

12-1-1987

## Emily Dickinson as the Queen of Sheba and the Approach to Solomon Master

Daniel Hughes  
*Wayne State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ecommons.udayton.edu/udr>

---

### Recommended Citation

Hughes, Daniel (1987) "Emily Dickinson as the Queen of Sheba and the Approach to Solomon Master," *University of Dayton Review*. Vol. 19: No. 1, Article 4.

Available at: <https://ecommons.udayton.edu/udr/vol19/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Dayton Review by an authorized editor of eCommons. For more information, please contact [mschlangen1@udayton.edu](mailto:mschlangen1@udayton.edu), [ecommons@udayton.edu](mailto:ecommons@udayton.edu).





# EMILY DICKINSON AS THE QUEEN OF SHEBA AND THE APPROACH TO SOLOMON MASTER

by Daniel Hughes

Hart Crane, another great American poet with a taste for “sumptuous destitution,” concludes his poem to Emily Dickinson with reference to the land of Ophir, one of Dickinson’s “pecking phoenixes,” as Richard Howard has called them:<sup>1</sup>

Truly no flower yet withers in your hand,  
The harvest you descried and understand  
Needs more than wit to gather, love to bind.  
Some reconciliation of remotest mind—  
Leaves Ormus rubyless, and Ophir chill.  
Else tears heap all within one clay-cold hill.

Crane asserts that, though Dickinson’s poetry lives, to grasp the full harvest she gathered requires from her readers more than wit or love; it demands a recognition of an ultimate truth, “Some reconciliation of remotest mind” to which her poems aspire but which they do not attain. Lacking such faith, her poems, for all their splendors, leave the wealthy places of their origins, Ormus and Ophir, “rubyless” and “chill.” Her poems, for herself and for her reader, can lead to sorrow and a grave without immortality.

Dickinson’s failure to provide a “reconciliation” does not obviate her wish for one. The rich sources to which Crane refers point to a splendid hope. Ormus (or Ormuz), an ancient city on the Persian gulf, is not mentioned in her work, but Ophir makes a small appearance that proves of use in understanding her. Ophir is the place cited in *Kings* 9: 28: “And they came to Ophir and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to King Solomon” and again in *Kings* 10: 11: “and the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees and precious stones.” Dickinson refers to Ophir (and Peru) in three short poems, J 1366 a, J 1366 b, and J 1366 c that seem inconsequential but which can lead us in true Blakean fashion “in at Heaven’s gate/ Built in Jerusalem’s wall” because Ophir takes us to the Biblical Solomon and Sheba and a central drama in the poems of Emily Dickinson.

Thomas Johnson describes these poems, which he dates from 1876, 1878 and 1880, as “three separate poems that seem to be personalized messages touching symbolically on the theme of friendship.”<sup>2</sup> Dickinson indulges both her appreciation of richness and her sense of loss in these pieces. The first poem, “Brother of Ingots—Ah Peru— / Empty the Hearts that purchased you—” has an unknown addressee but clearly pays tribute by emphasizing the price one pays for knowing the person complimented. The second poem was part of a message sent to her sister-in-law, Susan Gilbert: “Sister of Ophir—/Ah Peru/ Subtle the Sum/That purchase you—”. If Susan is the sister of Ophir, she is wealthy but requires subtlety on the

Hughes: Emily Dickinson as the Queen of Sheba and the Approach to Solomon part of the person who would understand her. The poem was accompanied by a flower and a message: "Susan, I dreamed of you and send a carnation to endorse it." (*Letters*, p. 632.) Thus Susan is honored and "purchased" at once; the dreamer dreams and congratulates both of them for so dreaming. The third poem, "Brother of Ophir/ Bright Adieu,/ Honor, the shortest route/To you" was enclosed in a note sent to Mrs. Edward Tuckerman upon the death of Elihu Root, a young brilliant professor at Amherst College who died on 3 December 1880, and is thus a distant tribute and the most conventionally "complimentary" of these pieces which, for all their slightness show the familiar Dickinsonian embrace and retreat. Ophir is an image of wealth at the source; it also directs us to a familiar Biblical story that does not make an explicit appearance in her work but one that seems to haunt it: the tale of Solomon and Sheba.

