Emily dickinson's in a library

Considered one of the definitive American poets, Emily Dickinson (December 10, 1830 – May 15, 1886) was a reclusive personality and a largely unpublished poet during her lifetime. Her well-deserved fame is posthumous, and is representative of her strong voice which continues to beckon us across the the gap of more than a century and through the variety of rigorous edits most of her works have gone through.

She had a politically eminent, preoccupied father and an almost continually ill mother, which made her a quiet, thoughtful child. She went to the Amherst Academy as a young girl where she learned the subjects of her time which included everything from classical literature and geology to religion and biology. She went on to study at Mary Lyons Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, but left less than a year later. She never traveled far from her home at Amherst, and was never married.

Despite not being given much to cultivating human society, she certainly valued her friends, Susan Gilbert being one of her constant friends, who later became her sister-in-law. She maintained long correspondences with valued friends such as Thomas Wentworth Higginson who was possibly also her sole critic, and maybe even one of her romantic attachments. She wrote prolifically till her death in 1886. She died at the age of 56 of Brights disease, and was buried in white at Amherst, in keeping with her rigorously white attire through most of her later life.

One of the strongest aspects of Dickinsons poetry is its capacity for layered meanings, and “ In a Library” is no exception. For Dickinson, a written word was open to many interpretations, and the reader was very much a part of the poetic process: “ A word is dead, when it is said /Some say - /I say it just begins to live/ That day”(L 374; P 1212). She accepted that her words could,

and often did take different and often unintended meanings in a readers mind. On the surface, “ In a Library” is a poem about delving into the past with a book, to take pleasure in a flight of fancy by witnessing history as recorded on its pages, by taking part in myth, by understanding the perspectives and opinions that informed scholastic work during a time long gone past.

On another level, the poem can also be seen as an association with a dear old fatherly acquaintance, here personified in a book. The experience of reading a really old book, its aged textures and its nostalgic fragrance is almost like meeting up with an elderly, knowledgeable father figure, and Dickinson plays on this dual meaning to describe an experience all bibliophiles are familiar with. The “ mouldering pleasure” and the time-travel associated with it can only be derived from an old book, never a newly printed page.

To create this kind of harmonic dual meaning, Dickinson extensively uses figurative language. The very first line begins with a synecdoche: “ mouldering pleasure,” it is the book that is actually mouldering, not the pleasure. Dickinson also uses personification for the “ antique book” which appears in “ just the dress his century wore.” While describing the throwback into history and myth, Dickinson takes recourse to literary allusion: “ And Beatrice wore/ The gown that Dante deified”. In the lines, “ He traverses familiar,/As one should come to town”, Dickinson gives us a simile between the book and a new traveler in town from faraway lands who knows truths that we imagine to be dreams. And in a final, “ tantalising” vision, Dickinson gives us the personification where, “ Old volumes shake their vellum heads.”

Throughout, Dickinson loosely applies the hymn rhyme scheme with the common meter containing quatrains in an 8/6/8/6 pattern. Here, the first line of the quatrain has eight syllables followed by a line of six syllables, and the next two lines of the quatrain again contain eight and six syllables respectively. Dickinson was never overly concerned with following proper rhyme schemes, giving more importance to the insight behind her poems, and that is evident in the somewhat imprecise application of rhyme scheme in this poem as well.

Dickinson may have been a recluse during her lifetime, but more than a century after her death, her poems like “ In a Library” find an echo in the minds and hearts of readers today. She was indeed a poet before her time.

A word is dead, when it is said

Some say -

I say it just begins to live

That day.

(L 374; P 1212)

Emily Dickinsons " In A Library"

Instructions:

The paper has to be finished by 2: 00 p. m. Tuesday April 3, 2007.

the instructions are as follows:

1) poet biography on Emily Dickinson

2) surface meaning of the poem " In A Library"

3) deep meaning of the poem " In A Library"

4) a minimum of 5 examples of figurative language in the poem " In A Library" -- quotes and type

5) rhyme scheme of the poem " In A Library"

Created: 2007-04-03 09: 07

Deadline: 2007-04-04 07: 10

Time Left: 20 hours

Style: MLA

Language Style: English (U. S.)

Grade: n/a

Pages: 2

Sources: 2

In a Library

A precious, mouldering pleasure t is Synecdoche

To meet an antique book,

In just the dress his century wore; PERSONIFICATION

A privilege, I think,

His venerable hand to take, 8

And warming in our own, 6

A passage back, or two, to make8

To times when he was young. 6

His quaint opinions to inspect, 8

His knowledge to unfold 6

On what concerns our mutual mind, 8

The literature of old; 6

What interested scholars most, 8

What competitions ran

When Plato was a certainty.

