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*Meaning in Dickinson's Manuscripts:  
Intending the Unintentional*

In her article, "The Emily Dickinson Wars," Betsy Erkkila neatly connects nineteenth-century battles between Dickinson's editors to late twentieth-century sparring over the most appropriate presentation of the poet's manuscript materials. Erkkila distinguishes between two positions. The first is one of "pure intentionality originating in the author as a figure of mind and genius" (21) exemplified by a critic such as Susan Howe. From this position the only way by which the reader should approach Dickinson's texts is through a visual response to the manuscript material. The second position is that of Dickinson's "male editors" (11) who hold to the need to edit the poems on behalf of the reader (albeit to varying degrees and in a range of editions). Erkkila questions the first stance – held by critics such as Howe, McGann and Smith – on the grounds that it re-enacts Dickinson's own position while reifying Dickinson's intentions and being deeply impractical for the ordinary reader. With deliberate provocation she asks:

If we are going to follow Dickinson's "intentions" exactly, wouldn't a further logic be that we not "edit" Dickinson's work for publication at all, in fact, that we put her manuscripts back into the box where she left them and not read them at all. (26)

Certainly the question of how far to take "pure intentionality" is debatable. Is it reasonable to respond to the poet's manuscripts through a facsimile edition, for example? Should such facsimile material also be transcribed? Or is the only true response to that based on seeing the original, unique, materials? Should this ap-

proach be to the state and order in which they were left by the poet, or to a re-constructed order of manuscript materials? The questions proliferate.<sup>1</sup>

The debate about intentions in relation to Dickinson's manuscripts is focused very specifically upon the act of publication and whether or not it was intended by this poet. Martha Nell Smith clearly voices one position:

Writing in and from this place Emerson christened "the Portfolio," Dickinson developed a poetics in very different ways from her peers who wrote with the printing press and with pleasing editors, reviewers, and the nineteenth-century American consumer in mind. (*Rowing in Eden* 61)

The privileging of the manuscript by the author is here interpreted as a position of female resistance and independence from the forces of print culture or reception. On the other side of the debate (as Erkkila presents it) there stands the editor R.W. Franklin who sees his editorial role as "honoring the interests of history over her reticence" (Franklin 27). He states: "An editor's task therefore is to turn to her manuscripts and against criteria that were never explicitly hers prepare texts for the public" (Franklin 27). Franklin sees the complexities of his position, but his "never *explicitly* hers" (my italics) suggests a reading of the manuscripts by which they exist as part of a process not brought to completion by the poet herself (and therefore relying upon editorial decision-making to achieve completion).

The problem with these two positions is that they both implicitly rely upon the interpretation of an unverifiable authorial intention.<sup>2</sup> Those who choose to edit Dickinson implicitly believe that they are doing service to the poet by taking the creative process one stage further than she was able to take it. Those who deny this activity do so on the grounds that the poet consciously resisted the medium and culture of print and was actively asserting a visual and spatial reading of the manuscript page.

A second critic who, like Erkkila, has questioned the recent dominance of manuscript-based approaches, is Domhnall Mitchell. He takes as his focus:

the extent to which levels of meaning are or are not lost for particular poems when they are transposed from the author's handwritten originals to printed translations. ("Revising the Script" 703)

Mitchell questions the extent to which we can be involved in "respecting Dickinson's wishes" (719) primarily on the grounds that those elements supposed to be

intended by the poet in the manuscript may not be. He asks: "Where are we to stop when it comes to judging what is deliberate?" (708). Even Mitchell, though, repeatedly assumes that an argument on behalf of manuscript analysis must depend upon meaning in the manuscripts being provable as "intended" by Dickinson.

A third, more nuanced response, is articulated by Sharon Cameron in her illuminating study *Choosing not to Choose: Dickinson's Fascicles*. She asks directly:

Why didn't Dickinson publish? There are at least three ways of answering that question: she couldn't publish. She chose not to. Or she couldn't choose (52).

Cameron's assessment of Dickinson as a poet for whom "the apparent need to choose is countered by the refusal to choose" (21) defines her as a poet in a suspended state of willful uncertainty for whom a lack of clear authorial intention amounts to a deliberate resistance to making her own mind up. Non-publication is both a product and a consequence of this state with the result, (in relation to the fascicles, at least), that "it might even appear that Dickinson's intention was to be indeterminate with respect to the relation among these poems" (18). Towards the end of "Revising the Script" Domhnall Mitchell makes an important related point which takes the idea of "indeterminate intention" one stage further:

At stake, too, is Dickinson's place in the literary canon. If she is demonstrably not in control of, or not directing, the implications of her own textual practices, then she takes a step backwards into the nineteenth century; if she is visibly (and visually) in control, she takes a step forward. . . . (One might wonder, though, if what is ultimately at stake is the belief that all artists are fully and always in control of their own meanings.) (731)

It is the final, bracketed addition to this statement that most interests me and that bears directly upon my own approach in this paper.

My concern is not with defining Dickinson's manuscript intentions either in terms of conscious resistance to print or anticipation of it. Instead, I prefer to position myself somewhat tangentially in relation to that debate. What this paper will consider is the way in which Dickinson allows space within the creative process for unintended meaning and that such a space, and such a meaning, is an integral part of creative composition. I want to argue that for Dickinson, as for any writer whose draft materials survive, we must allow for the ways in which the manuscript possesses its own kind of meaning. From such a perspective, the question as

to whether meaning in the manuscript can be confirmed as “intended” by the poet or not becomes irrelevant, since the crucial point is that such meaning clearly does exist (and is worth studying in its own right). More wholeheartedly than Mitchell then, I want to affirm that “what is ultimately at stake is the belief that all artists are fully and always in control of their own meanings” (731).

Jerome McGann discusses the editing of line breaks in just such terms in *Black Riders: The Visible Language of Modernism*:

It does no good to argue, as some might, that these odd lineations are unintentional. . . . Her manuscripts show that she could preserve the integrity of the metrical unit if she wanted. Besides, certain textual moments reveal such a dramatic use of page space as to put the question of intentionality beyond consideration. (28)

In this article, I will not be using the idea of the unintentional *against* Dickinson, to argue that the line-breaks and other material aspects of the manuscript can be ignored (the editorial position that McGann is countering). Rather, I want to show that she allows for, and encourages, unintentional aspects to exist within the work. To do this it is necessary to have a fuller understanding of intentional and unintentional acts from a philosophical perspective.