Robert Frost, speaking in bemused admiration of Emily Dickinson's poetic method, said that "When she started a poem, it was 'Here I come' and she came plunging through. The meter and rhyme had to take care of itself!"<sup>3</sup> To the beginning of many Dickinson poems the intricate, sprightly music of Handel's Arrival of the Queen of Sheba in *Solomon* would make an appropriate setting. The familiar tale of these proud monarchs also takes on another tint when juxtaposed to Dickinson's poems. Sheba, we remember, appears as Dickinson can: grand and skeptical. Arriving in Jerusalem with a great train, she comes to the king "to prove him with hard questions." And when she is with the king, "she communed with him of all that was in her heart." Great Solomon in his turn meets her grandly with wealth of spirit and world. "And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not *anything* hid from the king, which he told her not." Famously and sadly perhaps, the Solomonic display discourages the Queen until "there was no more spirit in her." Humbled, and honoring Israel through its greatest king, the Queen of Sheba exchanges worldly wealth with him: "there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon." The king in turn gave "unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, besides that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants."

This may be another tale of the triumph of patriarchy, but the Queen herself is pictured as a figure of grandeur and solemnity in this account. The reach and the nervous fear of the story suggest an analogue for Dickinson's work—as though she had received from the mysterious Master of her letters a welcome and an overpowering. How was she to survive? The self-crowning, even the self-crowning, of many poems should be looked at in this context. Emily Dickinson as "the Queen of Calvary" is perhaps too well-known; as the Queen of Sheba seeking her Solomon she manifests a celebration of the poetic imagination as intense and self-realizing as Whitman's.

The "Sheba" poems and passages in Dickinson's work are many and the converse of that Barefoot Estate she can also embrace. That she had a taste and passion for the purple is undeniable; purple and pearl are her favorite adjectives and nouns for exalted spiritual states. There is nearly a program of accumulation and ascension in her poetry, its method best described in the famous poem she sent in her first approach to Higginson:

We play at Paste—  
Till qualified for Pearl—  
Then, drop the Paste—  
And deem ourself a fool—  
The Shapes—though—were similar—  
And our new Hands  
Learned Gem-Tactics  
Practicing Sands—

(J 320)

The Gem-Tactics by which the barefoot beggar or the Queen of Calvary is transformed into the monarch worthy of admission to Solomon are strenuous and perilous. The compensatory cry of the trapped self given to boasting is but the first part of the "Sheba" process:

Me, change! Me, alter!  
Then I will, when on the Everlasting Hill  
A smaller Purple grows—  
At sunset, or a lesser glow  
Flickers upon Cordillera—  
At Day's superior close!

(J 268)

The grandeur without meets the grandeur within in an Ironic Sublime because sunset is, after all, the *death* of day.<sup>4</sup> Like Wordsworth and Shelley, Dickinson both embraces and resists the analogy between nature and her sense of her creative powers. The boasting must yield to a more thoughtful account. What is the crowning that goes on and how does it separate itself from a natural and transient glory?

The Day that I was crowned  
Was like the other Days—  
Until the Coronation came—  
And then 'twas otherwise—  
As Carbon in the Coal  
And Carbon in the Gem  
Are one—and yet the former  
Were dull for Diadem—  
I rose and all was plain  
But when the Day declined  
Myself and It, in Majesty  
Were equally adorned—  
The Grace that I—, was chose  
To Me surpassed the Crown  
That was the Witness for the Grace—  
'Twas even that 'twas mine—

(J 356)

The stumbling grammar and the tentative, low boast that contrasts with the exuberance of "Me, change! Me, alter!" show that the poet is unsettled by her discovery that the coal-carbon of nature and the coal-carbon in the gemmy soul are finally different. The Grace vouchsafed to the poet surpasses the Crown of Nature; the sunset is not the Grace itself but only the witness to that Grace. The Crown she puts on does not decline with the day but remains, a spiritualizing of her wealth. But she is not sure; can she, like Napoleon, crown herself?