And Sophocles a man;

When Sappho was a living girl,

And Beatrice wore

The gown that Dante deified. ALLUSION

Facts, centuries before,

He traverses familiar,

As one should come to town SIMILE

And tell you all your dreams were true;

He lived where dreams were sown.

His presence is enchantment,

You beg him not to go;

Old volumes shake their vellum heads: PERSONIFICATION

And tantalize, just so.

-- Emily Dickinson

Some common forms of hymn meter that Dickin-son used are common meter (a line of eight syllables followed by a line of six syllables, repeating in qua-trains of an 8/6/8/6 pattern), long meter (8/8/8/8), short meter (6/6/6/6), and common particular meter (8/8/6/8/8/6).

Comments:

I love to collect books. Recently my quest led me to a dingy shop in Bangalore that is famous all over India for its collection of old and rare books. I was in a hurry and intended to spend no more than 10-15 minutes there. Ended up spending approximately three hours and during almost the

entire duration, this poem kept on going through my mind. I had read this poem several times before, but that day I felt it!!

As far as the poem goes, I hardly find any need for comments. The personification of the old book, the time machine-like ability of the book to transport the readers to its own era and finally the crash back to the readers own time- is entirely magical. Anyone who has read an old, musty-smelling, slightly tattered volume will vouch for whatever is expressed here. Obviously, this feeling is lacking entirely when you read poems/books over the internet!!!

Sutirth Dey

[Martin adds]

I liked Sutirths commentary, since I have often had the same experience - a poem, or perhaps a single line, attaches itself to a particular occasion, and my experience of both the poem and the occasion are enhanced thereby.

Poetry truly is a collaborative effort between the writer and the reader, a fact that overly analytical critics often forget.

Emily Dickinson (December 10, 1830 – May 15, 1886) was an American poet. Though virtually unknown in her lifetime, Dickinson has come to be regarded, along with Walt Whitman, as one of the two quintessential American poets of the 19th century.

Dickinson lived an introverted and hermetic life. Although she wrote, at the last count, 1, 789 poems, only a handful of them were published during her lifetime — all anonymously and some perhaps without her knowledge.

Her father, Edward Dickinson (1803–1879), was politically prominent, serving on the Massachusetts General Court from 1838 to 1842, the Massachusetts

Senate from 1842 to 1843, and the U. S. House of Representatives (to which he was elected as a Whig candidate in 1852). Her mother, Emily Norcross Dickinson (1804–1882), a quiet woman, was chronically ill.

William Austin Dickinson (1829–1895), usually known by his middle name, was her older brother. He later married Dickinsons most intimate friend, Susan Gilbert, in 1856, and made his home next door to the house in which Emily lived most of her life. Their younger sister, Lavinia Norcross Dickinson (1833–1899), often known as " Vinnie", encouraged the posthumous editing and publishing of her sisters poetry.

Dickinson lived almost all of her life in the familys houses in Amherst, which has been preserved as the Emily Dickinson Museum. In 1840, Emily was educated at the nearby Amherst Academy, a former boys school which had opened to female students just two years earlier. She studied English and classical literature, learning Latin and reading the Aeneid over several years, and was taught in other subjects including religion, history, mathematics, geology, and biology.

In 1847, at 17, Dickinson began attending Mary Lyons Mount Holyoke Female Seminary (which would later become Mount Holyoke College) in South Hadley. Austin was sent to bring her home after less than a year at the Seminary, and she did not return to the school. Some speculate that she was homesick, however there is also speculation that she refused to sign an oath stating she would devote her life to Jesus Christ, and realizing she no longer wanted to attend there, went home and never returned.

After that, she left home only for short trips to visit relatives in Boston, Cambridge, and Connecticut. For decades, popular wisdom portrayed Dickinson as an agoraphobic recluse. New scholarship suggests that while

she was not necessarily an overly sociable person, she certainly valued her friends.

Susan married Dickinsons brother Austin Dickinson in 1856, though Susan and Emily had known each other earlier. Emily asked Susan to critique her poems, at which she began working harder than ever. Dickinson died on May 15, 1886. The cause of death was listed as Brights disease (nephritis). After her death, her family found 40 hand-bound volumes containing more than 1, 700 of her poems.

Her posthumous popularity at the turn of the century may have inspired one of her aunts, Kate Dickinson Sweetser, to become a writer.

