in the western world.⁷²⁹ Second, since the American institutions of art had a few collections of the masters of that time, art lovers and American students alike chose to “go home” to Europe to search for and learn classical art.⁷³⁰

Williams claims that Dickinson’s reading of European literature was broad and sophisticated.⁷³¹ It is not only because she read the works of many British poets and writers such as George Herbert, John Donne, Shakespeare, George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Barret Browning etc.; it is also because many of her close correspondents engaged in European trips.⁷³² Among those, one must include Higginson, Samuel Bowles, Joseph Bardwell Lyman, Mrs. J. G. Holland as well as

⁷²⁷ Williams 317.

⁷²⁸ Williams 317.

⁷²⁹ Williams 317-18.

⁷³⁰ Williams 318.

⁷³¹ Williams 318.

⁷³² Williams 320.

some individuals who may be her lovers or suitors, such as Kate Scott Anthon, John Langdon Dudley, and George Gould.⁷³³ For Dickinson, these friends were her eyes because the correspondence with her during their European travels offered her the opportunity to follow in their footsteps and to see what they saw.⁷³⁴ As Williams concludes, “Dickinson encountered and imaginatively experienced the sights and scenes of Europe through the eyes of her loved ones.”⁷³⁵

Nonetheless, it is generally known that Dickinson does not absorb European culture, history, and art with an unquestioning acceptance.⁷³⁶ She clearly senses that there should be a balance of the appreciation between the European and American culture, history, and art, as advocated by her favorite writers Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Washington Irving, William Cullen Bryant, and Geoffrey Crayon.⁷³⁷ By placing the images of Switzerland and Italy together, in the poem “Our lives are Swiss –,” the poet reveals an American ambivalent reactions to the blended European familiarity and difference.⁷³⁸

Our lives are Swiss –
So still – so Cool –
Till some odd afternoon
The Alps neglect their Curtains
And we look farther on!
Italy stands the other side!
While like a guard between –
The solemn Alps –
The siren Alps
Forever intervene!

Jane Donahue Eberwein explains in her “‘Siren Alps’: The Lure of Europe for American Writers” that in Dickinson’s age, if there was an analogue to America, especially New England, it would have to be Switzerland,⁷³⁹ for the words “still” and “Cool” echo Dickinson’s own life which is “simple and stern.”⁷⁴⁰ Eberwein further

⁷³³ Williams 320.

⁷³⁴ Williams 320.

⁷³⁵ Williams 320.

⁷³⁶ Williams 320.

⁷³⁷ Eberwein, “‘Siren Alps’” 176.

⁷³⁸ Eberwein, “‘Siren Alps’” 179.

⁷³⁹ Eberwein, “‘Siren Alps’” 179.

⁷⁴⁰ In a letter to Higginson in June 1869, Dickinson wrote, “My life has been too simple and stern to embarrass any” (L330).

explains that the austerity of Switzerland's rugged landscapes can develop the habits of self-discipline and independence similar to the independent nature of the Yankee mind.⁷⁴¹ Therefore, there are many perceptions of the metaphorical differences between Switzerland and Italy. For example, Switzerland may represent the Protestants because of its cultural and religious diversity; at the same time, it stands in opposition to the Catholic Church with its center in the heart of Italy.⁷⁴² To put it in a somewhat different context, those differences reveal different ways of human life in different geographic situations.⁷⁴³ Switzerland, which symbolizes human life, is sheltered while still isolated by the Alps, a natural barrier; and this blockade creates an image of Italy as the celestial city at the heart of Christianity.⁷⁴⁴ In a word, the contrasts represent the relationship not only among European countries, but also between Europe and America.⁷⁴⁵

Except for all the religious and geographical connotations, this poem reveals the lure of travel to Italy. Helen Barolini claims in her "The Italian Side of Emily Dickinson" that the poet also believed that Italy symbolized freedom just as many American women of talent in the nineteenth century, such as Catherine Maria Sedgwick, Julia Ward Howe, Constance Fenimore Woolson (writers), Harriet Hosmer, Adelaide Johnson (sculptors), Charlotte Cushman (actress), and Edmonia Lewis (painter).⁷⁴⁶ Moreover, contrasting to a Swiss life with its "clockwork precision and predictability," Italy on its opposite side represents a "seductive exuberance."⁷⁴⁷ Therefore, the italicized "Italy" in the poem is an exclamation in order to show surprise and excitement when the speaker finally accidentally sees it.

Many Dickinson scholars such as Kornfeld and Vendler mention the feminine ("The Alps neglect their Curtains") as well as the masculine qualities ("While like a

⁷⁴¹ Eberwein, "Siren Alps" 179.

⁷⁴² Eberwein claims that Dickinson "could have learned the association between European mountain settings and the struggle for religious liberty" from "Hymn of the Waldenses" by Bryant. Eberwein, "Siren Alps" 180.

⁷⁴³ Eberwein, "Siren Alps" 181.

⁷⁴⁴ Eberwein, "Siren Alps" 181-2.

⁷⁴⁵ Eberwein, "Siren Alps" 181.

⁷⁴⁶ Barolini 57-8.

⁷⁴⁷ Barolini explains further that "[i]n the Western mode of establishing Either/Or categories, Italy did stand for the Other in human experience: freedom over discipline, innocence over knowledge, and, most romantically, the licentious and sensual South versus a Northern moral temperament." Barolini 58.

guard between – / The solemn [...] Siren Alps / Forever intervene!”) in this poem.⁷⁴⁸

These qualities are presented by the personification of the Alps, and the poet’s word choice, such as “some odd afternoon,” “neglect,” “Curtains,” “stands,” “guard,” and “intervene,” reveals it. Another author also uses anthropomorphism in her poem; nevertheless, compared to Dickinson’s Alps, her “highlands” are more descriptive:

Saw ye first, arrayed in mist and cloud;
No cheerful lights softened your aspect bold;
A sullen gray, or green, more grave and cold,
The varied beauties of the scene enshroud.
Yet not the less, O Hudson! calm and proud,
Did I receive the impress of that hour
Which showed thee to me, emblem of that power
Of high resolve, to which even rocks have bowed;
[...]⁷⁴⁹

Similarly, Margaret Fuller also presented a sublime image of the Hudson highlands. Their mystery (“arrayed in mist and cloud,” “varied beauties of the scene enshroud”), undisguised boldness and confidence (“No cheerful lights softened your aspect bold”), grimness (“sullen gray, or green, more grave and cold”), as well as authoritativeness (“high resolve, to which even rocks have bowed”) astonished Fuller, and what she emphasized is the power of the highlands.

Whereas, rather than awe and astonishment, Dickinson’s Alps convey something different. Though the italicized “Italy” presents surprise and excitement, the position of the “solemn” and “Siren Alps” is unquestionable and unshakable. If sibilance (“Swiss,” “so,” “still”) at the beginning of the poem emphasizes how gloomy the life is, at the end of the poem, it serves as exclamation to present the sublime nature of the Alps (“solemn,” “siren,” “Forever”). The anthropomorphic “Alps” stands between suffering of “Swiss” and lure of “Italy”; under the guard of the “Alps,” the speaker seems imprisoned because the only chance to see “Italy” rests on “some odd afternoon.” The coincidence is vividly described in three words: “Some” reveals that the speaker does not expect she/he will eventually see Italy; “afternoon” indicates that it happens not in the sober, alert morning time. Instead, it may be the relaxed, lazy atmosphere of the guardian Alps

⁷⁴⁸ Cf. “The Prowling Bee;” Vendler 44.

⁷⁴⁹ Margaret Fuller, “The Highlands,” www.poemhunter.com, 15 March 2019.

that offer the opportunity to see “Italy.” The poet uses “odd” to imply that the chance to see “Italy” is a one-time experience that is unlikely to happen again. As Roland Hagenbüchle puts it, the land of southern warmth indicates the object of desire and stands in contrast to the image of God’s “siren Alps.”⁷⁵⁰

Combining the sense of forbidden with the image of a celestial city in Italy as the heart of Christianity, this poem is arguably another allusion to Dickinson’s consideration of her flood subject, immortality. The “siren Alps” present an image similar to the “magic perpendiculars” in “The Road was lit with Moon and star.” If the detached, motionless, and passionless life represents hardship and difficulties along the journey, Dickinson’s speaker was very close to her/his final destination because she/he found that their destination was in fact covered by thin curtains. Then, a strong irony is revealed by the image of the “siren Alps.”

To begin, the poem is enveloped by a sense of submission because the only stirring moment is caused by a glance of “Italy.” The line with the italicized “Italy” on the one hand reveals excitement in contrast with the “Swiss” life; on the other hand, it preludes greater disappointment. The speaker’s situation does not change by knowing her/his desire is in fact next to her/him. Rather, knowing the fact makes the speaker realize that the “guard” will forever stand between the dreamland and reality. The poet describes the inability to achieve a still, cool life; it also indicates a soldier image of the “Alps.” Readers may also be disappointed because they are informed the “Alps” will “forever intervene.” If God’s “solemn,” “siren Alps” prevents the speaker from arriving to the final destination, the speaker is either tested, or she/he is rejected by what she/he was promised. In other words, “solemn” and “siren” are used ostensibly to praise the grandeur of the “Alps.” The poet in fact expresses that the divine decree is the true obstacle or hardship which lies on the journey to the final destination.

In short, “Swiss,” the “Alps,” and “Italy” are three typical images that arouse many discussions on what they represent and how they function in the poem. Compared to Fuller’s depiction, Dickinson seems to add more connotations to her images. These

⁷⁵⁰ Hagenbüchle 34.

three images vividly reveal a contrast between a real situation and a desire. If they were created to describe the poet's attitude toward the subject of immortality, the ironic image of the "Alps" not only represents the lure which challenges mortals and evokes their expectation; it also represents restriction and forbiddance, even to the extent of an unchallengeable majesty.

In "The lonesome for they know not What –," the subject of expulsion is portrayed by the imagery of "Eastern Exiles." Attracted by popular culture and literature, Dickinson borrowed different elements from them for her poetic creation; this becomes an unchanging aspect of her poetry.⁷⁵¹ From 1858 to 1886, Dickinson increasingly used the idioms of foreign travel and Orientalism; reading different kinds of travel literature which are set in foreign lands provided her several opportunities to compare the values and assumptions of Christianity and New England with the Eastern people and their cultures.⁷⁵² Dickinson's imagery of the South, West, and East Asia was mostly as positive as the thinking of many people of her time.⁷⁵³ Because of the popular narratives on Asian countries and the biblical lands, those places were perceived as extravagantly wealthy and beautiful, capable of satisfying a Westerner's longings.⁷⁵⁴

"The lonesome for they know not What –" could be created as an allusion of "Circassians." Circassians attract Dickinson for several reasons: Historically, in 1860, the northwestern Caucasus people were involved in the war between Russia and Circassia (1763-1864).⁷⁵⁵ Due to the Russian massacres of the Circassians, the Circassians were forced to emigrate from their own land to various parts of the Ottoman Empire, especially Turkey during the final years of the war; the result is that many Circassian women became slaves in Turkish harems during the 1850s.⁷⁵⁶ Therefore, based on descriptions in the public news, there were reports on the "Horrible Traffic"

⁷⁵¹ Altogether, Miller selects seventy-one (with one undated) of Dickinson's poems which are on the "Orient" from 1858 to 1881. They are (according to Franklin's edition) Fr14, 16, 35, 98, 104, 111, 120, 121, 131, 136, 141, 145, 162, 176, 201, 206, 228, 248, 276, 285, 312, 326, 333, 334, 349, 352, 356, 388, 410, 417, 418, 426, 451, 460, 495, 506, 511, 513, 529, 549, 572, 584, 661, 666, 696, 705, 716, 739, 748, 749, 770, 836, 846, 849, 942, 988, 1064, 1090, 1102, 1118, 1147, 1162, 1262, 1462, 1471, 1487, 1488, 1509, 1562, 1563, and 1777. Cf. Miller, *Reading in Time* 197-99.

⁷⁵² Miller, *Reading in Time* 118.

⁷⁵³ Miller, *Reading in Time* 119.

⁷⁵⁴ Miller, *Reading in Time* 119.

⁷⁵⁵ Miller, *Reading in Time* 124.

⁷⁵⁶ Miller, *Reading in Time* 124.

detailing various aspects of slave trade; in turn, these stories inspired images of how Circassians fought for freedom and independence.⁷⁵⁷ These offered Dickinson adequate material to compose her most markedly political poems of Asia such as “Some Rainbow – coming from the Fair!” (J64/Fr162). Moreover, culturally, Circassians were the focus of myth, literature, and news.⁷⁵⁸ According to the *Republican*, men of Circassia were so vigorous and graceful, and women were so beautiful so that they considered themselves as the “original and uncorrupted stock from which all the race of men descended.”⁷⁵⁹

Whether from culture, history, or myth, the information of the “Circassians” provided different sources for Dickinson to create the image of exile in the following verses:

The lonesome for they know not What –
The Eastern Exiles – be –
Who strayed beyond the Amber line
Some madder Holiday –

And ever since – the purple Moat
They strive to clime – in vain –
As Birds – that tumble from the clouds
Do fumble at the strain –

The Blessed Ether – taught them –
Some Transatlantic Morn –
When Heaven – was too common – to miss –
Too sure – to dote upon!

Two familiar 8686 stanzas followed by one unpredictable 6696 stanza, the more irregular line-length of the last stanza creates disharmony. Cristanne Miller points out that the conclusion of this poem suggests that every person is an “Eastern Exile.”⁷⁶⁰ The “Blessed Ether” teaches us to wander from heaven, but from then on, no one can

⁷⁵⁷ The article “Horrible Traffic in Circassian Women – Infanticide in Turkey” from a *London Post* was reprinted by the *Republican* in August 1856. It focused on “the trade in Circassian slave ‘girls,’ noting that there is now such a glut of Circassians on the market that Turkish slave-holders are attempting to sell of their black female slaves at very low prices because they can afford ‘white slaves.’” And what is more, they were treated as “tribal” people who believed in “a curious mixture of paganism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity.” Though the life of slaves was hard, Circassians did not give up their hope of seeking freedom; and an 1859 news story revealed that Circassians achieved “a signal success of ‘the brave Circassian chief, Schamyl’ against Russia,” and it was described as a “good example for the world to contemplate.” Cf. Miller, *Reading in Time* 124-5.