Hughes: Emily Dickinson as the Queen of Sheba and the Approach to Solomon  
The most secure assertion of her genius is the startling "Mine—by the Right of the White Election," a fusion of Sheba-hood and poet-hood:

Mine— by the Right of the White Election!  
Mine—by the Royal Seal!  
Mine—by the sign in the Scarlet Prison—  
Bars—cannot conceal!  
Mine—here in Vision and Veto!  
Mine—by the Grave's Repeal—  
Titled Confirmed—  
Delirious Charter!  
Mine—long as Ages steal!

The richness of meaning in Dickinson's white costume is manifest here in high glee. Sandra Gilbert is correct to align it with Melville's Whale and warn the interpreter:

We might wonder. . . if Dickinson herself consciously intended her costume to convey any one message. . . The range of associations her white poems imply suggest, on the contrary, that, for her, as for Melville, white is the ultimate symbol of paradox, enigma, and irony.<sup>5</sup>

This poem's White Election describes, besides much else, the joy Dickinson feels as she puts the words on the white page and seals them with her hand. The Scarlet Prison is the body itself, necessary for the making of the poem, and the Vision and Veto are the rewriting of her poems that has left them so open. The Delirious Charter she recognizes is the inner exulting she senses in her greatest period (1861-1863). The headiest wealth possessed by Emily the Queen of Sheba is a sure sense that she was also Queen of language.

This "Sheba-boasting" in Emily Dickinson is not, however, without moments of doubt and difficulty. The Master letters, and poems like "I'm saying every day" and "Dropped into the Ether Acre" exhibit the complications of self-crowning. Whoever Master was, he does not seem to have communed with her as Solomon did with Sheba though she certainly told him "all that was in her heart." The royal impulse in Dickinson is present in the mysterious letters to Master which are also like drafts for poems. She asserts in the second letter that "if I wish with a might I cannot repress—that mine were the Queen's place—the love of the Plantagenet is my only apology—" but she can also, in the shattered third letter, take on the Low Pathetic by wondering if she has grieved Master by her "odd-Backwoodsman (life) ways," asking him to "teach her majesty" because she is "Slow (Dull) at patrician things." This mixture of grandeur and abasement yields to a fierce assertion in the second Master letter when she rejects seeing Master in Heaven after death because "the Corporation" are going to Heaven too and she prefers a sequestered love. She wants to grow old with him in *this* life: "I waited a long time—Master but I can wait more—wait till my hazel hair is dappled—and you carry the cane—then I can look at my watch—and if the Day is too far declined—we can take the chances (of) Heaven—What would you do with me if I came 'in white?' Have you the litte chest to put the Alive-in?" The ever-ramifying white in Dickinson means here that she will come to him in honesty and frank love, neither angel nor corpse but a redeemed and still earthly woman who can reproach Master: "I didn't think to tell you, you didn't come to me 'in white' nor ever told me why." This shows that Master had not been as

frank with Emily (Daisy) as she had been with him; yet together in this white sign they will come to their own Redemption like the spiritual aristocrats Shelley and D.H. Lawrence wish their men and women to be. "I heard of a thing called 'Redemption' which tested men and women. You remember I asked you for it—you gave me something else. I forgot the Redemption in the Redeemed—I didn't tell you for a long time, but I knew you had altered me." The anguished and muted grandeur of the Master letters shows that the redemption of lovers beyond the Corporation was not realized in experience. Master remains a would-be Solomon who never did give Sheba "whatever she asked besides that which Solomon gave her of his own royal bounty." *This* Sheba must continue to reward herself.

Poems of nervous and dramatized self-election are frequent in Dickinson. In J 373, for example, the tone is defensive, uncertain, and finally relieved:

I'm saying every day  
 "If I should be a Queen, tomorrow"—  
 I'd do this way—  
 And so I deck, a little,  
 If it be, I wake a Bourbon,  
 None on me, bend supercilious—  
 With "This was she—  
 Begged in the Market place—  
 Yesterday."