Contents [hide]

Poetry and influence

Emily Dickinson, sometime around 1850- The supposedly second and only other known photo of her. Curators at the Emily Dickinson Museum deny its authenticity. Her poetry is often recognizable at a glance. Her facility with ballad and hymn meter, her extensive use of dashes and unconventional capitalization in her manuscripts, and her idiosyncratic vocabulary and imagery combine to create a unique lyric style.

Although over half of her poems were written during the years of the

American Civil War, it bears no overt influence in her poetry. Dickinson toyed briefly with the idea of having her life in her poems published, even asking Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a literary critic, for advice. Higginson immediately realized the poets talent, but when he tried to " improve" Dickinsons poems, adapting them to the more florid, romantic style popular at the time, Dickinson quickly lost interest in the project.

By her death (1886), only ten of Dickinsons poems (see: Franklin Edition of the Poems, 1998, App. 1) had been published. Seven of those ten were published in the Springfield Republican. Three posthumous collections in the 1890s established her as a powerful eccentric, but it wasnt until the twentieth century that she was appreciated as a poet.

Dickinsons poetry was collected after her death by Higginson and Mabel Loomis Todd, with Todd initially collecting and organizing the material and Higginson editing. They edited the poems extensively in order to regularize the manuscripts punctuation and capitalization to late nineteenth-century standards, occasionally rewording poems to reduce Dickinsons obliquity. A volume of Dickinsons Poems was published in Boston in 1890, and became quite popular; by the end of 1892 eleven editions had sold. Poems: Second Series was published in 1891 and ran to five editions by 1893; a third series was published in 1896. Two volumes of Dickinsons letters, heavily edited and selected by Todd (who falsified dates on some of them), were published in 1894.

This wave of posthumous publications gave Dickinsons poetry its first real public exposure, and it found an immediate audience. Backed by Higginson and William Dean Howells with favorable notices and reviews, the poetry was popular from 1890 to 1892. Later in the decade, critical opinion became

negative. Thomas Bailey Aldrich published an influential negative review anonymously in the January 1892 Atlantic Monthly:

It is plain that Miss Dickinson possessed an extremely unconventional and grotesque fancy. She was deeply tinged by the mysticism of Blake, and strongly influenced by the mannerism of Emerson.... But the incoherence and formlessness of her — versicles are fatal....[A]n eccentric, dreamy, half-educated recluse in an out-of-the-way New England village (or anywhere else) cannot with impunity set at defiance the laws of gravitation and grammar. (in Buckingham 281-282)

In the early 20th century, Dickinsons niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, published a series of further collections, including many previously unpublished poems, with similarly normalized punctuation and capitalization; The Single Hound emerged in 1914, The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson and The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson in 1924, Further Poems of Emily Dickinson in 1929. Other volumes edited by Todd and Bianchi emerged through the 1930s, releasing gradually more previously unpublished poems. With the rise of modernist poetry, Dickinsons failure to conform to nineteenth-century ideas of poetic form was no longer surprising nor distasteful to new generations of readers. A new wave of feminism created greater cultural sympathy for her as a female poet. Her stock had clearly risen, but Dickinson was not generally thought a great poet among the first generation of modernists, as is clear from R. P. Blackmurs critical essay of 1937:

She was neither a professional poet nor an amateur; she was a private poet who wrote as indefatigably as some women cook or knit. Her gift for words and the cultural predicament of her time drove her to poetry instead of

antimacassars.... She came, as Mr. Tate says, at the right time for one kind of poetry: the poetry of sophisticated, eccentric vision. That is what makes her good — in a few poems and many passages representatively great. But... the bulk of her verse is not representative but mere fragmentary indicative notation. The pity of it is that the document her whole work makes shows nothing so much as that she had the themes, the insight, the observation, and the capacity for honesty, which had she only known how — or only known why — would have made the major instead of the minor fraction of her verse genuine poetry. But her dying society had no tradition by which to teach her the one lesson she did not know by instinct. (195)

The texts of these early editions would hardly be recognized by later readers, as their extensive editing had altered the texts found in Dickinsons manuscripts substantially. A new and complete edition of Dickinsons poetry by Thomas H. Johnson, The Poems of Emily Dickinson, was published in three volumes in 1955. This edition formed the basis of all later Dickinson scholarship, and provided the Dickinson known to readers thereafter: the poems were untitled, only numbered in an approximate chronological sequence, were strewn with dashes and irregularly capitalized, and were often extremely elliptical in their language. They were printed for the first time much more nearly as Dickinson had left them, in versions approximating the text in her manuscripts. A later variorum edition provided many alternate wordings from which Johnson, in a more limited editorial intervention, had been forced to choose for the sake of readability.