In her seminal work, *Intention*, the philosopher G. E. M. Anscombe suggests that unintentional meaning comes into being as a by-product of intended meaning. Considering the example of “offending someone” she states that “one can do this unintentionally, but there would be no such thing if it were never the description of an intentional action” (84). Anscombe then goes on to list various descriptions of “happening” which may be intentional or unintentional – such as: intruding; offending; kicking (85). She also makes a distinction between voluntary action (a bodily action without any conscious intention) and intentional action. This can be clarified by considering the three levels of action which might emerge in response to the question “Why did you raise your arm?” The first answer might be: “I twitched” (involuntary action); the second, “I don’t know” (voluntary – without conscious intent); and the third, “I wanted to ask a question” (intentional act). However, it might also be the case that, say, a child raised his arm merely to stretch it, that this was taken as the asking of a question by a teacher, and that the individual then realised that, in fact, he or she *did* have a question to ask, and asked it. From the teacher’s perspective it would appear that the act of raising an arm occurred as a result of the intention to ask a question, but would not, in fact, have

been the case. In such a scenario, the possibility of unintended meaning seems to come into being and with it comes the possibility of its presence being hidden and uncertain (except for the agent).

Such ideas are explored by Jack Meiland in *The Nature of Intention* where he asks "Can the agent try to do X and yet unintentionally perform the Y in question?" (70). Again, like Anscombe, Meiland suggests that unintentional action occurs within a framework of intended action. He relates a narrative in which one individual arranges to meet another at a certain time in a certain place. The individual goes there an hour early (as he thinks), to prepare, but meets the person at the time arranged because it is in fact an hour later than he had realised. Meiland concludes: "Because he did what he did unintentionally, what he did is not the carrying out of his intention" (81), (although it appears to be so to the other person).

The third philosopher to consider here is John Searle, who briefly, but clearly, addresses the question of unintentional action with relation to the Oedipal narrative:

Oedipus intended to marry Jocasta but when he married Jocasta he was marrying his mother. "Marrying his mother" was not part of the Intentional content of the intention in action, but it happened anyhow. The action was intentional under the description "marrying Jocasta", it was not intentional under the description "marrying his mother". . . . the total action had elements which were parts of the conditions of satisfaction of the intention in action and other elements which were not. (101)

This account makes clear once more that the unintentional is brought into being as a kind of "by-product" of intention, and that the outcome of an action can appear to be that of satisfied intention without actually being so. Searle goes on to offer a useful definition of the unintentional:

we count an action as unintentional under those aspects which, though not intended, are, so to speak, within the field of possibility of intentional actions of the agent as seen from our point of view. (102)

In terms of literary meaning this suggests a structure in which the most spontaneous (even, accidental) elements of meaning must nonetheless come into being as a result of a more controlled framework.

The idea that unintended action exists, but is partly masked by, intended

action has considerable significance when we turn from intentional action to intended meaning within poetic process. The fixed text in a single state – such as that of first publication – presents a front of stable, achieved, authorial intention.<sup>3</sup> Generally, when we discuss “authorial intention” we are referring to a particular meaning embodied in the text by the creative agent and representing the best attempt he or she can make at communication at the time of fixing that text (through an act of final fair copy, publication etc.). If we know nothing about the process by which the text came into being we are only able to read it in the light of that apparently stable, intentional position. By contrast, an understanding of process makes us aware of a far more fluid, flexible model of authorial intention, including unintentional elements, which lies beneath the smooth surface of the fixed text. Knowledge of the text’s own history allows us to respond to intention as a layered act, and as an act occurring over time, involving changes of meaning and, potentially, a degree of oscillation between intended and unintended meaning.

Jack Meiland is relevant here in that he makes clear the importance of understanding intention in a temporal way:

These cases also show that we should not speak of the agent’s doing or not doing X intentionally, but only of his doing or not doing X intentionally *at a certain time*. (87)

Again, this is an important point for understanding intention in relation to creative process. Meiland continues: “an agent may be performing an action intentionally at one moment and not intentionally at another moment while performing the action continuously” (88).<sup>4</sup> He concludes that: “any action which the agent does not know that he is performing at *any* moment while he is performing that action is an unintentional action” (89). When we compare this account of unintentional action to unintentional meaning we have to recognise that the latter is not of quite the same order, since it always possesses latency within the text. Nonetheless, the linkage of intention to time is important here. A writer might write a first draft at a certain time and unintentionally misspell a word, or write one word in place of another, as he or she does so. Perhaps he or she then returns to that draft some weeks later and now sees the “incorrect” word. Two things might follow: either the writer corrects the word, removing the unintended meaning which is defined as an error, or the writer may find that the unintended word is actually more striking than the word it was meant to be. In this case, he or she now incorporates it into the poetic process.

John Searle's final definition of unintentional action as "within the field of possibility of intentional actions of the agent" (102) also points to the ambiguity and uncertainty implicit in the unintentional. This is relatively clear in a case like Oedipus' (where we can assume that there is no likelihood of him *wanting* to marry his mother, so that the action is verifiably unintended) but far less clear when we consider it within the creative process, particularly in material terms. We cannot be sure whether unintended meaning occurs indirectly as an unconsidered consequence of, say, writing on a certain page of a certain size which may limit or constrict or shape that work, or whether such a shaping was actively envisaged and chosen by the writer from the start. One core characteristic of unintended meaning, then, is that it is highly ambiguous – both at the level of whether it is actually present or not, and in terms of whether it is external to the writer or unconsciously coming from him or her. In the case of misreading one's own handwriting, for example, this might occur as a result of the author's mental or visual response, or it might be because of the quality of the paper, ink, or shape of book in which the word is written, or even because it was late at night and the author was reading by candlelight. In authorial, or more generally creative terms, it is possible that creative process may operate through a balance between intended meaning (what the writer sets out to do) and unintended meaning (aspects which he or she could not possibly have anticipated). Creativity establishes certain parameters but must allow for unpredictability within those parameters.

An example of localised unintentional meaning can perhaps be found in Wordsworth's famous passage of the boat-stealing scene in *The Prelude*.<sup>5</sup> In its first provisional "fixed" state<sup>6</sup>, at a point when Wordsworth completes and puts aside the first two books, it reads:

When from behind that rocky steep, till then  
The bound of the horizon, a huge Cliff,  
As if with voluntary power instinct,  
Upreared its head: I struck, and struck again,  
And, growing still in stature, the huge cliff  
Rose up

(*Prelude* 1799, 45)

By comparison, in the earlier first draft of this passage in MS JJ (the earliest *Prelude* notebook) Wordsworth describes the interaction of the boy on the lake and the monstrous hills around him with the following line:

the oars and  
Upreared its head I truck again struck  
again

(Prelude 1799, 90-91)

The nature of this repetition, and the author's intention here, is not absolutely clear. It may well be that Wordsworth intends the second "struck again" to be a deliberate repetition of the first, for poetic effect, as it is used in the final version. Alternatively, though, it may be an example of simple recopying over a rejected revision (probably "struck the oars again") which had made the original words unclear on the page, so that the author needed to re-enter them. This provides us with a good example of unintentional composition within the manuscript with a characteristically high level of ambiguity. A misreading of a revisionary act on the manuscript page may reveal a creative development to the author which he had not consciously intended, or it may have been intended all along.