⁷⁵⁸ Miller, *Reading in Time* 124.

⁷⁵⁹ Miller, *Reading in Time* 124.

⁷⁶⁰ Miller, *Reading in Time* 128.

return to that original place.⁷⁶¹ The East in this poem is envisioned as a mythic place of origin for humanity and all human beings “stem from” the original exiles of Adam and Eve.⁷⁶²

Therefore, this poem alludes to Circassians by portraying the colors of sunrise as it crosses an “Amber line” and then strives “in vain” to recross the “purple Moat” to return to “Heaven” on “some Transatlantic Morn –.”⁷⁶³ Kornfeld offers an interesting reading that the situation the poet describes in this poem may be the feeling or experience of taking opiates or hallucinogens from some wild holiday.⁷⁶⁴ Though in Dickinson’s time, she might only know about opium, it is those drugs which enable the user to cross through the “Amber line” that the rest of people cannot experience.⁷⁶⁵ Dickinson has a complex for the status of exile.⁷⁶⁶ She may consider exile as what Salman Rushdie claims in his *The Satanic Verses* – a dream of “glorious return” – which cannot be confused with terms such as “expatriate,” “refugee,” or “immigrant.”⁷⁶⁷ She used the word “lonesome” in this poem to indicate a sense of loss rather than an implication of Rushdie’s glorious return. Likely inspired by the story of Circassians, the “Eastern Exile” resembles the aftermath of a drug user who crosses the “Amber line,” as Kornfeld suggests.

According to *Emily Dickinson Lexicon*, the first line of the poem indicates “nostalgia”; it means “people who are longing for something that they cannot quite identify.”⁷⁶⁸ Hence, the expectation of returning no longer exists because they cannot even identify the thing that they are longing for. The first stanza tells the reader that the suffering of those outcasts is due to a careless mistake; the connotation is that if they had known what “Eastern Exiles” truly involves, they may not have made the mistake of wandering beyond the “Amber line,” which may symbolize the stone arch in Cole’s *Expulsion* or the golden image of heaven in “Some madder Holiday.” The rest of the

⁷⁶¹ Miller, *Reading in Time* 128.

⁷⁶² Miller, *Reading in Time* 128.

⁷⁶³ Miller, *Reading in Time* 128.

⁷⁶⁴ “The Prowling Bee.”

⁷⁶⁵ “The Prowling Bee.”

⁷⁶⁶ Miller, *Reading in Time* 121.

⁷⁶⁷ Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Random House, 1988) 205.

⁷⁶⁸ “Emily Dickinson Lexicon.”

poem describes the aftermath of their careless mistake toward two metaphors. “The purple moat” could be the dark clouds after sunset as the poet creates in her sunset poems; it contrasts with the “Amber line” that divides heaven and the earthly world of Cole’s *Expulsion*. Their effort to climb the “purple Moat” is “in vain,” just as birds which “fall precipitously” from the clouds will “temporarily stop singing”⁷⁶⁹ because singing is “in vain.”

Additionally, the past tense of the last stanza reveals that the only known thing on the “Eastern Exiles” was taught by the “Blessed Ether” when they left “Heaven.” Essentially then, this poem reveals the disparity between mortals as represented by the Eastern outcasts and immortality as represented by the “Amber line.” The disparity is also revealed through the images of “Swiss,” the “Alps,” and “Italy.” Dickinson’s influence by both European and Eastern literature and culture presents different aspects of religious thinking through a cross-cultural approach. Through the use of toponyms, the reader might be more impressed by the vivid contrasts between divinity and humanity.

5.2.2 “Velvet people from Vevay”

The poet’s metaphorical allusions to foreign cities or towns are cheerful and pleasant. For example, she uses the “Footman from Vevay” in “The Flower must not blame the Bee –” (J206/Fr235) to create a poem of apology.⁷⁷⁰ Because a bee by nature has to pester a flower and may cause some damage, the poet thinks that the “Footman from Vevay” will help the “flower” refuse the bee’s further admittance, for his cool but cultured Swiss manners would appropriately denying access.⁷⁷¹ Anthropomorphism is also used in Mark Twain’s “A Sweltering Day in Australia.” In his *Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World*, Twain wrote a poem by using his collection of curious names of Australasian towns, such as Woolloomooloo, Murrubidgee, Kondoparinga etc., to create interesting rhythm. The poem was written in alternate rhyme; combined with those interesting place names, the heat was humorously and absurdly presented.

⁷⁶⁹ See the definitions of “tumble” and “fumble.” “Emily Dickinson Lexicon.”

⁷⁷⁰ Preest 64.

⁷⁷¹ Preest 64.

Different from Twain's humor, Dickinson would rather keep graceful and romantic for her favorite subjects. The poem "Pigmy seraphs – gone astray –" (J138/Fr96) mentions not only Vevey, but also Paris and Venice. Though this is another depiction of flowers and bees, this poem reveals its association with Henry James' travel writings. James' "international theme" is his most notable subject⁷⁷² because he spent most of his career writing in Britain and had various experiences studying and living in other European countries such as Germany, Switzerland, France, and Italy.⁷⁷³ This offered him real, rich materials for his creation;⁷⁷⁴ his writing is also vivid and thought-provoking because he devoted himself to capturing the American-European, or say, the transatlantic relationships between the innocent, unsophisticated New World and the decadent, sophisticated Old World.⁷⁷⁵ It seems farfetched to relate "Pigmy seraphs – gone astray –" to James' international theme; nonetheless, the poet's use of the "Footman from Vevay" reveals her implication of the Swiss manners which are cool but cultured. It somewhat echoes the sophistication that James describes when talking about Europe. More importantly, James' descriptions of the pleasant and attractive side of Europe can be seen as an appropriate secondary literature in understanding the poet's metaphorical use of the toponyms.

In *Henry James Goes to Paris*, Peter Brooks explains a plausible reason why James chose to go to Paris in 1875: He seemed to consider Paris not only as a place of writers and artists "where writing novels was taken seriously," but also as a place of the life of "mind and spirit" and of "freedom from family and constraint."⁷⁷⁶ Moreover, it was a place which was filled with pleasure, luxury, beautiful surfaces, and sensuous enjoyment.⁷⁷⁷ To James, Italy was a place that had "not only an element novel and unknown to him [...] but also a promise" which even made him a "sentimental tourist,"

⁷⁷² Pat Righelato, "Introduction," *Daisy Miller and Other Stories* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2006) vii.

⁷⁷³ "Henry James," 20 June 2015, <<http://www.famousauthors.org/henry-james>>.

⁷⁷⁴ "Henry James."

⁷⁷⁵ Eliana Ionoia, "Shifting Portraits of the American Expatriate between the New and the Old World in Henry James' Works," 20 June 2015, <<http://www.academia.edu>>. Search Esquire.

⁷⁷⁶ Peter Brooks, *Henry James Goes to Paris* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2007) 7.

⁷⁷⁷ Brooks 10.

who was able to search and reveal the “deepest being of his soul.”⁷⁷⁸ Additionally, Venice acts upon James’s imagination and stands for a city of intrigue and beauty.⁷⁷⁹

While in Dickinson’s poem,

Pigmy seraphs – gone astray –
Velvet people from Vevay –
Belles from some lost summer day –
Bees exclusive Coterie –

Paris could not lay the fold
Belted down with Emerald –
Venice could not show a cheek
Of a tint so lustrous meek –
Never such an Ambuscade
As of briar and leaf displayed
For my little damask maid –

I had rather wear her grace
Than an Earl’s distinguished face –
I had rather dwell like her
Than be “Duke of Exeter” –
Royalty enough for me
To subdue the Bumblebee.

Paris and Venice merely serve supporting roles; the protagonist is “Velvet people from Vevay.” Preest and Kornfeld differently interpret the two opening lines. Preest claims that they cause initial confusion which is later explained with the following line: “For my little damask maid.”⁷⁸⁰ Roses were Dickinson’s favorite flower which she referenced as “little angels dropped from heaven.”⁷⁸¹ Their “velvet texture” is noble and elegant and reminds the poet of those cultured people from Vevey on Lake Geneva.⁷⁸² What is more, the creation of the buds folding in the leaves cannot be matched even by the designers from Paris.⁷⁸³ Kornfeld points out that this poem begins

⁷⁷⁸ Jacek Gutorow, “Figures of Fulfillment: James and ‘a Sense of Italy,’” *Henry James’s Europe: Heritage and Transfer*, eds. Dennis Tredy, Annick Duperray and Adrian Harding (Cambridge: Open Book, 2011) 93.

⁷⁷⁹ Rosella Mamoli Zorzi, “The Aspern Papers: From Florence to an Intertextual City, Venice,” *Henry James’s Europe: Heritage and Transfer*, eds. Dennis Tredy, Annick Duperray and Adrian Harding (Cambridge: Open Book, 2011) 104.

⁷⁸⁰ Preest 41.

⁷⁸¹ Preest 41.

⁷⁸² Preest 41.

⁷⁸³ Preest 41.

with a charming sketch of bumblebees: They are the “Pigmy seraphs,” or say, the “little angels” who prefer wandering into the garden and this world rather than staying in their heavenly abode.⁷⁸⁴ Thus, they were the “velvet-cloaked fine folk” from Lake Geneva who were drifting in the garden on a sudden day as a group of lovely girls, and with its damask roses, the garden is a fit place for their exclusive coterie.⁷⁸⁵

Both Preest and Kornfeld’s interpretations are appropriate from different angles. As a matter of fact, what Kornfeld describes as the “Velvet people from Vevay” resembles James’ description of Vevey. In the beginning of his novel *Daisy Miller*, James presents a pleasant, relaxed picture of the little town of Vevey. This town’s numerous hotels are in the business of providing entertainment for tourists. One establishment in particular is “famous, even classical, being distinguished [...] by an air both of luxury and of maturity.”⁷⁸⁶ Therefore, it becomes the most popular summer tourist spot with a “flitting hither and thither of ‘stylish’ young girls, a rustling of muslin flounces, a rattle of dance music in the morning hours, a sound of high-pitched voices at all times.”⁷⁸⁷ Together with the imagery of “neat German waiters, who look like secretaries of legation,” “Russian princesses sitting in the garden,” “little Polish boys walking about held by the hand, with their governors,” “the sunny crest of the Dent du Midi,” and “the picturesque towers of the Castle of Chillon,”⁷⁸⁸ every detail is beautifully and perfectly presented.

Not only did Dickinson create an excellent couplet in the last stanza which adds more melodious sound to the poem; beauty and perfection are also revealed toward her language and tone when she describes her dearest bees and roses. In a noble and elegant party in her garden, her guests – bees and roses – are incomparable; even the designers from Paris and the artists of Venice cannot match or portray their beauty. It would be great, as the last stanza reveals, that the “velvet-cloaked fine folks” are subdued to her as a “truer mark of royalty.”⁷⁸⁹ The poet’s adoration of bees and roses is vividly and

⁷⁸⁴ “The Prowling Bee.”

⁷⁸⁵ “The Prowling Bee.”

⁷⁸⁶ Henry James, *Daisy Miller and Other Stories* (Kansas: Digireads.com, 2008) 5.

⁷⁸⁷ James 5.

⁷⁸⁸ James 5.

⁷⁸⁹ “The Prowling Bee.”

thoroughly expressed in this poem with the imagery of Paris, Venice, and Vevey. Her imagination and expectation of Vevey is pure and simple. Vevey stands for a more cultivated and sophisticated manner which is symbolic for Dickinson in both the imagery of the “Footman from Vevay” and “Velvet people from Vevay.”

To sum up, as a person who does not have much travel experience in her life and especially no experience of traveling abroad, Dickinson may not have the accurate, deeper understandings of touring as James. For example, she does not notice the contradiction as well as the complexity and subtlety between “innocent” and “sophistication”; she simply takes the general, common impressions of places and believes that the cool but cultured Swiss manners are more elegant and splendid. Nevertheless, she reveals that in front of her beloved subjects, she would rather believe the perfect part of her metaphorical symbols in her imaginative world.

5.2.3 “Bereaved of all, I went abroad”

In “Bereaved of all, I went abroad” (J784/Fr886) the images of peninsula and sea evokes the imagery of voyage to immortality.

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 its shape away –
The Grave – was finished – but the Spade
Remained in Memory –

There are at least two interpretations: First, as a romantic poem, losing a loved one

because of death or desertion,⁷⁹⁰ the speaker is perhaps on a “self-assigned odyssey”⁷⁹¹ to forget the loss she/he has to confront. However, her/his plan of going abroad to the peninsula for a new life fails because the speaker finds that it is impossible to escape from the shadow of death.⁷⁹² The image of the grave of her/his loved one haunts her/him, whether she/he attempts to be submerged in crowds or to be alone on the shore, or even taking “Cups of artificial Drowse.”⁷⁹³ At the end of this poem, the speaker realizes a lesson that the completion of the grave can be seen as a close and it may be forgotten as time passes; nevertheless, spading and digging it cannot be forgotten.⁷⁹⁴

Second, as a death poem, it seems that the speaker is forced by death to conceive a way which is completely disconnected from a larger sphere.⁷⁹⁵ She/he has to face her/his ultimate individuality and subjectivity, and to accept her/his isolation.⁷⁹⁶ Moreover, as a haunting image, death appears at the beginning of the poem and plays a persecuting personification.⁷⁹⁷ It is clear that the “New Peninsula” is not the final destination that the speaker longs for. The poet defines “exultation” as “the going / Of an inland soul to sea / Past the houses – past the headlands – / Into deep Eternity –.” The image of the “headlands” resembles the image of “peninsula,” for not only do they connect to land; they also should be one stop on the journey to immortality. Unfortunately, it seems to be the final stop for the speaker in this poem.