Later readers would draw attention to the remaining problems in reading even Johnsons relatively unaltered typeset texts of Dickinson, claiming that Dickinsons treatment of her manuscripts suggested that their physical and

graphic properties were important to the reading of her poems. Possibly meaningful distinctions could be drawn, they argued, among different lengths and angles of dash in the poems, and different arrangements of text on the page. Several volumes have attempted to render Dickinsons handwritten dashes using many typographic symbols of varying length and angle; even R. W. Franklins 1998 variorum edition of the poems, which aimed to supplant Johnsons edition as the scholarly standard text, used typeset dashes of varying length to approximate the manuscripts dashes more closely. Some scholars claimed that the poems should be studied by reading the manuscripts themselves.

Music

Because of her frequent use of common metre, many of Dickinsons poems can easily be set to tunes (for example " I heard a fly buzz when I died- / The Stillness in the Room / Was like the Stillness in the Air / Between the Heaves of Storm"). Dickinson’s poetry has been used as texts for art songs by composers such as Aaron Copland, and Nick Peros.

Because of this, one can also sing many of her poems to the tunes of " Amazing Grace", " The Yellow Rose of Texas", or the " Gilligans Island" theme song. While this novelty is entertaining in itself, it also demonstrates the connection between poetry and song embodied for centuries in the ballad.

Sexuality

Sexual Orientation of:

William Shakespeare

Leonardo da Vinci

Emily Dickinson

Michael Jackson

Jesus Christ

Muhammad

Alexander the Great

Julius Caesar

Elagabalus

James Buchanan

Abraham Lincoln

Adolf Hitler

Robert Baden-Powell

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The sexuality of Emily Dickinson is a topic of dispute; it has been argued that she may have been bisexual or lesbian.

Dickinsons possible romantic and sexual adventures are matters of great controversy among her biographers and critics. There is little evidence on which to base a conclusion about the objects of her affection, though Dickinsons understanding of passion can be inferred through some of her poems and letters.

Attention has focused especially on a group of letters addressed only to " Master", known as the Master letters, in which Dickinson appears to be writing to a male lover; neither the addressee of these letters, nor whether they were sent, has been established. Some biographers have been convinced Dickinson might have been romantically involved with the newspaper publisher Samuel Bowles, a friend of her fathers, Judge Otis Lord, or a minister named Charles Wadsworth. A relatively recent theory has emerged that proposes William S. Clark, a prominent figure in Amherst at the

time, as the identity of her " Master".

Some biographers have theorized Dickinson may have had romantic attachments to women in her younger years, a hypothesis which has grown in popularity. After a claimed romance with Emily Fowler, circa 1850, some conjecture that Susan Gilbert 1851, her closest friend and sister-in-law, was another possible love. The evidence for all these theories is circumstantial at best. Many scholars that claim the evidence for the latter theory about her relationship with women is scant and highly ambiguous.

Peggy Macintosh, from Wellesley Colleges Center for Research on Women, and Ellen Louise Hart, from University of California at Santa Cruz: Cowell College, in their introduction of Emily Dickinson in The Heath Anthology of American Literature (Fifth Edition) note that " It is important to understand the role in Dickinson studies played by homophobia.... We do not know to what extent Dickinson expressed her sexual desires physically...."

Whether Dickinson had romantic feelings for women or not, it is important to remember that her poetry was heavily edited by several people before being released into the public posthumously. According to Macintosh and Hart, there is evidence that Mabel Loomis Todd (the editor) was Austin Dickinsons mistress, and together they " mutilated Dickinson’s manuscripts, erasing [Susans] name and scissoring out references to her." There were lines of poems that were completely scratched out. Todd was involved in the editing of all three initial volumes of Emilys published works. This alteration of documents throws possible romantic aspects into ambiguity.

Other aspects, though, such as their lifelong friendship (late teens to Emilys death), are not ambiguous. It is well-known that no one received more writing from Emily than Susan Gilbert. There were hundreds of letters found,

which Gilbert reciprocated. Dickinsons few friendships were all very close, and her friendship with Gilbert was no exception. Some of the letters were very passionate, furthering this ambiguity. While many of Dickinsons letters and poems are highly charged, passionate, and erotic, few biographers or critics believe that Dickinson physically consummated a relationship with anyone.