The example also illustrates the way in which unintended meaning is strongly temporal and temporary within the creative process. In the next version of the draft, the repetition is incorporated into the base text. It may exist only in a single state in an isolated way on a single manuscript page, or it may be converted by the author into intended meaning and then carried forwards, within the text for all future drafts. In this case, the powerful repetition of "I struck & struck again" is immediately incorporated in the next draft version on the following page within the notebook.

A more material example of a similar sort is noted by Nancy Bogen in her facsimile edition of *William Blake, The Book of Thel*. She draws attention to Blake's change of a word on Plate 1, line 13 from "gently" to "gentle", which can clearly be seen on the printed page. She states:

Just why Blake made these alterations on his plates we shall probably never know with certainty. The word *gently* in the first state may have been a misprint, and the change to *gentle* merely a correction. . . . On the other hand, it is possible that gently was originally intended but that Blake . . . changed *gently* to *gentle* for the sake of logical and syntactical uniformity. (5)

Helen Vendler also touches on such issues in a reading of Keats' manuscript of "To Autumn" at the Houghton Library when she states:

Keats's many misspellings are in part surely the result of haste, as his mind



races too fast for his pen. But some misspellings are suggestive. The sun is *naturring* (for *maturing*); *orr* (for *or*) has been proleptically contaminated by the upcoming *furrow* (*The Marks in the Fields* 40).

Vendler notes the way in which later words affect preceding ones to create “misspellings” and allows for this as part of an active creative process.

Finally, there is one other important point to make about unintended meaning, which none of the philosophers seem to consider. There is a need to distinguish between two kinds of unintended meaning. The first kind of unintended meaning might be called “unconscious”; it is still connected in some way to the creative agent and proceeds from him or her. The second kind is entirely *external* to him or her and is created by factors relating to the time, place, domestic circumstances and materials of the act of writing. The first kind is of a different order from that which is initially entirely external to the creative agent (but may be later incorporated by that agent).

A famous example of external unintended meaning occurs with Coleridge’s interruption by the “man from Porlock.” In the first surviving manuscript of “Kubla Khan” the manuscript draft breaks off with a note:

This fragment with a good deal more, not  
recoverable, composed, in a sort of Reverie  
brought  
on by two grains of Opium, taken to check a  
dysentery, at a Farm House between Porlock &  
Linton, a quarter of a mile from Culbone Church,  
in the fall of the year, 1797 –

S. T. Coleridge  
(British Library Holograph, CoS 288)

Coleridge’s famous explanatory prose account of the interrupted writing is not present in the earliest manuscript but is instead written for the first printed text of the poem in 1816. It includes a third person account of his vision by the author so that:

On awaking he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and

on his return to his room . . . all the rest had passed away . . . (675)

In this example, not only is the initial act of writing described in terms of a release of the unconscious with little sense of authorial intention about it, (“Composed in a sort of Reverie”), but also the unpredictable act of interruption dramatically shapes and redefines the poem by causing it to be left as a fragment. Coleridge’s intention to write the entire dream down is unsatisfied because of an unintentional action entirely beyond his control. Of course there is always a question as to how far we are willing to believe Coleridge’s retrospective reconstruction – which reads in part as an apologetic attempt to justify the publication of an incomplete work – but even so it remains a strong example of a poet drawing our attention explicitly to the significance of the unintentional within the creative process. In this example, too, the unintended is reincorporated into an intentional framework since the account of interruption is now used in the interests of authenticity to reinforce an authorially-desired reading of the poem as a genuine record of a vision.

Some sense of the existence of unintended meaning as a vital part of the creative process has, I hope, been established. We can now return to Dickinson’s manuscripts. The kind of unintentional meaning resulting from mis-spelling or mis-reading is unlikely to be verifiable for Dickinson, since there is rarely a surviving sequence involving later integration of earlier texts. G. Thomas Tanselle’s article on the editing of Dickinson touches upon this aspect of the unintentional within her composition at a localised level:

For manuscripts, even those in the handwriting of the authors of the texts, frequently contain letters, words, and punctuation that were not intended. Such ‘slips of the pen’ occur in almost everyone’s writing. One common class is caused by anticipating the next word, as when one writes ‘verg’ instead of ‘very’ because the next word is ‘great’. Dickinson in fact did this (in ‘The life we have is very great’). (67)

Tanselle, though, uses the idea to make the point that such elements should not be represented in an edition which is based upon what the author intended (and therefore he considers such examples as misspellings).<sup>7</sup>

For the most part, in the case of Dickinson, critics focus upon the ambiguity of unintentional meaning in terms of the way in which material elements, apparently external to the poet, impinge upon the poetry as it exists on the manuscript page. In terms of textual stages in Dickinson’s poetry we can look for unintentional

activity within the text both at a first draft stage and in fair copy work, where physical aspects of the circumstances of writing impinge upon form and meaning.

It is necessary now to consider further the implications of allowing or denying the reader access to unintended meaning by returning to the editorial debates outlined at the start of this paper. It is clear that the reader's awareness of unintentional meaning in the manuscripts will be affected by the editing of a text, since a non-documentary representation of manuscript material must inevitably end up hiding or distorting unintended meaning in some way. The issue of non-representation of manuscript line-breaks, already touched upon, provides an easily understood example of the loss of unintended meaning in the editing of Dickinson.

In both the Johnson and Franklin editions, the poetic text is shaped according to initial capitalisation of lines, which is understood to represent authorial intention, rather than the shorter line breaks of the manuscript page. The question of whether manuscript line-breaks should be considered of significance was first raised by Susan Howe in *The Birth-Mark*, where she mounted a triple attack: on Dickinson's original editors; on Johnson; and on Franklin, as the editor of *The Manuscript Books* who appears to liberate and enlighten but in fact does not really do so. Howe, and after her McGann, drew attention to the change of practice in Dickinson's manuscripts after Fascicles 1-8, stating that "after the ninth fascicle (about 1860) she began to break her lines with a consistency that the Johnson edition seemed to have ignored" (134) and that "After 1861, Dickinson's practice of variation and fragmentation also included line breaks. Unlike Franklin, I believe there is a reason for them" (139).