This poem continues the poet’s conception on journey to immortality; whereas, it presents a failed experience. To begin, “bereaved” and “went abroad” indicate the speaker is sorrowful to travel to a foreign place; it also implies, as the third and fourth line presents, that instead of entering immortality, she/he arrives at a *cemetery* which is described as a “New Peninsula.” The image of a “grave” exhausts the reader’s last expectation. The second stanza then depicts a typical appearance of a coffin: There is no

⁷⁹⁰ Preest 265.

⁷⁹¹ T. D. Peter, *Living in Death: A Comparative Critique on the Death Poetry of Emily Dickinson and T. S. Eliot* (New Delhi: Partridge, 2013) 205.

⁷⁹² Preest 265.

⁷⁹³ Preest 265.

⁷⁹⁴ Preest 266.

⁷⁹⁵ Katharina Ernst, “‘It was not Death, for I stood up...’: ‘Death’ and the Lyrical I,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 6.1 (1997): 1-24, at 5, *Project MUSE*, 4 July 2016.

⁷⁹⁶ Ernst 5.

⁷⁹⁷ Ernst 5.

need to find the *room*, for it directly shows itself with simple and crude decoration – a pillow. Following like a shadow, the grave does not give the speaker a chance to gasp for breath; it appears as burden or some sort of instrument of torture and the speaker has to bear it anywhere she/he goes. Finally and pathetically, the speaker has no choice but to drink “Cups of artificial Drowse” to force her/himself to be sunk in sleep. It seems she/he only solves the problem of how to eliminate the image of the grave; the process of her/his burial cannot be forgotten. Rather than shoveling the earth, the speaker’s feeling is tortured by one spade after another. The sorrow would not be able to be removed; as the speaker said, it “[r]emained in Memory.”

To conclude, different understandings of the word “bereaved” bring different interpretations to this poem. Those interpretations cannot escape from the shadow of death, and that is how this poem creates the feeling of oppression. Though the poet presents death toward conventional images such as grave and pillow, they reinforce the dreariness of death and the fact of regarding death as an abomination. Toward the description of living with death, this poem adds another failed experience to the poet’s pursuit of immortality.

5.2.4 “I cross till I am weary” and “I did not reach Thee”

Finally, in “I cross till I am weary” (J550/Fr666), another failed experience of traveling to the final destination, which is called the “Grace” in this poem, is vividly described:

I cross till I am weary
A Mountain – in my mind –
More Mountains – then a Sea –
More Seas – And then
A Desert – find –

And My Horizon blocks
With steady – drifting – Grains
Of unconjectured quantity –
As Asiatic Rains –

Nor this – defeat my Pace –
It hinder from the West
But as an Enemy’s Salute

One hurrying to Rest –

What merit had the Goal –
Except there intervene
Faint Doubt – and far Competitor –
To jeopardize the Gain?

At last – the Grace in sight –
I shout unto my feet –
I offer them the Whole of Heaven
The instant that we meet –

They strive – and yet delay –
They perish – Do we die –
Or is this Death’s Experiment –
Reversed – in Victory?

Some images of this poem are perhaps extracted from a sermon of Charles Wadsworth, one of Dickinson’s friends:

Far away over the desert, up where the mountains are piercing the skies, shine the palaces of immortality! And if we attain to them in triumph at all, these deserts must be traversed, these stormy waters crossed, these mountains ascended!

The images of “Mountains,” “Seas,” and “Desert” in the poem echo the same images in the sermon. Clearly Dickinson uses them as a prelude and puts them into a story on quest. As Joan Burbick puts it, the weariness of the speaker’s mind is revealed by her/his confrontation of “Mountains,” “Seas,” and “Desert” on the journey of scanning and searching the horizon for the desired.⁷⁹⁸ Burbick further considers the fourth stanza as a “deferment of satisfaction”: The struggle is validated by a carefully conceived asceticism and the asceticism also claims that “merit” will be increased by the goal.⁷⁹⁹ Moreover, as the necessary obstruction to the movement of desire, intervention exists in “Faint Doubt” and “far Competitor” though the poet does not clarify that the doubt is part of the desired or the desirer, or it belongs to the shadow across the act of the search.⁸⁰⁰

⁷⁹⁸ Joan Burbick, “Emily Dickinson and the Economics of Desire,” *American Literature* 58.3 (1986): 361-78, at 369, *JSTOR*, 28 July 2016.

⁷⁹⁹ Burbick 369.

⁸⁰⁰ Burbick 369.

This poem is filled with questions, doubts, and obstruction; the suspicion reaches its climax by the final question in the last stanza. Though Dickinson used perfect rhyme (“mind” and “find,” “Grains” and “Rains,” “West” and “Rest,” “feet” and “meet”) which auditorily presents a subdued tone, the speaker is clearly very exhausted due to the arduous journey. Nonetheless, her/his horizon is blocked by “Grains” which are “steady,” “drifting,” and with “unconjectured quantity.” This image vividly presents the obstructive situation; meanwhile, the image of “Asiatic Rains” not only represents “discouraging” and “impending”;⁸⁰¹ it may also remind the reader of the “Eastern Exiles,” for it alludes to a helpless and desperate state. The third and fourth stanzas seem to be a self-consolation. The speaker rationally analyzes the reason of the obstruction and consoles her/him that only because of the “Faint Doubt,” the “merit” is reflected in the process of seeking the goal.

In fact, the speaker is fortunate enough to finally meet the “Grace” after a great deal of hardship and difficulty. The fifth stanza depicts her/his joy and piety through the imagery of the present she/he devotes (“the Whole of Heaven”) and of the eagerness (“The instant that we meet”). However, contrasting to the exhausted journey and the speaker’s pathetic self-consolation, “They” act reluctantly and desperately and “They” pay no attention to what the speaker has been through. After their irresponsible “perish,” the speaker asks an ironic question. It reflects that the ostensible successful journey has in fact failed again. Death is the ending of the speaker because the “Death’s Experiment” will not bring her/him immortality; at most, it might bring a “Victory” for commending her/his final arrival.

Finally, unlike “I cross till I am weary,” “I did not reach Thee” (J1664/Fr1708) seems to reveal that the speaker has a special feeling for “thee.” Though the hardship of the journey is specifically presented by a combination of two hexastiches, two heptastiches, and an octal, she/he still does not escape from a failed ending.

I did not reach Thee
But my feet slip nearer every day
Three Rivers and a Hill to cross
One desert and a Sea

⁸⁰¹ “Emily Dickinson Lexicon.”

I shall not count the journey one
When I am telling thee.

Regardless of the pronoun, the last two lines of the first stanza reveal that though the speaker “did not reach Thee,” she/he never gives up approaching “thee.” Whether she/he still has three rivers, a hill, a desert, and a sea to overcome, they even cannot be regarded as one obstacle. As time passes by, the journey seems more difficult,

Two deserts, but the Year is cold
So that will help the sand
One desert crossed –
The second one
Will feel as cool as land
Sahara is too little price
To pay for thy Right hand.

and “the Year is cold” indicates that winter is coming. Nonetheless, the severe environment cannot stop the speaker because she/he knows that in order to reach “thy Right hand,” even crossing the Sahara “is too little price” for her/him. In the following stanzas, the speaker talks to her/his close travel companion – her/his feet, to encourage them to continue the journey because they almost reach the final destination.

The Sea comes last – Step merry, feet,
So short we have to go –
To play together we are prone,
But we must labor now,
The last shall be the lightest load
That we have had to draw.

The Sun goes crooked –
That is Night
Before he makes the bend.
We must have passed the Middle Sea –
Almost we wish the End
Were further off –
Too great it seems
So near the Whole to stand.

We step like Plush,
We stand like snow,
The waters murmur new.
Three rivers and the Hill are passed –
Two deserts and the sea!
Now Death usurps my Premium

And gets the look at Thee.

Though the speaker describes the journey to “thee” in a relatively objective tone without irony or sarcasm, as her consistently unchanged denouement, the speaker cannot escape from a failed fate whether she/he arrives at the final destination or accomplishes the promise to her/him. Though the speaker’s faith of reaching “Thee” supports her/him to finally overcome three rivers, a hill, a desert, and a sea, the images of “Night,” “step like Plush,” and “stand like snow” indicates coldness, weariness, and even death. Whether the speaker overcomes those difficulties or even sacrifices her/his life, she/he finally realizes that any resolution and effort cannot compare to the control of death.

Basically, through the imagery of toponyms, these two poems not only present a difficult journey; the poet also uses them to contrast to an ironic ending. In this section, different types of toponyms are used to express the poet’s thinking and quest on some of her favorite themes. Except for “Pigmy seraphs – gone astray –” which portrays a relatively delightful scene, the rest of the poems continue to reveal the poet’s imagery on the arduous journey. Whether the poems are conducted by captivity, exile, death, or obstruction, Dickinson’s speaker is imprisoned, expatriated, haunted, and obstructed through images the poet presents.

5.3 Toponyms in Her Haiku-Like Poems

In this section, four poems with toponyms and images of traveling are introduced to initially compare with some of the characteristics of haiku.⁸⁰² Michiko Iwata, the

⁸⁰² As an ancient form of Japanese poetry, Haiku was not invented by the great 17th century Japanese poet Matsuo Bashō, “but his body of work and the work of his followers have been uniquely influential on haiku and related forms. In Bashō’s time, hokku was the name of the first stanza in a linked verse form called hakai no renga. Bashō infused his hokku with a depth and clarity that was not typical of the form up to that time [...] A traditional Japanese haiku includes a seasonal reference and has total of 17 sound-symbols arranged in units of 5 sounds, 7 sounds, and 5 sounds.” As Harold Gould Henderson further explains, first of all, “there are no articles in the Japanese language, practically no pronouns, and in general no distinctions between singular and plural;” secondly, “there is no punctuation in haiku, its place being taken by *kireji* (literally ‘cut-words’) such as *ya*, *kana*, *keri*, and the like, which have no translatable meaning, but which often indicate an unfinished sentence, and which have in addition an elusive force of their own;” and finally, different from English, “the Japanese language [...] [has] no relative pronouns – any descriptive clause must precede its noun [...]” Therefore, it is obvious that it cannot be equal between Japanese and English haiku writings, and the differences are: “An English-language haiku *sometimes* contains of 17 total syllables;” “English-language format is *sometimes* composed of 3 lines of 5-7-5 (syllables);” “2 simple subjects are often placed in juxtaposition;” “[t]hese 2 subjects are often separated by punctuation;” and “[a] keen on unusual observation is made by comparing the two subjects.” Cf. “What is Haiku?” *Haiku Poetry, Experiencing Life in 5-7-5*, 22 June 2015, <<http://www.haiku-poetry.org/what-is-haiku.html>>; “What’s a Haiku?” *North Carolina Haiku Society*, 22 June 2015, <<http://nc-haiku.org/whats-a-haiku/>>; Harold Gould Henderson, *An Introduction to Haiku: An*

director of the *Emily Dickinson Society of Japan* claims that many Dickinson scholars point out the similarities between haiku and some of Dickinson's poems; nonetheless, for Japanese readers, the "whole world of Dickinson's poetry [...] is quite different from haiku."⁸⁰³ On the length of her poetry, for example: It is rare to find that Dickinson's poems have the same length as haiku. Therefore, except for the images, the focus of their similarities shifts from the format to the similes or metaphors.⁸⁰⁴ By comparing "A bird came down the Walk –" (J328/Fr359) and "The ancient pound – / A frog jumps in, / The sound of the water" by Matsuo Bashō, it is clear that though the butterflies quietly leap in the upward direction and a frog jumps into the water with a splash are different imagery at one glance, "beauty" is the essential implication in both of them.⁸⁰⁵

These lines, "Than Oars divide the Ocean, / Too silver for a seam – / Or Butterflies, off Banks of Noon / Leap, splashless as they swim" as the last stanza of "A bird came down the Walk –," seems incompatible with the development of the plot; nonetheless, the simile or metaphor exists as a certain relationship with the emotion or enlightenment of the poet. Iwata further explains that these kinds of similes or metaphors, which requires the reader to read them as independent wholes, do not largely exist in Dickinson's poems.⁸⁰⁶ Nonetheless, it is still a new approach for interpreting her poetry when these "independent wholes" is related to the nature and the function of imagery, so that the haiku qualities can be defined in a certain way.⁸⁰⁷

Indeed, it is inadequate to simply equate two literary forms of two different culture backgrounds; nevertheless, it is still inevitable to associate Dickinson's poetry with haiku. Generally, the haiku qualities which exist in Dickinson's poetry are for example, the "images," "conciseness," "preciseness," and "intensity."⁸⁰⁸ Moreover, based on the style of Dickinson's poetry, there are still two important and significant

Anthology of Poems and Poets from Bashō to Shiki (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1958) vii-viii.

⁸⁰³ Michiko Iwata, "Plenary B: Dickinson and Haiku," *Emily Dickinson International Society Bulletin* 19.2 (2007): 11, 34, at 11, 16 November 2014, <<http://www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

⁸⁰⁴ Iwata 11.

⁸⁰⁵ Iwata 11.

⁸⁰⁶ Iwata 11.

⁸⁰⁷ Iwata 11.

⁸⁰⁸ Iwata 11.

resemblances. The first one is “kireji.”⁸⁰⁹ As a kind of poetic punctuation of haikus, kireji is used when the poet’s mood and soul-state are expressed, hinted at, or emphasized.⁸¹⁰ For example, in Bashō’s “The ancient pound –” he mentions the ancient pound first; then instead of immediately jumping to the next line, he puts a half-period to attract the reader to explore what will happen next toward the image of the ancient pound.⁸¹¹ The equivalent of kireji in Dickinson’s poems is dashes.⁸¹² Though there are many interpretations of Dickinson’s dashes, one use for creating “suspension” and attraction is similar to the function of kireji.⁸¹³

The second resemblance is the “spatial rather than temporal” characteristic,⁸¹⁴ which will be discussed in the following part by analyzing Dickinson’s haiku-like poems. Iwata argues that Dickinson’s poems are “realistic rather than meditative” and the expressions are “staccato rather than continuous.”⁸¹⁵ Moreover, rather than time, the poet is preoccupied with space.⁸¹⁶ This “spatial rather than temporal” notion is also shared by haiku; if a haiku poet accidentally encounters a beautiful natural object, she/he will be immediately absorbed by the heart of it and naturally forgets the relationship between the object and subject.⁸¹⁷ In fact, as Michael Dylan Welch puts it,

[t]he most important characteristic of haiku is how it conveys through implication and suggestion, a moment of keen perception and perhaps insight into nature or human nature. Haiku does not state this insight, however, but implies it.⁸¹⁸

Implying rather than stating is revealed in the following four poems – “Many cross the Rhine” (J123/Fr107), “With thee, in the Desert” (J209/Fr201), “Nor Mountain hinder Me” (J1029/Fr1041), and “Least Rivers – docile to some sea” (J212/Fr206).