The poet "decks" herself from Nature and Poetry that she appear worthy:

Court is a stately place—  
 I've heard men say—  
 So I loop my apron, against the Majesty  
 With bright Pins of Buttercup—  
 That not too plain—  
 Rank—overtake me—  
 And perch my Tongue  
 On Twigs of singing—rather high—  
 But this, might be my brief Term  
 To qualify—

She wonders, however, if the language she has taken from the cricket and the bee must now reluctantly be put aside:

Put from my simple speech all plain words—  
 Take other accents, as such I heard  
 Though but for the Cricket—just,  
 And for the Bee—  
 Not in all the Meadow—  
 One accost me—

The strategy chosen is to be at once prepared and alert:

Better to be ready—  
 Than did next morn  
 Meet me in Aragorn  
 My old Gown—on—

Hughes: Emily Dickinson as the Queen of Sheba and the Approach to Solomon  
And the surprised Air  
Rustics—wear—  
Summoned—unexpectedly  
To Exeter—

The “surprised air” the speaker does not want to show when she is called is, like so much else in Dickinson, wearing a double face. The hesitant bumpkin expects to be called and will know how to behave when she is. The tone is wry, then resonant at the thought of Exeter.<sup>6</sup>

“Dropped into the Ether Acre” (J 665), read as a poem about death by Gilbert,<sup>7</sup> may also be read as an account of a Sheba-journey to transformation:

Dropped into the Ether Acre—  
Wearing the Sod Gown—  
Sonnet of Everlasting Laces—  
Brooch—frozen on—  
Horses of Blonde—and Coach of Silver—  
Baggage a Strapped Pearl—  
Journey of Down—and Whip of Diamond—  
Riding to meet the Earl—

The apparent funeral train here is more like a journey to Exeter. The Earl here and elsewhere in Dickinson is a form of change. In J 213 the most sexually explicit of Dickinson’s poems, the Earl is the phallic bee over whose encounter with the Harebell the poet muses:

Did the Harebell loose her girdle  
To the lover Bee  
Would the Bee the Harebell *hallow*  
Much as formerly?  
Did the “Paradise”—persuaded—  
Yield her moat of pearl—  
Would the Eden *be* an Eden,  
Or the Earl—an Earl?

This Blake-sounding poem asks whether the sexual encounter will diminish both flower and bee, but it also wonders about the Sheba-Solomon character of the participants. Will their potential selves survive the encroachments of the actual? The Earl with whom Dickinson identifies herself in J 452, “The Maya—took the Pearl—/ Not I—the Earl” is an image usually signifying *a state that is to be*. In J 704, “No matter—now—Sweet,” the “dull Girl” of the poem, offended by some slight, warns her offender twice that when she becomes an earl the slighter may be sorry then? In J 473, “I am ashamed—I hide—,” the speaker is a “dowerless Girl” who, in order to become a bride and put on her “best Pride” will among other strategies, “hold my Brow like an Earl.” Even the anorexic J 791, “God gave a Loaf to every Bird—” uses the Earl to exalt the crumb the speaker has been given:

I wonder how the Rich—may feel—  
An Indiaman—An Earl—  
I deem that I—with but a Crumb—  
Am Sovereign of them all—

The Earl, but one of Dickinson’s guises, stands, I think, in an important place in



her work between the completed white election and the difficult assertion of the Sheba-state. The Earl is a figure of movement and potentiality with a wavering sexual identity; he is obviously not yet the Queen of Sheba or her sought king.

The most dramatic and fully articulate Sheba poem in Dickinson is J 508, "I'm ceded—I've stopped being Theirs—," a work reminiscent of those great Romantic lyrics of mid-point confrontation with the self that are represented in Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," and D.H. Lawrence's "Song of a Man Who has Come Through." The self-baptizing of this poem celebrates a history of the developed soul:

I'm ceded—I've stopped being Theirs—  
 The name They dropped upon my face  
 With water, in the country church  
 Is finished, using, now,  
 And they can put it with my Dolls,  
 My childhood, and the string of spools,  
 I've finished threading—too—

One recalls Emily's wonderful sentences to Higginson about religion in the second of her great show-off letters to him:

. . . I have a Brother and Sister—My Mother does not care for  
 thought—and Father is too busy with his Briefs to notice what  
 we do—He buys me many Books but begs me not to read  
 them—because he fears they joggle the Mind. They are  
 religious—except me—and address an Eclipse, every  
 morning—whom they call their "Father." But I fear my story  
 fatigues you—I would like to learn—Could you tell me how  
 to grow—Or is it unconveyed—like Melody—or Witchcraft?