McGann clarifies the significance of Howe's position when he states of the first eight fascicles that:

These texts are being copied to imitate, at their basic scriptural level, the formalities of print. Though handwritten, these are poems that have been imagined under a horizon of publication. ("Emily Dickinson's Visible Language" 42)

By comparison, Fascicle 9 is:

[S]cripturally a much different work. It has nineteen lines, it isn't ordered in quatrains, and the metrical scheme is drastically altered from the metrical norm that we (as it were) *un*hear below Dickinson's visible language. (40)

Both Howe and McGann, writing at a time historically prior to Franklin's *Variorum Edition* (1998), make their arguments with reference to Johnson's edition. Franklin, in the most recent edition, edits poems into typographical forms rather than giving transcriptions of the manuscript page, but also represents manuscript line breaks in the apparatus below each poem. He thus adopts a kind of compromise position which nonetheless significantly affects unintended meaning since it remains hidden or obscured by non-spatial representation of text. In relation to line-breaks, the editor's own position is made clear in his introduction where he states that "Available space ordinarily determined the physical line breaks in Dickinson's poems" (Franklin 34) and that "There are many examples in which two or more copies of the same poem appear on papers of different shapes, yielding different line breaks for each" (Franklin 34).

It does seem fair to say that line breaks do not have a *systematic* significance in Dickinson's manuscripts. Tanselle defends Franklin here when he states that:

There is no question that the manuscript lineation (like all other features of the manuscripts) could have affected the responses of those who read the manuscripts . . . But it does not follow that Dickinson necessarily thought of her manuscript spacings as integral parts of her poem. (71)

At the same time, Tanselle only seems to allow such lineation a social significance for Dickinson's immediate audience. On the other side of the debate, we have Martha Nell Smith and Ellen Louise Hart who show how this issue is relevant to all readers. They point to the way in which:

Might I but moor –  
Tonight –  
In Thee!

(H38)

is rendered in the *Variorum Edition* as:

Might I but moor - tonight -  
In thee!

*Division*      11 moor - /

(Fr269)

The critics thus state of Franklin that: “His theory of Dickinson’s poetics does not account for “Tonight -” on a line by itself as a physical record of the poem’s breathless, excited emphases” (“On Franklin’s Gifts and Ghosts” 28). As a consequence of Franklin’s edited presentation of the text, a meaning which was present on the manuscript page has been lost.

We might place against this Domnhal Mitchell’s discussion in “Filling in the Blanks” of Letter 378 which includes within it the poem beginning “A narrow Fellow in the Grass.” Mitchell reproduces the poem as edited by both Johnson/Ward and Hart/Smith and then goes on to give his own transcription allowing for word spacing on the page. Partly he seeks to make the point that if lineation is so significant then so, too, must be the spaces between words and letters:

This version does not absolutely preclude the possibility that the lineation was intentional – but it allows us at least to consider that the layout may be a consequence of the dimensions of the writing surface. (38)

Ultimately, Mitchell goes on to show that Dickinson’s negative response to the publication of her poem reads *against* those who privilege her manuscript line breaks as though intended. Instead he notes “she does not contest the *lineation* . . . she contests the *punctuation*” (39). Still, from my perspective Mitchell is missing the point. Line endings on the manuscript page are capable of significantly affecting the meaning of a text, and this is true whether those endings are intended by the poet, or whether they are understood to bear an unintentional meaning.

One poem which illustrates the significance of manuscript line endings is that beginning “I heard, as if I had no Ear” (Fr996) (see Figure 1).<sup>8</sup> We need to compare the first stanza as Franklin presents it, and as it occurs on the fair copy manuscript page:

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

(Fr996)

I heard, as if I  
had no Ear  
Until a Vital Word  
Came all the way



*Figure 1.* A 88-9/10 "I heard as if I" By permission of The Houghton Library, Harvard University, Franklin-A88. © The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

from Life to me  
And then I knew  
I heard.

(A 88-9/10)<sup>9</sup>

Now it is true that the form as it occurs on the page for Dickinson is partly defined by the physical restrictions of that page, and that capitalisation suggests that her line endings are not intended to equate with line breaks. But it is also true that the material reads differently in its manuscript form and that, if something is gained by respecting the “intended” line endings rather than the visual appearance of the document, something is also lost. In this first stanza, whether by coincidence or design, the form of the poem emphasises internal assonance in a way that is far less apparent in Franklin’s edited version. The poem plays with a first vowel sound in “heard, had, [Ear], Word, heard” and with a second vowel sound in “I, Came, way, Life, me, knew”:

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

The phrase “Un/til/ a Vi/tal” also provides a complex localised interplay of its own, between the two dominant vowel sounds at the point of transition within the poem.<sup>10</sup> The pattern of metrical emphasis remains the same in either layout, but the shorter lines of the manuscript page place greater weight on words that become mid-line stresses in Franklin’s version, because they are placed here as the final stressed syllable of a line. Since the stanza is also explicitly about two ways of hearing – one literal, and one of a higher, finer, kind – the poem read in *this* form uses that interplay by means of two sound schemes within it to mark the difference between the first “I heard”, and the second. The three half-rhyming words at the ends of lines four, five and six enact the rapid excitement of the state they describe. They bring about, and result in, a return to the initial state, now radically transformed in meaning. The stanza read in this form thus also plays with the idea of “hearing as sound” at a basic level, in a way which anticipates the inside-

outness of the later poem. Nevertheless, it is highly likely that the line breaks are created purely by a lack of width on the page on which they occur, and so support Franklin's account of them. Indeed this is reinforced by the fact that, in the case of the first example, if the line breaks *were* systematically intended by the poet, then the next stanza should begin, in imitation of the first:

I saw, as if my  
Eye were on

Whereas it starts:

I saw, as if my Eye  
were on

(A 88-9/10)

If a decision is made at one stage of a process and held across different stages of a work we read this as a fixed intention on the part of the author. In the case of Franklin's editing of Dickinson, if she had retained line breaks, or page breaks, in the same place across all forms of a poem then he would have respected this as representative of a clearly intended meaning. Since she does not, he does not. At the same time, however, the fact that a particular meaning exists in one version, but not in another, does not necessarily mean that it was *not* intended in the single version for which it exists. It may mean this, or it may mean that it was fully intended at the time of writing, but not retained over time. As already discussed, this double possibility often exists for unintended acts of composition. We cannot be sure whether they are truly "unintentional" or whether they had a transient conscious existence in the mind of the author. Because there is no further stage of writing or preparation of the text we have no way of knowing whether or not Dickinson would have seen, or perhaps even did intend, the pleasing emphasis created by the shaping of the poem on the page and thus might have deliberately incorporated it at the next stage. What the line breaks create, then, is a situation of unintentional meaning within the manuscript which may be partly caused by the limitations of the material object on which the poet chooses to write. Franklin's editorial decisions mean that such unintentional creativity is only allowed to exist in the manuscript material itself – the "artifact" from which he has constructed a distinct "literary work" (Franklin 27). He does not allow that the existence of this transient element of meaning can significantly affect understanding and interpre-



tation of the lines.