⁸⁰⁹ See the footnote 694.

⁸¹⁰ Iwata 11.

⁸¹¹ Iwata 11.

⁸¹² Iwata 34.

⁸¹³ Iwata 34.

⁸¹⁴ Iwata 11.

⁸¹⁵ Iwata 11.

⁸¹⁶ Iwata 11.

⁸¹⁷ Iwata 11.

⁸¹⁸ Michael Dylan Welch, “Becoming a Haiku Poet,” *Begin Haiku*, 22 June 2015, <<http://www.haikuworld.org>>. Path: Search Esquire.

In the following verses,

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

the poet's supposed person seems to be sitting out on a verandah overlooking her/his garden with a glass of Rhine wine and smoking a fine cigar, as Kornfeld connects to the poet's mental image.⁸¹⁹ Preest explains that the speaker who is smoking the brown cigar is hardly the poet herself; he might be one of the travelers who traveled to Europe and when he came back home, he could still recall his experience of crossing the Rhine and breathing Frankfurt air by drinking a Rhenish wine and smoking a cigar from that region.⁸²⁰ The “huffing and puffing” tone, as Kornfeld describes,⁸²¹ reveals some historical facts: As the busiest waterway of Europe, the Rhine is the only river that links the Alps with the North Sea; it meanwhile channels trade through Switzerland, Germany, France, and the Netherlands.⁸²² The Rhine has a very important standing in European history, culture, and politics; its prosperity is to certain degree due to bold experiments, meaning the European statesmen embarked to internationalize the Rhine as a commercial waterway to establish a free-trade zone along its banks⁸²³ in the nineteenth century.

Therefore, it is easy to imagine how busy, flourishing, and international the Rhine was as an icon of nineteenth-century Europe as well as a dreamland for the American travelers. Ostensibly, the speaker exaggerates the implication of her/his experience of crossing the Rhine and breathing Frankfurt air by only the taste of the Rhenish wine and the cigar of that region. Nonetheless, these two images – “this cup of mine” and “my brown Cigar” – are simple on the surface, but profound due to their function of evoking sensory travel memories. The poet would not randomly bring two images which have nothing to do within this quatrain. The wine and cigar might be tasted when the speaker was cruising on the Rhine or strolling in Frankfurt. These two things either leave the

⁸¹⁹ “The Prowling Bee.”

⁸²⁰ Preest 37.

⁸²¹ “The Prowling Bee.”

⁸²² Mark Cioc, *The Rhine: An Eco-Biography, 1815-2000* (Seattle: U of Washington, 2002) 11.

⁸²³ Cioc xxiv.

speaker deep impressions or are commonly taken from daily life during her/his travel, so that she/he is able to recall the detailed experience of living in Europe, once she/he tastes them after coming back home. Hence, one point is clear: The speaker has a meaningful and unforgettable memory when traveling in Europe; what is more, her/his longing of revisiting the places she/he once has been is revealed by her/his indulgence of the “cup of mine” and “my brown Cigar.”

In “With thee, in the Desert –,” the reader may be more impressed in the speaker’s resolution of being totally willing to follow “thee” rather than finding out who the “thee” is.

With thee, in the Desert –
With thee in the thirst –
With thee in the Tamarind wood –
Leopard breathes – at last!

Sandra M. Gilbert claims that “Leopard” is one of Dickinson’s names because the poet has many names and selves.⁸²⁴ As a name of another species, “Leopard” represents a species with a different consciousness and an alternative way of speaking.⁸²⁵ The poet explains its meaning in “Civilization – spurns – the Leopard!” (J492/Fr276) that a “primordial” place, or say, a place of otherness with its “*Ur* language” is and will always be a more appropriate place for “Civilization” than “spurns – the Leopard.”⁸²⁶ Gilbert further claims that “With thee, in the Desert –” is another interpretation for “Civilization – spurns – the Leopard!”⁸²⁷ “Thee” could be the one who is also an estranged one and can understand her language; thus, there is no need for extra explanation or translation.⁸²⁸

The poet could imagine herself as a tough traveler without any confusion and cannot be beaten by any obstacles. Rather than depicting an abominable environment along the journey with “thee,” the images of “Desert,” “thirst,” and “Tamarind wood” indicates something megathermal. On the one hand, it ostensibly presents an arduous

⁸²⁴ Sandra M. Gilbert, “If a lion could talk...’: Dickinson Translated,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 2.2 (1993): 1-13, at 3, *Project MUSE*, 15 August 2016.

⁸²⁵ Gilbert 3.

⁸²⁶ Gilbert 4.

⁸²⁷ Gilber 4.

⁸²⁸ Gilber 4.

journey; on the other hand, it implies passion and resolution of following “thee.” The changing location from “Desert” to “Tamarind wood” implies that only “With thee,” they are able to conquer thirst, and finally arrive at the “Tamarind wood” and regain strength as a “Leopard.” Or, in fact the poet expresses the “thirst,” or say, desire or longing to be with “thee.” As the following one:

Nor Mountain hinder Me
Nor Sea –
Who’s Baltic –
Who’s Cordillera

which seems to imply the same will of overcoming any obstacles and hindrances, the repetition of “Nor” and “Who’s” emphasizes the strong resolution, and so does the spondaic meter. Additionally, the reinforcement of the obstacles by “Baltic” and “Cordillera” offers the reader visual imagery to experience the resolution.

The two line poem “Least Rivers – docile to some sea. / My Caspian – thee” seems to be a glorification or confession. Kornfeld points out that the Caspian can be truly considered a sea because it is the largest inland body of water in the world.⁸²⁹ Caspian seems to be a miracle not only because of its size; it is also because there are many rivers flowing into it every day to accomplish its greatness. The poet may not assimilate herself to the big rivers; instead, she treats herself as only a “least river.” The image of “Caspian” produces a sort of visual imagination that for an inland soul as the poet, “Caspian” could fulfill her vision of the sea; what is more, compared to the sea, a lake is more peaceful and unchangeable which could be more romantic for the image of “thee” in the poet’s heart.

To a Dickinson’s reader, one may be familiar with the poet’s way of using such images for personal expression; to other readers, such images of toponyms are evocative because each one of them can be further explored as a process, an experience, or even a story. A good image can function as a large container which has a lot of space to carry the poet’s as well as her readers’ emotions. Once the container is opened by the reader, the poet’s emotions and the information she wants to convey will be fully revealed. In a word, as the poet’s most condensed poems, they are easily related to the Japanese haiku;

⁸²⁹ “The Prowling Bee.”

nonetheless, their similarity exists in ellipsis and ambiguity.

In this chapter, Dickinson's various topographic entities are divided into four categories. It is clear that some of these entities are not merely her code-like language, or her figurative images. As Juhasz claims, in a more dynamic way, each toponym represents the changeable, expanding, and continually growing widely that characterizes Dickinson's mind; therefore, it is suitable to use geographical vocabulary to describe the development of her mind.⁸³⁰ Moreover, through her use of toponyms, her pursuit on the topic of the final destination, or say, immortality is reflected by the imagery that those toponyms visually or meaningfully represent. Though some of her short verses are not identical to haiku, on the level of presenting beauty and implication, they share similarities.

6. Is Home the Final Destination?

Amherst is Eden; "Home is the definition of God" (L355).⁸³¹ In 1851, Austin Dickinson accepted a teaching job in Boston. Young Emily Dickinson wrote many letters to her brother, urging him to return home from time to time.⁸³² Among them, one letter was followed by the second poem in Johnson's edition. "There is another sky" (J2/not in Fr) as a persuasion depicts an Edenic garden; everything in it is extraordinary and even immortal. In fact, this letter was written five days before the date Austin promised to return home.⁸³³ When Dickinson wrote this, the weather in Amherst was gloomy and cold; however, in order to urge Austin to come back quickly, she assured him that the weather would be beautiful again because of his return.⁸³⁴

In order to show her deep love of her brother, Dickinson uses positive modifiers such as "ever serene and fair," "ever green," "brighter," and "unfading"; the images are her favorite sky, sunshine, the garden, flowers, and the bee; the tone shows sincerity through her repeated use of terms such as "never mind" and "here is," as well as intimacy through "Prithee, my brother, / Into *my* garden come!". Meanwhile, both the parallel structure and the italicized "here" and "my" emphasize the poet's earnest entreat.

⁸³⁰ Juhasz 20.

⁸³¹ Hallen 174.

⁸³² Preest 1.

⁸³³ Preest 1.

⁸³⁴ Preest 1.

The image of the paradisal garden symbolizes Dickinson's love to her brother,⁸³⁵ while also revealing her affection for her residence, though it is not the famous Homestead.

6.1 The Homestead

It is the Homestead that helps Dickinson to live a reclusive life and to fulfill her career as a poet. Firstly, it provides a shelter which enables the poet to remain largely unseen; secondly, whether from family, friends, neighbors or even the poet herself, there are anecdotes from that house which allow readers to experience her uncommon, unorthodox, and even whimsical lifestyle, though she seemed eccentric and “wedded to her interiority.”⁸³⁶ There were complications before Dickinson finally moved to the Homestead on Main Street. Though it was perhaps the first brick house in Amherst built by Samuel Fowler Dickinson, the poet's grandfather, he lost it due to financial setbacks in the 1830s.⁸³⁷ Thus, the poet had to leave where she lived from her birth to the age of nine, and move to another home on Pleasant Street.⁸³⁸

During her life in the new house, young Dickinson not only had her “most social years” in which she not only participated in many activities such as sugaring parties, charades, sleigh rides, and country rides; she also had special experiences such as watching funeral processions from a northern window of the house and meeting Susan Gilbert, her lifelong friend.⁸³⁹ In 1855, Dickinson's father repurchased the Homestead and moved the whole family back; nonetheless, Dickinson felt as if she was forced to emigrate in spite of her unwillingness to leave.⁸⁴⁰ From that time, the life on Pleasant Street became nostalgic memories, and the situation became worse because the return was accompanied with mysterious invalidism of Dickinson's mother.⁸⁴¹ However, when the renovations of the Homestead were gradually accomplished, it became a place that provided more possibilities and positive experiences.

⁸³⁵ Preest 1.

⁸³⁶ Diana Fuss, “Interior Chambers: The Emily Dickinson Homestead,” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 10.3 (1998): 1-46, at 1, *Project MUSE*, 15 November 2016.

⁸³⁷ Fuss 5.

⁸³⁸ Fuss 6.

⁸³⁹ Fuss 7.

⁸⁴⁰ Fuss 7.

⁸⁴¹ Fuss 8.

Edward Dickinson invested five thousand dollars in renovating the home and that was only five hundred dollars less than the brand new home, the Evergreens that he built for his son.⁸⁴² It was renovated to follow the new national standard of the republican family home;⁸⁴³ nevertheless, there were interesting changes which had a profound, lasting influence on the poet. First, because of the veranda along the west side of the main house, the home alters the dominant north/south axis; the Homestead is reoriented by the new frontality to the Evergreens, putting the two houses into close conversation.⁸⁴⁴ This change as well as the dome at the top of the Homestead provides a clear view of the Evergreens.⁸⁴⁵ Whether the father intentionally built the homes as surveillance for one another,⁸⁴⁶ the construction to some degree enabled Dickinson to extend her solicitude to her brother's wife.⁸⁴⁷

Second, unlike rooms of the traditional mid-century American country house in which each space had a single domestic purpose, the Dickinson family treated books very seriously and used them to guide the renovation of each space in the Homestead.⁸⁴⁸ For instance, the dining room and the kitchen still fulfilled multiple purposes, meaning the Dickinson family could not only cook and eat, but also read and write in the kitchen.⁸⁴⁹ Without specialization and privatization, the kitchen is the place that enabled the Dickinson family to communicate and to share; at the same time it leaves many memories for the poet.⁸⁵⁰ The more multifunctional dining room provided a space for eating, reading, writing, sleeping, and even sex.⁸⁵¹ In fact, due to its advantageous proximity to the front and the back doors, it became a perfect place for Austin Dickinson and Mable Loomis Todd to accomplish their first assignation.⁸⁵²

⁸⁴² Fuss 8.

⁸⁴³ Fuss 8.

⁸⁴⁴ Fuss 11.

⁸⁴⁵ Fuss 11.

⁸⁴⁶ Fuss 11.

⁸⁴⁷ Fuss 29.

⁸⁴⁸ Fuss 11.

⁸⁴⁹ Fuss 11.

⁸⁵⁰ Fuss 11-2.

⁸⁵¹ Fuss 13.

⁸⁵² Fuss 13.

Third, for Dickinson, the Homestead's bedroom was a place where she could remove family obligation, domestic labor, and social expectation.⁸⁵³ Further, her reclusion was not merely a rebellion, for

[t]he rise of interiority in nineteenth-century America was made possible by the growing distinction between public and private space. During Dickinson's lifetime, houses became increasingly privatized as commercial labor moved out of the home and into the town or factory. With her father's law office located several blocks away from the Homestead, Dickinson's family home became a private residence, a sanctuary from the new public world of contracts and commerce that comprised the basis of Edward Dickinson's thriving legal practice. No longer the site of agricultural labor, the bourgeois family home becomes in the nineteenth century the stage for an emerging interior life. The domestic interior as private haven, where an individual could withdraw from public view, was a relatively new cultural ideal when Dickinson began writing her poetry.⁸⁵⁴

This privacy provides not only protection but more importantly a relatively undisturbed space for creativity. Only a few poems were not composed in the Homestead, and the poet's bedroom was the creative center.⁸⁵⁵

On this creative hub, most criticism is surrounded by key words such as helpless agoraphobic, self-imposed isolation, melancholy, terrifying, coffin, trapped, and prison.⁸⁵⁶ Nevertheless, though it is impossible to know the poet's exact feelings, there is at least one important fact that can be known: Her bedroom is in fact the one which has the best light, the best ventilation, and the best views.⁸⁵⁷ The view of Evergreens to the West and the Holyoke mountains to the South can clearly be seen in this room which offers her the "occupant maximum visual control."⁸⁵⁸ The street was also included in her line of vision, so that she could indulge her ear for language by listening to different voices and talks of pedestrians; more importantly though, she was able to watch the sunset over her beloved Sue through the bedroom's western windows.⁸⁵⁹ In a word, though life on Pleasant Street formed a relatively carefree childhood and quality

⁸⁵³ Fuss 28.

⁸⁵⁴ Fuss 4.

⁸⁵⁵ Fuss 4.

⁸⁵⁶ Fuss 29.

⁸⁵⁷ Fuss 29.

⁸⁵⁸ Fuss 29.

⁸⁵⁹ Fuss 29.

memories that accompanied the rest of Dickinson's life, the Homestead continued the Dickinsons' book-centered tradition as well as facilities which enabled Dickinson to put her cherished memories into her creation and to practice her poetic ideas on her road to become a poet.

6.2 The House/Home Metaphor

Interestingly, the house or home image appears frequently in Dickinson's figurative description on her favorite subjects. For example, in the famous "I dwell in Possibility," possibility to her is "A faire House than Prose." Criticism tends to interpret the possibility as Dickinson's poetic creativity, or simply, poetry. Preest claims that for the poet, prose is the symbol of dogmatic opinions or orthodox religious views which people as her father would uphold; while the house of poetry is "More numerous of Windows" and "Superior – for Doors"; such a house is free for questionings while also being available for other possibilities.⁸⁶⁰ Farr holds the similar idea that Dickinson might compare the dark home of her lawyer father to prose; what is more, this immeasurable and numinous house is able to accept poetry.⁸⁶¹ This "fairer house" is, as Magdalena Zapedowska states, a far more sumptuous kingdom of interiority in which the poem presents a joyous celebration of her recluse life at home.⁸⁶² Diana Fuss explains that Dickinson treats prose and poetry as two starkly different kinds of architectural interiors.⁸⁶³ The former represents captivity and confinement while the latter indicates secret, private, secure spaces, and limitless expanse.⁸⁶⁴

Furthermore, similar metaphors as "Myself was formed – a Carpenter" (J488/Fr475), "The Props assist the House" (J1142/Fr729), "Remembrance has a Rear and Front" (J1182/Fr1234) all depict the process of creating poetry as "both labor and artistry."⁸⁶⁵ Besides, on her exploration of religious subjects, Eden and paradise are also described as the "old-fashioned House" (J1657/Fr1734) and the "old mansion"

⁸⁶⁰ Preest 221.

⁸⁶¹ Farr, *The Passion* 50.

⁸⁶² Magdalena Zapedowska, "Citizens of Paradise: Dickinson and Emmanuel Levinas's Phenomenology of the Home," *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 12.2 (2003): 69-92, at 86, *Project MUSE*, 21 November 2016.

⁸⁶³ Fuss 14.

⁸⁶⁴ Fuss 14.

⁸⁶⁵ Fuss 13.

(J1119/Fr1144). If Eden is, as Nielson and Hallen observed, the toponym that Dickinson most frequently used in seventeen of her poems, and meanwhile is an indication of a sacred space in heaven and on earth,⁸⁶⁶ the house/home image to some extent equally represents a divine space which belongs to Dickinson, physically and spiritually.

More specifically, home in Dickinson's work is either presented biographically, metaphysically, and religiously, or in any combination thereof.⁸⁶⁷ Dickinson did not use the home image to conventionally assent concepts of heaven where God the Father welcomed the elect, which was based on the nineteenth-century New England's orthodoxy.⁸⁶⁸ On the contrary, as a challenge to the orthodox concepts, she stated firmly that the temporal nature of an earthly home formed the basis of its special meaning.⁸⁶⁹ Except for this difference, the supposed agoraphobia from much psychoanalytic criticism did not appear in her home-involved poems; she almost did not put her home image in a conventional domestic sense of nineteenth century America.⁸⁷⁰ Though there were many female writers who devoted themselves to the consolation literature of Dickinson's era, she did not agree with them; her home image was not built and guarded by the figure of a mother who was a moral center of a family.⁸⁷¹

Finally, Sally Bayley gives a high opinion of Dickinson's home life in her book *Home on the Horizon: America's Search for Space, from Emily Dickinson to Bob Dylan*. She claims that home for Dickinson is not only a place which provides opportunities of communication for both inner and outer worlds; it also is a place where anything seems possible.⁸⁷² Dickinson uses her home space to encapsulate her attitude toward culture; home is the mansion universe in which not only her poetic interiority infinitely expands; it is also the ideal version of America as hosted by her.⁸⁷³ What is more, the influence and limitlessness that Dickinson believed in her poetic interiority is the same as

⁸⁶⁶ Nielson and Hallen 16.

⁸⁶⁷ "Home, as Subject," *An Emily Dickinson Encyclopedia*, ed. Jane Donahue Eberwein (California: Greenwood, 1998) 146.

⁸⁶⁸ "Home, as Subject" 146.

⁸⁶⁹ "Home, as Subject" 146.

⁸⁷⁰ "Home, as Subject" 146.

⁸⁷¹ "Home, as Subject" 146.

⁸⁷² Sally Bayley, *Home on the Horizon: America's Search for Space, from Emily Dickinson to Bob Dylan* (Oxfordshire: Peter Lang, 2010) 1.

⁸⁷³ Bayley 1.

America's belief in its frontier.⁸⁷⁴

Besides, Bayley believes that due to her Puritan heritage, Dickinson absorbed divine omnipresence that people often experienced divinity anywhere at any moment.⁸⁷⁵ She reconciles her beliefs and her domestic life, so that home to her is a holy thing, a sacred vessel, a site of cultural ideology, and a ritual space for everyday living.⁸⁷⁶ To conclude, the house/home metaphor does not fortuitously exist in Dickinson's poems. On the one hand, due to its irreplaceable position in Dickinson's life and poetic creation, home represents possibility in both her reality and her spiritual world. On the other hand, her home image does not conform to the conventional domestic sense or female literature of nineteenth-century New England. This characteristic allows the reader to envision and to explore various meanings that the speakers attempt to convey in the poet's different house/home scenes.

6.3 On the Images of House, Home, and Door

Whether on her voyage or journey, Dickinson wrote many poems on traveling to the final destination as represented by images such as immortality, eternity, Eden, paradise, or heaven. However, rather than concentrating on depicting the final destination, the poet pays more attention to describing doubts or suspicion toward the boat image, or hardship, difficulties, and a failed ending on her journey. She might consider the tomb as a house as she describes in "Because I could not stop for Death –"; nonetheless, her obsession with house/home is more complicated because it also reveals her thinking toward her flood subject. It is therefore different from, for example, John Howard Payne's "Home, home, sweet, sweet home! / There's no place like home, oh, there's no place like home!"⁸⁷⁷ or Longfellow's "beautiful town" where one could seek one's youth in there.⁸⁷⁸

⁸⁷⁴ Bayley 1.

⁸⁷⁵ Bayley 1.

⁸⁷⁶ Bayley 1.

⁸⁷⁷ John Howard Payne, "Home Sweet Home," www.poemhunter.com, 10 April 2019.

⁸⁷⁸ Cf. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "My Lost Youth," www.poemhunter.com, 10 April 2019.

6.3.1 Traveling with the House

In “I started Early – Took my Dog –,” Dickinson’s speaker describes a story of a dangerous encounter⁸⁷⁹ with the sea in which she escaped at the last second from the aggressive sea beast and from the nightmarish narrative which she carefully attempted to hide.⁸⁸⁰

I started Early – Took my Dog –
And visited the Sea –
The Mermaids in the Basement
Came out to look at me –

And Frigates – in the Upper Floor
Extended Hempen Hands –
Presuming Me to be a Mouse –
Aground – upon the Sands –

But no Man moved Me – till the Tide
Went past my simple Shoe –
And past my Apron – and my Belt
And past my Bodice – too –

And made as He would eat me up –
As wholly as a Dew
Upon a Dandelion’s Sleeve –
And then – I started – too –

And He – He followed – close behind –
I felt His Silver Heel
Upon my Ankle – Then my Shoes
Would overflow with Pearl –

Until We met the Solid Town –
No One He seemed to know –
And bowing – with a Mighty look –
At me – The Sea withdrew –

Recalling his experience of creating the blank verse “Mennonites by the Sea,” Jay Rogoff described in his essay that when he was lying on a beach, he was attracted by a family of Mennonites, and especially their women who wore nineteenth-century-style

⁸⁷⁹ David Cody, “‘When one’s soul’s at a white heat’: Dickinson and the ‘Azarian School,’” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 19.1 (2010): 30-59, at 46, *Project MUSE*, 26 November 2016.

⁸⁸⁰ Cody 48.

long dresses.⁸⁸¹ He was intrigued by them because they were more titillating among the young women who wore thongs and bikinis; therefore, when he finished his poem, he realized that there is a parallel between the barely veiled sexuality of Dickinson's "I started Early – Took my Dog –" and the sensuousness of his "Mennonites by the Sea."⁸⁸²

The speaker of Dickinson's poem narrates her intimate encounter with the sea, and the whole visit switches between reality and a magical world.⁸⁸³ It begins with a realistic scene in which the speaker takes her dog to visit the sea where she experiences a magical adventure till she returns to the real world again.⁸⁸⁴ Four points need to be stressed: First, the sea is domesticated by the images of the basement and the upper floor; second, there is a confrontation between femininity and masculinity because the speaker is overwhelmed by the water, which indicates the surrender of the feminizing figurative strategy, meaning the domestic imagery of a house, to the boldly masculine water; third, the sea withdraws not only from the speaker herself, but also from her human world; and finally, rather than a rape, the sexuality that the poem presents is as a nineteenth-century dance, and the sea "behaving more like Darcy than Rochester,"⁸⁸⁵ for he chivalrously bows "with a Mighty look – / At me –" and leaves.⁸⁸⁶

As a matter of fact, the images of a girl, a dog, and a house can easily arouse readers' association of Dorothy, Toto, and their farmhouse which fell from the sky and killed the Wicked Witch of the East in L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. There are even more analogous images such as Dorothy's magical silver shoes and the sea's silver heel, as well as different living forms they met along the journey and other encounters. What is more, it is interesting enough that "I started Early" is in fact selected by a book entitled *Some Emily Dickinson Poems for Children*, though it is more like a fairy tale of Grimm's.⁸⁸⁷ The images of a girl, a dog, mermaids and frigates form

⁸⁸¹ Jay Rogoff, "Certain Slants: Learning from Dickinson's Oblique Precision," *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 17.2 (2008): 39-54, at 50, *Project MUSE*, 25 November 2016.

⁸⁸² Rogoff 50-1.

⁸⁸³ Rogoff 51.

⁸⁸⁴ Rogoff 51.

⁸⁸⁵ Rogoff 51.

⁸⁸⁶ Rogoff 52.

⁸⁸⁷ Preest 175.

a traditional beginning of a fairy tale; nevertheless, with the development of the plot, the dog and the mermaids disappeared, the frigates captured the girl, and the tide almost overwhelmed her.⁸⁸⁸ All these elements combine to make the situation of the girl dangerous and helpless. It could be, as Preest claims, an allegory on human life because human beings have to surrender to mighty nature lest they be overwhelmed by it.⁸⁸⁹ It could also be the adventure of a girl who conquered all kinds of difficulties, finally winning her chance to return home. Or it could be a story of a private journey which narrates an intimate contact between the speaker and the sea; the following paragraphs then will demonstrate it step by step.

To begin, an image of a dog might be one of the reasons of why the poem is selected for inclusion in a children's book. Marty Rhodes Figley states that because of her dog Carlo, children would not completely conjecture Dickinson as a woman who was timid, childlike, always in white dress, and keeping locked away in her bedroom.⁸⁹⁰ Whether he was a Saint Bernard, or a Newfoundland, or a hybrid of a Saint Bernard or a Newfoundland, Carlo was supposed to be a guard and a rescuer who was gentle and intelligent as his ancestors were trained to be.⁸⁹¹ Figley further explains that children highly value their pets as friends, hence they understand the importance of Carlo to Dickinson;⁸⁹² Carlo was a protector, and confidant as well as a guide to the outside world to Dickinson;⁸⁹³ hence, it would be a good reason that she put the image of a dog at the very beginning of the poem. It presents the importance of the dog as a close friend who accompanies the speaker on the road; at the same time, it comforts the reader recognize that it could be a safe journey rather than an unknown adventure.

Moreover, the journey is within expectation. First, the speaker did not arbitrarily start the travel; instead, she "started early" in order to ensure that she had enough time to complete the journey. Second, she might still be a little nervous about what might

⁸⁸⁸ Preest 175.

⁸⁸⁹ Preest 175.

⁸⁹⁰ Marty Rhodes Figley, "'Brown Kisses' and 'Shaggy Feet': How Carlo Illuminates Dickinson for Children," *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 14.2 (2005): 120-127, at 120, *Project MUSE*, 26 November 2016.

⁸⁹¹ Figley 121.

⁸⁹² Figley 124.

⁸⁹³ Figley 120.

happen to her; thus she brought her “close friend,” though the company ended when she arrived at the “house.” Third, instead of encountering the sea, she visited it; hence when the frigates captured her, she was not afraid of them but humorously described herself as a mouse. Ostensibly the journey seems questionable; in fact, a certain intimacy can be easily sensed.