A second example of a similar kind occurs with the poem beginning “Best Things dwell out of Sight.” It is helpful to place alongside each other Franklin’s edited version and the text on the manuscript page:

Best Things dwell out of Sight The Pearl - the Just - Our Thought -	Best Things dwell out of Sight The Pearl - the Just - Our Thought -
Most shun the Public Air Legitimate, and Rare -	Most shun the Public Air Legitimate , and Rare -
The Capsule of the Wind The Capsule of the Mind	The Capsule of the Wind The Capsule of the Mind
Exhibit here, as doth a Burr - Germ’s Germ be where?	Exhibit here , as doth a Burr - Germ’s Germ be where?

(Fr1012)

(A 90-1/2)

The most immediate difference is the shape of the stanza (although on the manuscript page Dickinson’s hand spaces the letters far more widely, so that the lines are not as compact as they appear here) (see Figure 2). The poem is about images of containment – the pearl, the capsule, the burr, the germ – and the form on the manuscript page seems to reflect this far better than Franklin’s linear, two-line stanzas. Considered closely, the layout on the page raises all kinds of questions about which aspects of it may be deliberate, and intended, by the poet and which are unintended and created by the page dimensions. So, in the first stanza, although the lines do fill the page, the capitalisation of “Our Thought” might suggest that it was intended to be on a new line (which Franklin does not respect). The line breaks which place “Wind” and “Mind” alone on a line are also clearly emphatic and make single unit “capsules” of such words in a way which allows



*Figure 2. A 9-1/2 "Best Things dwell." By permission of The Houghton Library, Harvard University, Franklin-A90. © The President and Fellows of Harvard College.*

them to enact their meaning visually. In the case of the two full lines "Legitimate, and Rare -" and "Germ's Germ be where?" these lines might equally well have been broken but were not, which makes them stand out in comparison to what is around them on the manuscript page.<sup>11</sup>

What is the poem about? It strongly articulates a valuing of the internal and hidden over the external and publicised; a need to "shun the Public Air." But it also explores the way in which we conceive of valuable things as though they were able to be contained and containable. The final part confuses because the "here" of "Exhibit here" is unlocated. Here in "the Public Air?" Here on earth? Here in the poem? Here in the mind of the speaker? Wherever "here" is, the images are radically redefined by it. The poem seems to be saying that, if placed in the air, all such things lose their value and instead of existing as the inner core of something, the true seed becomes a false one, a burr which is externalised, parasitic and dependent rather than self contained.<sup>12</sup> The conclusion of the poem, then, envisages a double interior. The speaker seeks not just for something which is hidden but can be disclosed (and found to be less than it was thought to be) but for the inner source of the hidden thing which will never be revealed. Finally, the way in which syntax is left hanging on the page ("Most shun the"; "The capsule of the"; "Exhibit here, as") gives the manuscript lines a certain appropriate distinctiveness, as if the words which follow are clinging on to the line before. On the manuscript page, then, they themselves seem to "Exhibit here, as / doth a Burr". Again, though, I am not trying to argue that the kind of interpretation we can make of the page, in this visual way, is necessarily intended by the poet. It may be, but it is more likely to be an unintentional meaning created by the poet's willingness to allow material aspects to impinge upon her writing in ways that are sometimes highly appropriate to the meaning contained. It might therefore be described as "intended unintentionality" on Dickinson's part.

When we say that material aspects of the text shape meaning we have to bear in mind that this is so because, consciously or not, those material aspects have been *allowed* to shape meaning. In other words, there is no practical reason why Dickinson should have to limit herself in the way she does. For first draft material Dickinson often deliberately chooses to write on ephemera – the inside of envelopes, pieces of wrapping paper and so on – pieces of paper which once had a use but do not any longer. The commonest explanation for such usage is that her urge to write is so sudden that she takes whatever is at hand:



*Figure 3a (recto).* A 418 "None who/The Merchant of the Picturesque." By permission of The Houghton Library, Harvard University, Franklin-A90. © The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

The cometary pace of her thought determines her choice of materials – whatever lies close by – and is registered in the disturbance of the scribal hand.  
(Werner 21)

I find this explanation only partly convincing. It is more likely that she *wants* her first draft material to exist in a very fragile and ephemeral state which either reclaims such scraps –giving them a new life as text – or liberates her, by the knowledge that the material can easily be thrown away if it is no good. I would argue that she is *deliberately* choosing to write on pieces of paper which impose their limitations on the writing. In a sense this is a little like a poet choosing to work within the confines of a certain form – such as a sonnet – and being partly liberated by the fact that such confines exist. Dickinson translates this into almost physical terms.

It is frequently the case, in relation to Dickinson, that a shape or kind of activity on the page which at first sight appears to exist only at a purely functional level, turns out to re-enact the content and meaning of the text itself. In her work on Dickinson's materiality, Melanie Hubbard argues that, in her later scraps, "Dickinson is theorizing the materiality of representation and materially representing the theory" ("Dickinson's Advertising Flyers" 36). Certain pieces thus serve to "embed the motive circumstance for thought at the material level and think about the materiality of that circumstance" (28). The poem beginning "None who saw it ever told it" (Fr1135) is an example of such material, being written – along with "The Merchant of the Picturesque" (Fr1134) – in pencil on the plain back of a flyer for "Orr's Boneset Bitters" and "Orr's Lavender Cordial". The flyer is folded in four, so as to make a "mini-bifolium" of the sheet with none of the advertising visible (See Figure 3a). Instead, there are two poems written across its four sides.

Samuel K. Orr was a druggist and apothecary in Amherst, owning first a shop in the High Street in 1858 and then moving to the National Bank building in 1866.<sup>13</sup> The flyer is emphatic in its claims: "TRY THESE BITTERS!" urges Samuel Orr on the other side of the sheet: "YOU WILL NOT REGRET IT!" (see Figure 3b). This first unfinished piece combines images of buying and selling with responses to nature, true and false. The images of the shop, the counter and currencies are used to describe "The Merchant of the Picturesque" who is divided between the fashionable stance he has adopted and truer inner feelings.<sup>14</sup> The subject may perhaps have been prompted by an associative link to "Painter's Cholic" on the front of the sheet, listed by Orr as one of the many ailments able to be cured by his Lavender Cordial.<sup>15</sup> However, since the poem is not completed, the exact basis of



*Figure 3b (verso).* A 419 Advertisement for "Orr's Boneset Bitters." By permission of The Houghton Library, Harvard University, Franklin-A419. © The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

*Figure 4.* A 232 "I have no life to live." By permission of The Houghton Library, Harvard University, Franklin-A232. © The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

the comparison between commercial transaction and “the picturesque” remains unclear.