Therefore, the private journey can be described as follows: The speaker planned to accomplish her appointment with the sea; as possibly the first human to visit the sea, the mermaids were curious to observe her. Though she seemed to be fallaciously captured, she was not afraid and even concentrated on how the water gradually submerged her shoes, apron, belt, and bodice. Nevertheless, when she felt she was insignificantly small and was nearly engulfed by the water, “He followed – close behind” and only her feet still felt the pearl-like water, meaning she was lifted by the waves⁸⁹⁴ and was standing on the top of the tides. In the end, she was safely escorted to the “Solid Town,” and the sea behaved as a knight and treated her gently and chivalrously.

Such gentleness and chivalry seems familiar because it appears in “Because I could not stop for Death –” when death is in an image of a wooer. When the speaker was captured by the frigates, readers might have been worried about her predicament; nonetheless, after reading the last stanza, the truth is revealed and anxiety is relieved. One question then emerges: Which one is the speaker’s longing destination, the “house” or the “Solid Town”? There are poems that Dickinson directly presents the destination to the reader: For example, in “On this wondrous sea,” eternity is the shore, and in “Wild Nights – Wild Nights,” they are rowing in Eden. However, in this poem, the magical journey ends by arriving at the unnamed “Solid Town.” Whether indirectly from her feelings or directly from the depiction of him (“And bowing – with a Mighty look”), the speaker specifically describes her traveling experience with the sea without further elaboration.

Moreover, the poet not only uses anthropomorphism to endow the sea with noble qualities; she also gives it strength and masculinity. To some degree the imbalance

⁸⁹⁴ See the definition of “heel.” “Emily Dickinson Lexicon.”

between the descriptions reveals the poet's true aspiration: On the surface it is the journey to the "Solid Town"; nevertheless, the sea serves as an outsider ("No One He seemed to know –") who becomes the girl's final companion and protector. The hidden house image reinforces a sense of security. Moreover, rather than Cole's *Old Age*, the sea clearly does not represent immortality. If the "Solid Town" represents immortality, it is again ignored by the poet, for the unforgettable experience she describes as a journey with the sea may be the embodiment of death.

To conclude, as Zapedowska puts it, Dickinson "transforms the elevated realm of [p]ossibility into domestic interior space without reducing its magnificence."⁸⁹⁵ As a nineteenth-century woman who does not use the image of a house for domestic purposes but for describing the sea and a magical voyage, the poet presents at least one possibility that one can travel with a "house"; at the same time, the house may represent death. The poet unexpectedly likens death to a house and presents its chivalry. This breaks with the traditional expectation of a domestic image and of an image of death.

6.3.2 Heaven or Home

Dickinson spent her whole life in the Connecticut Valley which was described as a stronghold of uncompromising Calvinism.⁸⁹⁶ As a very independent person in religion who had little particular interest in reading devotional texts and also refused conversion eventually, Dickinson was still influenced and even well schooled by sermons, teachers, and friends, as well as her family.⁸⁹⁷ Therefore, on exploring questions of faith in Dickinson's poetry, there are generally three different sources that form her experience: The older Puritanism weakly remained in conservative Amherst; the trends of enlightened thought was more liberal and rational, and culminated in Transcendentalism; and, a domestic or sentimental religiosity existed and developed in the poet's own lifetime.⁸⁹⁸

⁸⁹⁵ Zapedowska 87.

⁸⁹⁶ Gary Lee Stonum, "Dickinson's Literary Background," *The Emily Dickinson Handbook*, eds, Gudrun Grabher, Roland Hagenbüchle, and Cristanne Miller (Massachusetts: U of Massachusetts, 1998) 54-5.

⁸⁹⁷ Stonum, "Background" 55.

⁸⁹⁸ Stonum, "Background" 55.

Interestingly, the introspection upheld by the Dickinson couples was a more specific religious doctrine.⁸⁹⁹ In other words, they not only believed that between God and human beings, there was an ontological gap; they also fully comprehended the absolute importance of this theology.⁹⁰⁰ Hence, it is easy to find discussion on the distinctions between two groups of subjects – earth and heaven, or time and eternity in Dickinson's poems.⁹⁰¹ Moreover, God is higher than all the sources of judgment according to Calvinism.⁹⁰² Though Dickinson entertains other ideas on divine justice and sovereignty, there is no abjuration on the possibility of admitting the association between divinity and others as wisdom, grace, charity etc.⁹⁰³ Except for these backgrounds, a sentimental love religion has some relationship with Dickinson's lyrics: It is named by St. Armand and meanwhile juxtaposes some literature that was popular at Dickinson's time, but its motifs might be once condemned by her.⁹⁰⁴ For instance, one fundamental motif that has resonance with her poems focuses on the banned or separated lovers who are continuously affected by bad luck, and their only hope of reunion has to be realized after death; and another motif is the centrality of both deathbed scenes and a sentimental rhetoric of consolation.⁹⁰⁵

One aspect of it, which is interesting enough for interpreting Dickinson's house imagery, emphasizes the material comforts of religion; heaven is envisioned as a “well-furnished house in which the self can feel at home.”⁹⁰⁶ As the one that most differs from Puritanism, it not only has more disembodied theology; it also stresses more perils of damnation than promises of salvation.⁹⁰⁷ What is more, it is most significant in the aspect of gender, for Puritanism is the representative of a harsh, masculine tradition which opposes the feminized religion of the heart.⁹⁰⁸ Though the relationship between Dickinson and this materialist aspect of sentimentality is still open

⁸⁹⁹ Stonum, “Background” 55.

⁹⁰⁰ Stonum, “Background” 55.

⁹⁰¹ Stonum, “Background” 55.

⁹⁰² Stonum, “Background” 55.

⁹⁰³ Stonum, “Background” 55.

⁹⁰⁴ Stonum, “Background” 56.

⁹⁰⁵ Stonum, “Background” 57.

⁹⁰⁶ Stonum, “Background” 57.

⁹⁰⁷ Stonum, “Background” 57.

⁹⁰⁸ Stonum, “Background” 57.

for discussion, it is clear that a comparison between home and heaven is very important for her, and it is different from the Biedermeier sensibility of the main exemplar of material domesticity of St. Armand or Elizabeth Stuart Phelps.⁹⁰⁹

It is generally known that Dickinson's attitude toward religion is contradictory. On the one hand, in presenting her spiritual insights and experiences, Christian and biblical symbols are "almost exclusively" relied on by her; on the other hand, several notions which reveal the divine mystery are nevertheless rejected by her.⁹¹⁰ For example, people not only know the plans of God, the essential nature, and person; they also know that some people are saved while others are damned.⁹¹¹ Prayers of every person can be heard by God, and He cares; at the same time, He is open to people whenever they knock.⁹¹² Since people are involved in original sin, they should therefore fully understand that through Crucifixion and Resurrection, God redeems their sinful souls; finally, afterlife is assured to souls whether they go to heaven or hell.⁹¹³

Though her consistent attitude is: "Of Paradise' existence / All we know / Is the uncertain certainty —" (J1411/Fr1421), Jane Donahue Eberwein points out that Dickinson is very curious about the joys of heaven because it is mentioned 143 times in her poems and 123 times in her letters; whereas the imagery of hell has only eleven references in the poems and none appears in the letters.⁹¹⁴ As a matter of fact, the imagery Dickinson chose to describe her expected heaven not only presents divinity, joy, and exquisiteness, but also reveals self-pity, solitude, and disappointment. If heaven is a well-furnished house which brings every soul a feeling of being at home, it is still not the home that exists in Dickinson's imagination and expectation.

In "The feet of people walking home" (J7/Fr16), Dickinson first depicts the arduous but joyful process of souls going back "home" according to her imagination; she then expresses disappointment based on her own situation:

⁹⁰⁹ Stonum, "Background" 57.

⁹¹⁰ Glenn Hughes, *A More Beautiful Question: The Spiritual in Poetry and Art* (Missouri: U of Missouri, 2011) 72.

⁹¹¹ Hughes, *A More Beautiful Question* 72.

⁹¹² Hughes, *A More Beautiful Question* 72.

⁹¹³ Hughes, *A More Beautiful Question* 72.

⁹¹⁴ Jane Donahue Eberwein, "'Earth's Confiding Time': Childhood Trust and Christian Nurture," *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 17.1 (2008): 1-24, at 10, *Project MUSE*, 30 November 2016.

The feet of people walking home
With gayer sandals go –
The crocus – till she rises
The Vassal of the snow –
The lips at Hallelujah
Long years of practice bore
Till bye and bye these Bargemen
Walked singing on the shore.

Pearls are the Diver's farthings
Extorted from the Sea –
Pinions – the Seraph's wagon
Pedestrian once – as we –

Night is the morning's Canvas
Larceny – legacy –
Death, but our rapt attention
To Immortality.

My figures fail to tell me
How far the Village lies –
Whose peasants are the Angels –
Whose Cantons dot the skies –
My Classics veil their faces –
My faith that Dark adores –
Which from its solemn abbeys
Such resurrection pours.

Several images contribute to the contrast between arduousness and joy. To begin, except for the element of poetic diction, “the feet” are emphasized by their leading position in the first line. Dickinson pays attention especially on this “lower part of the body”; for example, in “After great pain, a formal feeling comes –” (J341/Fr372) death first reached head (“The Nerves sit ceremonious, like Toombs –”) which belongs to the upper part of the body, then the middle part (“The stiff Heart questions was it He”), and finally “The Feet, mechanical, go round –.”⁹¹⁵

The feet symbolize “both the quick and the dead,” for in the poem “they move but walk aimlessly,” and whether in the air or on the ground, they only “go round in

⁹¹⁵ Carlos Daghlian, “Re-Visions: New Voices – New Perspectives on Dickinson's Poetry – Rescuing ‘After great pain’ for the Portuguese Language Reader,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 6.2 (1997): 158-165, at 161, *Project MUSE*, 2 December 2016.

circles.”⁹¹⁶ Nonetheless “the feet of people” have a tangible destination, which is “home,” or say, heaven. Though the image of “walking” to some degree indicates the hardship along the journey, the metaphor “The crocus – till she rises / The Vassal of the snow” again alludes to the truth that before resurrection⁹¹⁷ there must be an ordeal. The lifelong practice of “Hallelujahs” reveals religiosity; “the feet” are in “gayer sandals” and they finally reach the “shore” where they continue praising God. Moreover, using synecdoche such as “gayer sandals” and “the lips” emphasizes the piety of the saved.

Life likens to a journey; at the end of the journey people arrive at “home.” It seems reasonable and consolatory; nevertheless, the following stanzas gradually reveal the poet’s hesitation, doubt, and disappointment to the logical answer. Dickinson uses six groups of images to express her contradictory emotions; they are pearls and farthings, diver and extortion, pinions and wagon, seraph and pedestrian, night and morning, and death and immortality. The six groups of images represent preciousness and cheapness, hardworking and misdoing, lightness and heaviness, divinity and humanity, darkness and brightness, and termination and eternity. These contradictions form fragments of thought which are interwoven by beautiful expectation and uncharitable reality. After presenting these ironic metaphors, Dickinson directly states that the reason for such “ignorance” is caused by the failed “figures” she once trusted and “classics” she read.

In another poem, she appeals for an “affidavit,” otherwise she would not able to know “Whether Heaven is Heaven or not” and

Of that specific Spot
Not only must confirm us
That it is not for us
But that it would affront us
To dwell in such a place – (J1408/Fr1435)

Dickinson still needs to be reassured that there is such a place or that there is a “specific spot” that makes her feel at home. In “I’ve known a Heaven, like a Tent” (J243/Fr257): Though it cannot be decided whether “a Heaven” indicates the Heaven, if it is the

⁹¹⁶ Daghlian 161.

⁹¹⁷ The figurative meaning of crocus is “symbol of spring; sign of the resurrection.” See “Emily Dickinson Lexicon.”

“home” that saves good people, it is described as a “portable home,” a “temporary shelter,”⁹¹⁸ or even a “circus tent”⁹¹⁹ which has different kinds of intriguing performances. However, it disappears suddenly and desolation is the only thing left. The image of a tent reveals the unrealistic side of the “home” that cannot persuade the poet to dwell in, even though it is dazzling and attractive.

As a matter of fact, Dickinson had imagined the experience of going to Heaven. In “I went to Heaven –,” her speaker described the space of the afterlife as if she/he was a travel writer or literary tourist.⁹²⁰

I went to Heaven –
'Twas a small Town –
Lit – with a Ruby –
Lathed – with Down –

Stiller – than the fields
At the full Dew –
Beautiful – as Pictures –
No Man drew.
People – like the Moth –
Of Mechlin – frames –
Duties – of Gossamer –
And Eider - names –
Almost – contented –
I – could be –
'Mong such unique
Society –

Clearly, the depiction of the travel experience is insufficient through the length of lines, and the perfect rhyme (“Town” and “Down,” “frames” and “names”) and eye rhyme (“Dew” and “drew”) adds insouciance to the tone. Such a condensed description contrasts with other traditional and stereotypical ways of describing Heaven. Instead of feeling consolatory upon the return “home” and comfortable over dwelling in it, the speaker declares that she/he only “went” to it and then simply recalls what she/he saw in a repeated structure. Heaven is so small that only one ruby can illuminate it; the further depiction seems even perfunctory (“Stiller – than the fields / At the full Dew – /

⁹¹⁸ “Emily Dickinson Lexicon.”

⁹¹⁹ Preest 76.

⁹²⁰ Páraic Finnerty, “‘If fame belonged to me, I could not escape her’: Dickinson and the Poetics of Celebrity,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 26.2 (2017): 25-50, at 45, *Project MUSE*, 2 January 2018.

Beautiful – as Pictures – / No Man drew”).