The other poem on the flyer reads:

None        who  
      they  
saw    it    ever  
told     it  
'Tis     as hid  
as        Death  
      Had    for that  
          specific treasure  
A        departing  
breath -  
Surfaces    may be  
invested    can  
          related  
Did the     Diamond  
grow  
Gentle    General/

as    the     Dandelion
Would        you serve
it    so?     seek

INVERTED TEXT

(A 418-419; Fr1135)

The two poems are clearly “Surfaces . . . related” in physical terms since they share the same sheet of paper, and this is also partly true of revision on the page. The use of an alternative word “Gentle” at the end of this poem seems partly to prompt its repetition on the opposite page of the folded sheet, which then has to be crossed out. However, at a level of content, where the “Merchant” piece is very strongly related to the kind of material it is written on (an advertisement for a product to be bought across the “Counter”) the second poem moves into more abstract territory. At the heart of this piece is the idea that “Surfaces may be / invested.”

In her discussion of the phrase, Hubbard asks “To what does ‘Surfaces’ refer?” (38). She relates it first to the act of reading and then to the work of art, lead-

*Figure 5a (verso).* A 416 "The Mushroom is the Elf of Plants." By permission of The Houghton Library, Harvard University, Franklin-A416. © The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

*Figure 5b (recto).* A 416 (Front of envelope - Image of pestle) By permission of The Houghton Library, Harvard University, Franklin-A232. © The President and Fellows of Harvard College.



ing to an interpretation of the final part of the poem in which:

if everything were invested – the distinction between surface and depth, death and life, would be extinguished. . . . In effect, there would be no investment (39).

It seems to me that the poem is not questioning whether everything is “invested” so much as seeking to make the point that the very same object can be of value, or not, according to your point of view. It explores the way in which the value of something is accorded because of its rarity, or because of our shared human conditioning as to what value means, and this bears directly upon the poem itself here as material object. In other words, the effect of Dickinson writing *this* poem on *this* piece of scrap is, very clearly, to “invest the surface” with a different purpose and sense of what is valuable from that which it originally possessed. Put simply, a mid-nineteenth century flyer from a pharmacist’s shop is worth less than an Emily Dickinson manuscript poem, first draft, existing only in a single state. The poem seems to anticipate and mock its own ambitions through its material form.

A similar argument can be made for writing on the *inside* of an envelope.<sup>16</sup> There is something intimate about such an act but, more than this, it is also an act of reclamation and re-assimilation. In such cases, the paper on which Dickinson chooses to write is created by revealing an internal space that normally exists only in order to hold another communication of greater importance. Again, then, she gives a new value and status to something otherwise entirely overlooked and redundant of any meaning or significance in itself.

We can see this in two poems written on the inside of an envelope: the poem beginning “I have no life to live” (A232; Fr1432) and one of the draft versions for “The Mushroom is the Elf of Plants” (A416; Fr1350). In both cases, Dickinson opens out a rectangular envelope to make of it a near-square and then turns it sideways. The text is written across the original folds that made the envelope, with the mouth on the right for “I have no life to live” and on the left for “The Mushroom is the Elf of Plants.” Turned inside out, and on its side, at first glance the sheet is not immediately recognisable as an envelope at all (see Figures 4 & 5a). “I have no life to live” respects the folds of the envelope more than the “Mushroom” poem, treating it like a central bifolium page with two words written vertically down the central folds. For the “Mushroom” poem, text runs diagonally right across the envelope. Franklin also notes that “the physical measure increases then diminishes in length” (Fr1166) and such an action also physically embodies at a textual level



Figure 6. Photograph reproduced in the *Amherst Journal Record*. Thursday, August 10, 1961. The Jones Library, Amherst, MA.

the way in which the mushroom itself comes into being and disappears again. So the longest lines at the centre of the page are those which describe the mushroom's misleadingly sturdy appearance. The point at which the diagonal shape begins to reduce room on the page is also the point at which the words express the brevity of the mushroom's existence:

Is shorter than a  
snake's delay  
and fleeter  
than a  
+  
Tare -  
(A 416; Fr1350B)

Since the poem did not have to be entered in this way on the piece of paper – and since it in fact uses that paper in a way which is unexpected – it may well be that the poet intends this physical enactment of meaning on the manuscript piece. Moreover, not only does the mushroom silently appear and disappear, it does so on the inside of an envelope.

In “I have no life to live”, the traces of original significance that ensure the envelope fulfils its function – the stamp, and postmark, the writing of the address – now themselves become marginal, seen faintly through the paper, or in the serrated edge of the stamp appearing over the edge of the paper. For “The Mushroom is the Elf of Plants” the manuscript is written on the opened-out interior of a deep yellow envelope which has on the front of it a printed image of an apothecary's pestle and mortar (see Figure 5b).

Original advertisements and other materials from the 1860s onwards at the Jones Library show that the apothecary's symbol was shared by a number of practitioners in Amherst (e.g. Henry Adams, Charles Deuel). An article and early photograph reproduced in the *Amherst Journal Record* for Thursday August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1961 also shows Samuel K. Orr's shop, with an apothecary's sign on the side wall of the Bank building (see Figure 6). It is thus at least possible that this piece of ephemera is again provided by Orr, of “Boneset Bitters” fame. The exact use of the envelope, however, is difficult to ascertain. Apothecaries performed the function of the modern chemist, preparing prescriptions for physicians in the town and selling drugs, medicines, alcohol for medical purposes, soaps, perfume, cigars and so on. A surviving small box and envelope at the Jones library from Deuel's Drug Store,



Figure 7. A 466 "These are the rights." By permission of The Houghton Library, Harvard University, Franklin-A466. © The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

including "No.," "Date," and "Dr" makes it clear that such envelopes were used for the drugs themselves. However, the envelope used by Dickinson is not of this sort, suggesting that it contained some kind of non-prescription item, or possibly a bill which was hand-delivered (or collected from the store). Whatever its exact use, the paper of the envelope initially was of explicit commercial value, but this is now overridden by the writing of the poem. In each case the object is taken up from one usage and put to another which is physically re-embodied by the folds it contains, overriding its original form.