One noticeable feature of the heaven is lightness, and Dickinson uses various images such as down, mechlin, gossamer, and eider to present it; at the same time, the images are too monotonous to be appealing. What is more, people in heaven are described as “moth[s]” which contains two levels of meanings: On the one hand, resembling butterflies but flying mostly at night, moths are attracted by lights and can die because of lights; on the other hand, the figurative meaning suggests slowness in experiencing sounds and sights, as well as idleness.⁹²¹ “Insubstantial” and “undefined” are the major impressions of the people and their duties, so that the speaker loses interest in describing it and ends the report by saying, “Almost – contented – / I – could be – / ’Mong such unique / Society –.”⁹²² An ironic tone predominates in the poem, and again the poet expresses her disappointment because even if there is such a home, it still cannot fulfill her expectation or even cannot match the uniqueness. Moreover, using synonyms and repeated sentence structures not only reinforces the insipidity of the “small town”; it also sharply contrasts with the idea that heaven is like a well-furnished house, and regardless of the possibility to make her feeling like being at home.

To sum up, heaven seems not a well-furnished house which brings every soul a feeling of being at home. On the one hand, the poet separates herself from the other saved people who trust their destiny and destination. She attributes her suspicion and distrust to external factors such as her figures or classics. In other words, she thinks that she is not educated in that “right,” traditional way. On the other hand, she depicts a small, simple heaven with the imagery of lightness, boringness, and senselessness to show her reader that the “unique society” may not be what they expect; for the poet, heaven is heaven and it is not home.

6.3.3 As a Stranger Outside Doors

Doors and windows are made for daily use, decoration, ventilation, and symmetry.⁹²³ For Dickinson, an isolated life built a close relationship between her and these architectural features. Fuss claims that the most reversible and complex image in

⁹²¹ “Emily Dickinson Lexicon.”

⁹²² Preest 126.

⁹²³ Bayley 62.

the poet's letters and poems is the door; it contains rich metaphorical meanings such as loneliness, loss, and death.⁹²⁴ Alternatively, it could mean memory, secrecy, and safety, but most importantly, it represents the possibility of crossing over or passing through.⁹²⁵ Bayley also claims that the imagery of doors and windows, or say, exits and entrances often appears in the poet's oeuvre;⁹²⁶ separation, inside and out, and what can be seen and what can only be imagined⁹²⁷ offer imagery represented by a door. Therefore, being concretely visualized, doors offer a tenuous border between the human and the divine, the finite and the infinite, and the mortal and the immortal.⁹²⁸

There is also an association between doors and the theme of departure, a frequent theme in Dickinson's correspondence; the poet keeps describing a scene in her letters in which she races to a window or door in order to catch a final sight of loved ones who leave her.⁹²⁹ For instance, in a letter she wrote to Susan when she was twenty-three, she fully expressed her love and desperation:

I ran to the door, dear Susie – I ran out in the rain, with nothing but my slippers on, I called “Susie, Susie,” but you didn’t look at me; then I ran to the dining room widow and rapped with all my might upon the pane, but you rode right on and never heeded me. (L102)

On the one hand, it is helpless that Susan did not notice her regardless of how hard the poet tried to draw her attention; on the other hand, she seemed trapped in the house and could not escape from it. Fixed punctuations are the description for doors and windows which settle in the solid surface of walls; people can barricade themselves in by closing a door and at the same time, lines of division can be simply drawn.⁹³⁰

Nevertheless, in the following poem the speaker is confident and contented, and has fully prepared for a journey:

I sing to use the Waiting
My Bonnet but to tie
And shut the Door unto my House
No more to do have I

⁹²⁴ Fuss 15.

⁹²⁵ Fuss 15.

⁹²⁶ Bayley 23.

⁹²⁷ Bayley 62.

⁹²⁸ Fuss 15.

⁹²⁹ Fuss 15.

⁹³⁰ Bayley 62.

Till His best step approaching
We journey to the Day
And tell each other how We sung
To keep the Dark away. (J850/Fr955)

In her second letter to Higginson, the poet confessed, “I had a terror – since September – I could tell to none – and so I sing, as the Boy does by the Burying Ground – because I am afraid” (L261). In another letter, she claims that if she is scoffed by the whole United States, her business is still “to sing” (L269). In the first stanza of this poem, the speaker sings “to use the waiting,” and it also reveals her delightful mood; in the second stanza, singing becomes a sort of encouragement to “keep the Dark away.” The appointment between the speaker and her companion evokes the image of a lover or a wooer, as if the speaker journeys with death (“Till His best step approaching”) to immortality (“journey to the Day”). Nonetheless, the speaker indicates that she shuts the door of her house. “No more to do have I” not only indicates that the speaker is completely prepared for the journey; it also reveals her resolution to leave the house and begin the journey. The door, which separates the interior and exterior, is first open to welcome the journey and then shut to bid farewell to her old, familiar life; it represents a finishing line as well as a beginning line.

Fuss states that the poet may treat home as her favorite spiritual locale such as immortality, eternity, paradise, or Eden; she may also treat it simply as the actual house on Pleasant Street where she kept many of her best memories, and where she longed to return in later years.⁹³¹ Fuss further claims that whether home represents a spiritual locale or an accrual house, the speaker’s dilemma is revealed by the terror of facing an unknown presence hidden behind a familiar barrier.⁹³² Zapedowska suggests that there is no need to overestimate the role of the imagery of household and home in Dickinson’s poetry because severe ambiguities are involved in her treatment of such imagery.⁹³³ Except for her adoration, affection, and nostalgia for the Pleasant Street house, the Homestead seemed to bring her suffering over the emotional strain of the

⁹³¹ Fuss 16.

⁹³² Fuss 16.

⁹³³ Zapedowska 83-4.

“war” with the Evergreens.⁹³⁴ This left her with the image of an austere father whom she treated as a dominant figure even after his death.⁹³⁵ Therefore, even if the poet describes her own home, she observes it from a distance and presents it as a place where everyone is absent or where her speaker cannot enter.⁹³⁶

For example, in “I Years had been from Home” (J609/Fr440), such a sense of distance and strangeness is completely revealed:

I Years had been from Home
And now before the Door
I dared not enter, lest a Face
I never saw before

Stare stolid into mine
And ask my Business there –
“My Business but a Life I left
Was such remaining there?”

I leaned upon the Awe –
I lingered with Before –
The Second like an Ocean rolled
And broke against my ear –

I laughed a crumbling Laugh
That I could fear a Door
Who Consternation compassed
And never winced before-

I fitted to the Latch
My hand, with trembling care
Lest back the awful Door should spring
And leave me in the Floor –

Then moved my Fingers off
And cautiously as Glass
And held my ears, and like a Thief
Fled gasping from the House –

As Barbara Mossberg claims, returning home is a nightmare for the speaker and the

⁹³⁴ Zapedowska 84.

⁹³⁵ Zapedowska 84.

⁹³⁶ Zapedowska 84.

gasp is likely from suffocation.⁹³⁷ The nightmarish experience is due to the fear that there may be a stranger hiding behind the door.⁹³⁸ Marianne Noble points out that except for the maternal all, Dickinson simply forbids herself to experience the delight of attachment with other things.⁹³⁹ She often expresses an intense longing for love; however, it is consistently unavailable, off-limits, or threatening once it is achieved.⁹⁴⁰

Whether this poem is based on the image of the Pleasant Street house or the poet's favorite spiritual locale, the struggle between longing and fear is noticeable. It was "years" but the speaker still missed the home and in fact, she/he put the yearning into practice – she/he was now standing in front of the door. The nerves of the speaker were both tensional and fragile: On the one hand, she/he had to control her excitement and nervousness; on the other hand, rather than reluctance, she/he "dared not enter" because she/he was afraid of any strangeness from that house where she/he had yearned to return to for a long time. Nonetheless, what happened in the second stanza dispels the speaker's misgivings and brings her/him a shock: There were no strange faces behind the door; however, her/his family inside seemed indifferent rather than welcoming. Until the speaker asked whether her/his old life still remained in that house, she/he finally realized that after so many years, she/he had already become a stranger.

The rest of the poem is filled with images of trepidation. To begin, the speaker was trapped between the shock and the memory of the old life; nevertheless, once she/he realized the dilemma, it is heartbreakingly as the poet visually and auditorily describes – "like an Ocean rolled / And broke against my ear." The house then was depicted as a bomb that the speaker never thought could be unnerving. The last two stanzas vividly depict how she/he "dismantled the bomb" and safely escaped from it. From the description of a series of careful movements ("fitted," "with trembling care," "moved my Fingers off," "cautiously as Glass," "held my ears," "like a Thief," "Fled gasping"), the door is revealed as an irascible beast ("the awful Door should spring /

⁹³⁷ Barbara Mossberg, "Through the Transatlantic Lens of 'my George Eliot' and Percy Bysshe Shelley: Emily Dickinson's Expatriate Soul in postcards from the Edge," *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 21.2 (2012): 59-79, at 69, *Project MUSE*, 15 January 2018.

⁹³⁸ Zapedowska 85.

⁹³⁹ Marianne Noble, "Writing Life: Suffering as a Poetic Strategy of Emily Dickinson," *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 21.2 (2012):106-8, at 106, *Project MUSE*, 15 January 2018.

⁹⁴⁰ Noble 106.

And leave me in the Floor") which may humiliate or hurt the speaker again. For the poet, the door is a fuse; the speaker ignited it and quenched it before its explosion. Ostensibly, it is a woeful story of how a homesick person is rejected by home; in fact, instead of "sadness" or "collapsed," the word "Awe" reveals disenchantment and disillusionment; thus, the speaker fled the house as if she/he finally realized that the emotional entanglement is between her/him and the door, rather than life or someone behind it.

In "A Door just opened on a street –" (J953/Fr914), the speaker even dares not walk into it and inquire:

A Door just opened on a street –
I – lost – was passing by –
An instant's Width if Warmth disclosed –
And Wealth – and Company.

The Door as instant shut – And I –
I – lost – was passing by –
Lost doubly – but by contrast – most –
Informing – misery –

Preest claims that the speaker suffered a double loss: The first one is an unspecified loss; the second is when she/he passed the only open door on the street and saw through an instant "Width" that there might be "Warmth," "Wealth," and "Company" within. Nevertheless, the door was shut instantly without her determining what really behind the door.⁹⁴¹ Indeed, misery is revealed not only by the contrast between a wandering life and a life in peace and contentment; it is also revealed by means of a ruthless, "instant shut" in front of the speaker. This poem expresses the misfortune of homelessness; yet, if something behind the door represents the poet's favorite spiritual locale, several images echo her search for immortality. The speaker was lost and wandering on a street; the image of a door with an "instant's Width" resembles the image of the "siren Alps" which "neglect their Curtains" in an odd afternoon, and the "Warmth," "Wealth," and "Company" inside the door resembles the lure of "Italy." The speaker cannot get rid of a failed ending; the "unavailability of a home as the space of happy intimacy"⁹⁴² is represented by the instantly shut door.

⁹⁴¹ Preest 310.

⁹⁴² Zapedowska 85.

Perhaps possibility is the only house in which Dickinson is willing and able to dwell. There are numerous windows and doors, but the poet is not afraid of being refused or shut outside. Behind the doors of her unavailable home, there is old life, memory, and something she might long for; nonetheless, through her description, neither of them can be obtained by simply opening doors. As a thin line, the doors could be the stone arch in *Expulsion* which divides Eden and the earthly world; it could be a fuse or veil that can be easily lighted or simply seductive; or it could only be an actual door that the poet persuades herself to open. Toward the image of doors, the poet's complicated emotions for home are vividly revealed.

In short, this chapter explored how Dickinson's images of traveling connect with the imagery of house/home. The poet clearly does not use the house/home image for any domestic purpose; rather, it is used to present a magical journey and to reveal the fallacy that haven is as a well decorated house in which souls can comfortably dwell. Through her door image, she exposes consistently failed experiences and endings of returning home or entering doors. For Dickinson, whether in her spiritual world or the reality, her home and house play an important role in both her life and career. For a recluse, it is her final destination; for a poet, it is a place where all kinds of possibilities can be experienced through poetic creation.

7. Conclusion

In her paper “1860: Emily Dickinson’s Year at Sea,” Cristanne Miller points out that those foreign words and names as well as metaphors of travel in Dickinson’s poetry are used to build a contrast between the sense of home and foreignness.⁹⁴³ Moreover, as she puts it, “[...] travel can be traumatic or the occasion for joy, depending on the state of the speaker, and one can be as ‘foreign’ at home as abroad.”⁹⁴⁴ Indeed, Dickinson’s images of traveling present more to her reader: On the one hand, as a nineteenth-century woman and a recluse, it is incredible that she would extend her knowledge beyond the boundaries of gender and identity; on the other hand, because of her gender and identity, she seems to have more liberty and possibility to travel in her imaginative world.

⁹⁴³ Strickland 12.

⁹⁴⁴ Strickland 12.

As with many individuals, Dickinson's weltanschauung was the result of her upbringing in a minister's home, as well as her education and training. Those elements influenced her emotional, intellectual and spiritual development as she grew in her skills as a writer. She was influenced by events such as the Civil War and expanding industrialism including new innovations in train travel. She was also influenced by the images which were prevalent at that time in the form of paintings. Her Protestant upbringing helped form the core of her interpretation of the journey toward an eternal life in heaven and her understanding of the dire consequences for not following a straight and narrow path. Dickinson's legacy rests in her vivid visual imagery created through her poetry and prose.

In general, this dissertation attempted to explore colorful images of traveling in Dickinson's poetry. By presenting those images, the paper on the one hand, revealed travel as a theme of Dickinson's poetry; on the other hand, it interpreted the images of traveling in combination with the poet's famous subjects of death, immortality, sublime, and circumference. In order to display a full-scale background and to highlight her special life experience, chapter one first introduced the poet as a lucky girl who had a colorful childhood, a lucky woman who lived an upper class's life and received well education, and a lucky poet who was influenced by various cultural and literary movements, and was instructed by great mentors. After a brief introduction to travel history and writing of Dickinson's time, fictional travel writing was introduced as a contrast to nonfictional travel writing, and its characteristics, such as fully using ones intuition and five senses, were also introduced in order to present that Dickinson possessed these characteristics in her creation, too.