The process can also occur in reverse, however. With the poem beginning "These are the nights that beetles love" (Fr1150), the manuscript (A466) is an example of a page being reclaimed, materially. The piece is entered on a half-page of good quality cream paper. Franklin tells us that the manuscript became stained from "having been used subsequently as a pen wipe" (Franklin 999). The key word here is "subsequently": Dickinson was not choosing to write on a piece of paper already ink-stained, but choosing to stain a piece of paper already written on. As well as ink lines on the page, to test the nib, the marks on the page, particularly on the reverse, resemble the Rorschach inkblot test; the folding of the paper around the pen causes the ink patterns to mirror each other in a way that is visually very pleasing (see Figure 7).<sup>17</sup> It is tempting to make a connection between the mention of "Entomology" on the reverse side of the sheet, ("Supplied by / Entomology / With it's / remaining charm" [A 466]) and the ink patterns around it, which unfold like the opening wings of a butterfly. Since these marks are made *after* the meaning has been entered upon the page it is not possible for them to affect or shape meaning at any conscious level. They could, however, be understood as an example of completely unintentional contiguity of meaning: a kind of compositional coincidence.

Enactment of unintentional meaning in a physical or spatial way upon the manuscript page does not only occur with the physical shapings of first draft material. It also occurs at times in the placement of revised words marked with a cross upon a fair copy text. An interesting example is in Set 14 where the poem "That sacred Closet when you sweep" (Fr1385) is about cleaning out the internal space of the mind and the care that must be taken not to disturb certain parts. Meaning concerns an enclosed space and it is interesting, in the light of this, that Dickinson should choose to run words up the margin and invert the last two lines along the top of the page, thus partially enclosing the "sacred Closet" of the poem itself (see Figure 8). The sense of enclosure, and of wrapping words within words,



Figure 8. A 94 - 1/2 "That sacred Closet." By permission of The Houghton Library, Harvard University, Franklin-A96. © The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

is further enhanced when we bear in mind that this poem is on the final back page of a four-sided bifolium sheet. As arranged by Franklin, it is also the final sheet of the full “sets” after which Dickinson ceased to gather together her poems into any kind of formal grouping.<sup>18</sup> The final words written along the bottom, up the side and finally upside down upon the page read: “You cannot super - / sede itself / But it can / silence you” (A 94- 1/2). In the context of the sets it is tempting to read such an expression as the silencing, the sealing in, of a certain kind of activity within the manuscripts. However, such a conclusion cannot be clearly reached, since the order of sheets within the sets is not able to be firmly established.<sup>19</sup>

Another poem, “In falling timbers buried” (Fr447), working in the same kind of way is even more interesting in terms of the relations between apparently unintentional meaning on the page, created by acts of revision, and meaning in terms of the poem’s content (see Figure 9). The full text reads:

In <sup>x</sup> falling    Timbers buried -	X crashing X Without X
There    breathed a    Man -	
<sup>x</sup> Outside - the    spades - were	
plying -	
The    Lungs -    within -	
Could He - know - they sought	lived X
Him -	
Could They - know - He <sup>x</sup> breathed -	
Horrid    Sand    Partition -	
Neither -    could    be heard -	
Never slacked the Diggers -	Recompense of
But    when    spades had done -	
<sup>x</sup> Oh ,Reward    of    Anguish ,	
It    was    dying -    Then -	



*Figure 9.* H183b "In falling Timbers buried." By permission of The Houghton Library, Harvard University, MS Am 1118.3. © The President and Fellows of Harvard College.



Many Things - are fruitless -  
'Tis a Baffling Earth -  
But there is no Gratitude  
Like the Grace - of Death -

(H 183b)

The subject of the poem is doubled. It describes a situation involving, at a literal level, a division between external and internal locations. However, it is really about the relationship between two possible perceptions of a single event: one coloured by external facts (the knowledge that others are trying to help) and one by the absence of such knowledge and a solitary reliance on the self. The two are connected syntactically in the poem, so that the spades which aim to save the buried man are also bound up with destroying him, but neither side knows the nature of that connection or its outcome. On the level of content, the poem is deeply unresolved. The final stanza, with its "Reward of Anguish" may be asserting that it was worth trying to save the man even if it was only for him to die in his rescuers' arms. Alternatively it may suggest that each side silently and unknowingly gives up because neither is aware of their closeness to the other. In this case "Reward of Anguish" is no reward at all, but refers only to the escape offered by death for the solitary man. At the heart of the poem's meaning are the lines:

Could He - know - they sought  
Him -  
Could They - know - He <sup>^</sup>breathed

The poem does not state, and does not have to state, the difference such knowledge would make. So it situates itself in terms of two temporal conditions – what is, and what might have been – and in terms of the two mental states that each produces.

The entry of crossed alternatives down the margin of the page creates, visually, two kinds of text. In this case, the marginal, vertical, text faces inward and so, in a sense, protects the inner text, serving almost to prop it up, as the "falling Timbers" should have done around the man. Is it far-fetched to read into this either a subconscious, or even a consciously intended, connection between meaning and revisionary form? The closer one looks, the more this seems to be occurring. With the entry of "lived" in the right hand margin, for example, the reader's first

visual reaction to the manuscript page is that there would have been more space for the word further down. But when one looks again, thinking about a possible relation between content and revisionary activity, its position can be seen to create a meaningful shape upon the page at the most significant point of the poem:

Could He - know - they sought	l
Him -	ived
Could They - know - He xbreathed	x

The position of the word “lived” works to create a long narrow box within the text. These words describe the central sentiment of the poem (the internal dashes emphasising the difficulty of each breath) and the particular word which closes off the box is itself an assertion of the man as a living, breathing, being. But the visual and spatial effect of the box on the page is also anticipatory of the man’s coffin; a visual emblem of the event that the poem records. The open, conditional nature of the utterance, situated in an imagined future grammatical space, which the poem can only hopelessly imagine, is thus also denied at the moment of writing by the form (and meaning) of the manuscript page.

The poem on the opposite central page to “In falling Timbers buried” is also about burial (“I died for Beauty – but was scarce” [Fr448]), and if it is not about someone being buried alive it imagines a consciousness existing beyond death. The dialogue between one who “died for Beauty” and “One who died for Truth” envisages a connection “between the Rooms” which is gradually and slowly undone over time by the growth of the sealing moss. The poem’s quiet acceptance of a deep dialogue of understanding and its gradual end reads as a calming counterbalance to the human, living, agony and tragedy of the failed dialogue between the two participants of “In falling Timbers buried.” The revisionary words along the margin of the first poem can now be seen also to connect the two central bifolium pages as if propping them up and to make of them two adjoining rooms, in dialogue with each other within the manuscript.