The poet lived in an age that railroads had been well developed and people had more opportunities to travel in and out of the country. It is hard for the reader to imagine how her life as a recluse was connected with traveling; nonetheless, it is easy to understand that various reading materials offered her chances to gain more different experiences than those who actually traveled in real world. Due to Dickinson's family background, not only could she be influenced by family members and friends who were fond of books and knowledge as her; she could also be simply immersed in her family

library. Various reading materials were her stable foundation for seeing and knowing the world around her and far away from her; she therefore had a special bond with books as she presented in “A precious – mouldering pleasure – ‘tis –,” “Unto my Books – so good to turn –,” and “There is no Frigate like a Book.”

Additionally, being influenced by Romanticism and Transcendentalism, the poet believed in her intuition and valued her individuality. Several poems revealed her thinking on the relationship between brain/mind and heart, such as “The Life we have is very great,” “The Brain – is wider than the Sky –,” “The Heart is the Capital of the Mind –,” and “I never saw a Moor –.” From different comparisons and contrasts, the poet presented the power of oneself which seemed omnipotent if one realized it. Owning not only the vehicle (various reading materials), but also the conviction (believing in herself), Dickinson seemed to be a fully prepared traveler who was able to travel anywhere in the world.

As a matter of fact, many scholars had noticed Dickinson’s travel phenomenon. Some claimed that the poet traveled abroad because her works had been internationally disseminated after her death; some pointed out that the biography of great explorers such as Christopher Columbus inspired the poet; some presented the poet’s thinking on the relationship of Europe and America; and some revealed the poet’s interests on railroads and the Orient. All of these ideas reached an agreement that the poet traveled imaginatively; nevertheless, few of them delivered a specific analysis to her images of traveling.

From those selected poems of this paper, it is easy to see that Dickinson’s images of traveling are not a rare phenomenon. More importantly, these images functioned in pursuing the poet’s favorite subject, such as immortality. Her identity of being a female writer is one basic condition which is important for understanding her images of traveling. Many examples in female travel history prove that travel can offer women a means to presuppose a different persona, to redefine themselves, and to become someone who disappeared from their domestic sphere.⁹⁴⁵ In other words, female travel

⁹⁴⁵ Bassnett 234.

writing seems to overstep the boundaries of any genres or purposes; even their autobiographies and fictions can be seen as travel stories because they practice spatiality by mapping the self as well as making sense of experience; at the same time, they present a way for examining how they think of their position and mobility in the world.⁹⁴⁶ To Dickinson, her images of traveling not only revealed her unique identity among those female writers; more importantly, they also revealed her quest to her ultimate, favorite question such as immortality which was pursued in her complete writing career.

Due to various undeniable difficulties in understanding Dickinson's poems and her particular perception of poetry, a better way to move closer to the beauty of her works might not be seeking a solution or conclusion for those poetic moments, but presenting or revealing interesting images in her verses. It is meanwhile a better way to feel the fluid, dynamic power, as well as her strong emotion in her creation without any interruption and discontinuity. After all, it was the poet herself who defined poetry toward her extreme physical experience. It is generally known that Dickinson's poems never lack of images. Not only was she called an innovative pre-modernist poet among the founders of American poetry; her compressed, irregular poems also corresponded to principles of Imagism. Through her unique choice of images, the reader is able to experience different scenes in her poetry visually, auditorily, thermally, olfactorily, and tactilely.

Dickinson practiced rules of Imagism in many ways. For example, using exact words, choosing subjects freely, creating new rhythms, and good concentration can also characterize her poetry. One might question ambiguity in her poetry because it seems contradictory to the hard and clear principle of Imagism. In fact, for her, words not only equated with symbols; they also expressed her thought by their selection and arrangement. She insisted that the words she chose were the exact choice and way she attempted to reveal her thought. Therefore, based on this perspective, the poet clearly knew her choice of words and images. Since the principles of Imagism are consulted in

⁹⁴⁶ Roberson 215.

this dissertation, different forms of images were used as analytical materials, for example, paintings.

It seems unusual to compare two different art forms such as paintings and poems; nonetheless, it is a fact that the changed ideology of the mid-nineteenth century America brought changes and possibilities to art and literature. The distinctly American Romanticism not only separated itself from the European Romantic Movement; it also evoked interest and responsibility in art and literary world. Consequently, both artists and writers, such as the landscapists of the Hudson River School and transcendentalists, intended to seek and portray the unique beauty of American landscape. Therefore, chapter two built a connection between paintings and poems in order to present a diverse background for discussing the colorful images in Dickinson's voyage poems.

It is generally known that Dickinson herself was fond of drawing; Judith Farr provides different kinds of evidence to prove that the poet had been influenced by one of the Hudson River School artists, Thomas Cole. Nonetheless, though Dickinson's voyage poems show that she might be influenced by some images of Cole's *The Voyage of Life*, she had her own understanding on the final destination of life journey. Her voyage poems mainly focused on her favorite subject – immortality – the flood subject. On the one hand, if the reader takes the verb meaning of the word "flood," it emphasizes a process that the emotion overwhelmed the poet when she thought of immortality. Therefore, the first part of chapter two discussed Dickinson's two passionate poems, "On this wondrous sea" and "Wild Nights – Wild Nights!" in order to present the poet's passion and resolution toward images of traveling.

On the other hand, due to her frequent description of a boat image, the second part of chapter two presented the voyage of Dickinson's boat in comparison with, for example, Cole, Melville, Whitman, and Dana's boat images. Based on a chronological sequence, poems such as "Adrift! A little boat adrift," "Whether my bark went down at sea –," "Exultation is the going," "Twas such a little – little boat," "Down Time's quaint stream," and "It tossed – and tossed –" were discussed to display a relatively complete process of the poet's pursue of immortality through voyage, and how her consciousness changed during the pursuit. Based on the comparison, not only was

Dickinson's unique figurative device presented; her contradictory expectation toward the final destination, or say, immortality was also revealed. The poet started to create voyage images in her early life. Some images contain her love and passion; while some connote her early suspicion on whether mortals are able to reach the final destination.

As many nineteenth-century travel writers, Dickinson also extended her travel route to the sky. Her "A little Road – not made of Man –" continued the discussion of the final destination. It described a route in the sky which was not made for the speaker, and it revealed the poet's distrust of arriving at the final destination. Unlike other travel writers who placed their dream of sky travel on birds, she focused less on them but more on sunsets. Likening sunsets to the sea, Dickinson presented her understanding of the sublime and circumference toward the beautiful scenery. Both Edmund Burke and American's sublime theories seemed to be practiced in Dickinson's poems. Whether the poet's sublime was physiological or Americanized, they are not contradictory to one another when reading her poems. In fact, in her sky travel poems, one mode interacts with the other, and both of them enrich the reading of the images of traveling. Poems such as "Where Ships of Purple – gently toss," "This – is the land – the Sunset washes," and "A Sloop of Amber slips away" showed that the poet's sublime is created by a combination of dark color, astonishment, and unconditioned self-confidence, rather than mere practice of either European or American sublime theories.

Her business of circumference was a special focus as well. Poems such as "'Red Sea,' indeed! Talk not to me" and "As if some little Arctic flower" presented the poet's understanding and explanation on circumference. She expressed her love and philosophical thinking toward the description of the picturesque sunset and something that she depicted as aurora borealis. Though descriptive language did not appear in her condensed form, the images she chose to express her concept of circumference evoke the reader's resonance on philosophical thinking of nature and universe. Her "sky travel" poems in chapter three presented another picturesque celestial sea; moreover, those images of traveling revealed the poet's affection of celestial phenomena.

As a matter of fact, Dickinson did write of her real travel experience in a few letters. For example, she recorded one of her train travel experiences in an 1851 letter after her sister and her returned home from Boston for visiting their brother. This piece of writing contains many travel writing's elements, and Dickinson portrayed a vivid scene in a freight car with two interesting protagonists and especially with their narration. It revealed a fact that even a recluse as Dickinson could have been caught up in the flux of mobility. Indeed, due to her father's contribution to the Amherst railroad project, Dickinson was proud to witness such a significant innovation and such proudness is also presented in her letters as well as one of her famous poems, "I like to see it lap the Miles –."

Nonetheless, such a positive reaction is rare in her journey poems. Dickinson's imaginative journey is in fact filled with hardship and danger. Except for suspicion and hesitation, torment, misery, and desperation are also acquaintances along the journey because the poet once again focused on the final destination, or say, immortality. Generally, her ultimate thinking was on how to face the "magic perpendiculars" as she mentioned in her poem, "The Road was lit with Moon and star" in chapter four. The "magic perpendiculars" symbolizes something with both seductive and fatal qualities, and it implies that mortals have to passively give up their life in order to become immortal. To some degree, Dickinson's personal philosophy of religion could explain why she was fascinated by immortality as it often appeared in different themes in her poetry. Her writing indicated a duality of "magic perpendiculars." Though she was fascinated with the magic part, her imagery of journey was not as exultant and ecstatic as her vision of voyage; at the same time, it was not as positive and full of curiosity as her imagery of railroad travel. In contrast to Whitman's "Song of the Open Road," one of the most representative journeys in American travel literature, her speaker's journey seemed to be doomed.

It is easy to find that her road image was either portrayed as a dangerous route, or defined as a passage which was not built for every person, as she described in "Through lane it lay – through bramble –" and "The Road to Paradise is plain." Her travelers were missing or lost on their journey, or even rejected by their final destination when they

arrived, as she depicted in “‘Twas the old – road – through pain,” “Trudging to Eden, looking backward,” and “Our journey had advanced –.” It seems that the poet continued her suspicious attitude toward whether there was a final destination for every person, as well as whether every person was able to reach the final destination.

As a matter of fact, Dickinson had a solution for reaching the final destination. She envied Elijah’s dramatic ascension into heaven in a chariot of fire, rather than the experience of the routine tunneling of the grave. Therefore, she created images such as carriage and coachman to present her ideal way of reaching immortality. Especially in her “Because I could not stop for Death –,” “It was a quiet way –,” and “Tie the Strings to my Life, My Lord,” she envisioned death as a protective wooer who kindly and tenderly led her to the final destination. She might create such a figure to soothe the fear when she had to face death. After all, death is the only way for mortals to be immortal. Though her way of reaching immortality seemed consolatory, clearly, Dickinson expressed her suspicion and terror on the traditional way to reach immortality in her journey poems.

Another interesting phenomenon is that Dickinson was fond of using various toponyms to associate things which seemed impossible to be connected, and she was freely wandering through different scenes or places she created. The toponyms cover areas such as Europe, the Middle East, North America, Africa, Central America, Eurasia, Asia, South America, Austronesia and the North Pole, and even the solar system. These toponyms not only represent the poet’s special way of depicting her thinking; they also function as a kind of code that she used to describe her own emotions and views. Concerning travel, four categories of toponyms in chapter five need to be stressed: They are countries and regions in “Our lives are Swiss –” and “The lonesome for they know not What –”; cities and towns in “Pigmy seraphs – gone astray –”; seas, rivers and islands in “Bereaved of all, I went abroad”; and finally, the mixture of toponyms in “I cross till I am weary” and “I did not reach Thee.” Through these categories, it is easy to find that Dickinson continued using different toponyms to describe the difficult journey to immortality and express her disappointment.

Those toponyms not only provide the poet opportunities to specify the hardship of the journey; they also visually display these difficulties. Therefore, whether the poems are conducted by captivity, exile, death, or obstruction, Dickinson's speaker is imprisoned, expatriated, haunted, and obstructed as the poet intends to present to her reader. The combination of toponyms and images of traveling revealed the poet's special use of spatial imagination. Moreover, this characteristic of her poetry is considered as one of the features of Japanese Haiku. Scholars have also noticed the connection between Dickinson's poems and Haiku, though there are still differences. In "Many cross the Rhine," "With thee, in the Desert," "Nor Mountain hinder Me," and "Least Rivers – docile to some sea," the connection was revealed. Firstly, kireji in Haiku is the equivalence of dashes in Dickinson's poems; secondly, the poet is preoccupied with space which is also considered as an important feature of Haiku – space is more important than time. Therefore, in those four condensed poems, the images of Rhine, desert, mountain, river, and sea occupy extended space to present the poet's thinking and emotions. Dickinson could express her imagination of a foreign life, her resolution toward her target, and her confession and deep love to her "God" through these toponyms.

On exploring how Dickinson's images of traveling connected with the imagery of house/home in chapter six, poems such as "I started Early – Took my Dog –," "The feet of people walking home," "I went to Heaven –," "I Years had been from Home," and "A Door just opened on a street –" offered clues. Due to her personal background, it is easy to conclude that the home area was the only destination in her real life. She was fond of the home on Pleasant Street, but she had a special bond with the Homestead. It was the Homestead that helped the poet to live a reclusive life and to fulfill her career as a poet. Not only did it provide a shelter which enabled the poet to remain largely unseen; it also provided anecdotes which allow readers to experience her uncommon, unorthodox, and even whimsical lifestyle.

The poet clearly did not use the house/home image for any domestic purpose; rather, it was used to present a magical journey and to reveal the fallacy that heaven is as a well decorated house in which souls can comfortably dwell. Through her door

image, she exposed consistently failed experiences and endings of returning home or entering doors. The house/home image once again revealed the poet's ironic, negative feelings toward the final destination, or say, immortality. For Dickinson, whether in her spiritual world or the reality, her home and house played an important role in both her life and career. For a recluse, it was her final destination; for a poet, it was a place where all kinds of possibilities could be experienced through poetic creation.

Clearly, Dickinson knew, as she once wrote, "One Life of so much Consequence!" (J270/Fr248); nevertheless, for this life, she was still willing to pay "[her] Soul's entire income – / In ceaseless – salary –." Whether the "*Pearl*" indicates her poetry vocation, her beloved sister-in-law, or something special and important in her life,⁹⁴⁷ she declared that she "would instant dive – / Although – [she] *knew* – to *take* it – / Would *cost* [her] – just *a life*!" She knew that there was and would be a lot of hardship in the life she chose; yet she still persisted in believing that "*Monarchs* – are *perceptible* – / Far down the dustiest Road!" In contrast to her reclusive life, her images of traveling present her passion, thinking, as well as concern on her ultimate question of immortality. To reclusive Dickinson, traveling wherever she wants is a possibility; to poetic Dickinson, "To shut our eyes is Travel."

⁹⁴⁷ Preest 85.

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