At a level of textual understanding, the crosses down the margin possess one kind of meaning. They represent the deliberate physical separation of the alternative word from the base text. But at another level, in terms of a confluence of visual and verbal meaning on the page, they create another meaning, partly related to the bifolium context. They allow us to confidently assert that there is a meaning within the compositional material of a different order from that of the fixed text and to understand that such meaning is worthy of interpretation, whether it was

meant by the author or not.

I have not sought in this piece to make any new argument in favor of the value of Dickinson's manuscripts and of a full material understanding of them. Rather I have sought to show the potential of such material for full critical engagement. This is not to criticise the work of Dickinson's editors. Johnson's and Franklin's scholarly apparatuses prove extremely helpful to any detailed study of the manuscripts, as well as showing their high level of understanding and engagement with compositional process. Nonetheless, editorial attitudes of recent decades give increasing weight to the power of the manuscript itself and to a documentary presentation of materials. My work tries to show that for Dickinson, as for many others for whom such draft material has survived, a response to all aspects of the manuscript page allows for full interpretation and analysis at a critical level. To appreciate Emily Dickinson, such an approach is not a rarified scholarly activity but a necessity.

### Notes

1. To be fair to Susan Howe, she is partly alert to such issues. In a lengthy note to *The Birthmark: Unsettling the Wilderness in American Literary History* (Wesleyan University Press, 1993) she states: "I think her poems need to be transcribed into type, although increasingly I wonder if this is possible" (153).
2. Recent critics who attempt to read across Dickinson's fascicles fall into exactly the same trap of unverifiable intention. Eleanor Heginbotham, in *Reading the Fascicles of Emily Dickinson: Dwelling in Possibilities* (Ohio State University Press, 2003), reads the forty fascicles as a "long single work" (3), interpreting them in terms of an "editing project" (105). Such a position is based upon an assumption of Dickinson's intentions in relation to the fascicles which is extremely uncertain. Do we know that Dickinson herself kept the fascicles in the order that they were written or even that she was fully aware of that order (since the 1-40 order is reconstructed by Franklin)?
3. Such intention is likely to be far more "fixed" for the reader than for the writer, and may of course be subject to later revision. The text is "fixed" insofar as the act of publication means that it exists in a certain state, at a certain time, incurring a body of reception in response to that state.
4. Meiland's example is of an agent filling a tank with chemicals by switching on a pump which runs for ten minutes. Half way through he realises he is actually filling a different tank with a different chemical. The same action is still occurring but for the first half he was undertaking it unintentionally, for the second half intentionally, though perhaps against his will) (88).
5. See also my forthcoming paper: "Wordsworthian Composition: The Micro-Prelude," *Studies in Romanticism* Summer/Fall 2005. All manuscript work on Wordsworth, Tennyson and Dickinson was funded by a one year Innovation Award from the Arts and Humanities Research Board (UK) for which I am very grateful.

6. A "provisional fixed state" sounds highly contradictory. Elsewhere I discuss such a concept in terms of "contingent intention". See my forthcoming *A Compositional Method: Wordsworth, Tennyson, Dickinson* (Virginia University Press, 2006).
7. Tanselle continues: "the texts of the verbal works intended by Dickinson read 'very' and 'beyond,' even though those words are not physically present" (67).
8. All quotations from Franklin's editions reprinted by permission of the publishers and the Trustees of Amherst College from THE POEMS OF EMILY DICKINSON, edited by Ralph W. Franklin, ed., Cambridge, Mass., The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1998 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Copyright © 1951, 1955, 1979, 1983 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College and THE MANUSCRIPT BOOKS OF EMILY DICKINSON: A FACSIMILE EDITION, Ralph W. Franklin, ed., Cambridge, Mass., The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1981 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Manuscripts are reproduced with the kind permission of The Houghton Library, Harvard University; by permission of the Trustees of Amherst College Library and The Jones Library, Amherst (Special Collections). Harvard mss are cited by the abbreviation "H" and Amherst mss by the abbreviation "A."
9. Most of Dickinson's manuscripts do not exist in a transcribed (rather than edited) form, but it is necessary to transcribe them here. In so doing I have followed Franklin's text in terms of capitalization and punctuation (although this creates problems in terms of standardised representation) but differ from him in trying to represent the manuscript page more directly as it appears in terms of line breaks, revision within the text and at the bottom of the text, and spacing between words and letters on the page. I have represented all revisions in the same font size as the base text because of the difficulty of distinguishing between times of entry, and because of a reluctance to hierarchize Dickinson's activity.
10. See also a similar example for the line "It stop opon a spot" (A 416/ A 417) in "The Mushroom is the Elf of Plants" where there is not only the anagram of "stop"/"spot" but also the interplay of sound and visual appearance across "stop opon spot". I am not sure that such play has anything to do with meaning, rather it seems to exist as a self-contained unit of verbal and visual play within the line.
11. McGann makes the same point in *Black Riders: The Visible Language of Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) when he shows how the imposition of a strict quatrain form upon the lines of the poem drastically alters their effect. For "Experience is the Angled Road" he states that "when Johnson normalizes this poem into quatrains he destroys altogether one of its most important technical features: its repeated moves to isolate words and phrases" (31).
12. I am assuming Dickinson was using "Burr" in the sense of a seed, although in her Webster's Dictionary (1844) this definition is not given. The word is defined as: "The lobe or lap of the ear"; "The round knob of a horn next a deer's head"; "The sweetbread." It is possible that Dickinson might have meant the first of these definitions, as an image of part of the ear which is physically external to the body and cannot "hear" in its own right (an image she had used elsewhere).
13. All information about Orr and the advertisements and materials of Amherst apothecaries was acquired with the considerable assistance of Tevis Kimball at The Jones Library, Amherst (Special Collections) for which I am most grateful.
14. Hubbard reads the Merchant more negatively as "a character directly inspired by the obvious charlatan offering 'Orr's Boneset Bitters'" ("Dickinson's Advertising Flyers" 40). However, since Orr was not a charlatan but a respected practitioner in the town, this reading may be overly negative.
15. Painter's Colic is a form of lead poisoning caused by exposure to lead-based paint.
16. See also Melanie Hubbard's discussion of other envelope-poems in material terms in "As there are Apartments: Emily Dickinson's Manuscripts and Critical Desire at the Scene of Reading" *Emily Dickinson Journal* 12.1. (2003): 53- 75 (63-64).

17. In this case, then, an unintentional marking on the page mirrors a projective interpretive shape later designed to reveal the interpreter's inner state (unintentionally).
18. Set 15, which comes afterwards, consists only of a single poem on a single leaf (A 94-11).
19. Franklin states: "No internal sequence belonging to the poet has been established for the unbound sheets in Sets 1-15" (*The Manuscript Books* xiv).

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