The second baptism in J 508 is a conscious one, and a proof that she did not need Higginson to tell her how to grow:

Baptized, before, without the choice,  
 But this time, consciously, of Grace—  
 Unto supremest name—  
 Called to my Full—the Crescent dropped—  
 Existence's whole Arc, filled up  
 With one small Diadem.

She is called to her "supremest name" which is her own and which I have been suggesting as "Sheba." Called to a fuller self, the crescent moon of the first quarter must now be replaced by the small diadem of the whole self.

The last stanza of J 508 underlines the Sheba assertion with an explicitness unusual in Dickinson:

My second Rank—too small the first—  
 Crowned—Crowing—on my father's breast—  
 A half unconscious Queen—  
 But this time—Adequate—Erect,  
 With will to choose, or to reject,  
 And I choose, just a Crown—

In the first rank Dickinson was not truly crowned, but was boasting from a source

Hughes: Emily Dickinson as the Queen of Sheba and the Approach to Solomon  
not her own. The variants to Crowning, whimpering and dangling, look back to the pathetic state she has outgrown. The empty crowing of the child is replaced by the authentic claim of the woman who can choose or reject the Crown of her maturity, and she chooses to embrace it, ready now as Sheba to join her Solomon.

But who or what is Solomon in her work and is this heuristic and shadowy figure to be equated with the Master of her letters and poems? The struggle with patriarchy, the “Burglar! Banker—Father!” of poem 49, can veer wildly in Dickinson from the combative to the namby-pamby that may or may not be ironical:

I hope the Father in the skies  
Will lift his little girl—  
Old-fashioned-naughty-everything  
Over the stile of “Pearl.” (J 70)

But once the Crowning of a true Selfhood has been realized Sheba must address her Solomon. The complications of the Master figure in Dickinson, like her strategic apprehension of almost anything, require a patient gathering of her words. St. Armand suggests that Master was many things to Emily Dickinson, but I find his translation of this story into the names of Daisy and Phoebus most helpful.<sup>8</sup> Daisy, Dickinson’s name for herself in letters and poems, needs little explanation. An early poem makes Daisy’s passive, worshipful nature apparent:

The Daisy follows soft the Sun—  
And when his golden walk is done—  
Sits shyly at his feet— (J 106)

But the important “Man of Noon” letter of seven years later expresses in its anxiety over marriage both a Daisy overcome and a Sheba desirous for riches. Musing on those newly-married, Dickinson writes to Susan Gilbert:

you have seen flowers at morning, *satisfied* with the dew, and those same sweet flowers at noon with their heads bowed in anguish before the mighty sun; think you these thirsty blossoms will *now* need naught but—dew? No—they will cry for sunlight and pine for the burning noon, tho’ it scorches them, scathes them; they have got through with peace—they know that the man of noon, is *mightier* than the morning and their life is henceforth to him.

Daisy contains a Sheba in her; the “Phoebus” St. Armand names as her paramour is an appropriate image of the lover sought. It’s important to understand that Master is the lover-husband, not the earthly father or the father in heaven. The self-crowning of “I’m ceded—I’ve stopped being Theirs” shows Dickinson transforming from Daisy to Sheba. Phoebus does not appear by that name in Dickinson’s work any more than Solomon does, but to meet Master and transform him into Solomon is a deep motive in this extraordinary poet’s career.

Nothing one says about Emily Dickinson can be final. The Daisy-Sheba polarity continues throughout her 1, 775 poems. Two more examples of the intense struggle of these contraries in her work demonstrate the dramatic uses she made of the theme.

Although Benjamin Newton or Susan Gilbert have been suggested as the person addressed in J 299, “Your riches—taught me Poverty,” I see it as another “Sheba”

University of Dayton Review, Vol 19, No 4 (1987), Art 4  
poem in which and nearly return to the condition of the little girl who hopes for a boost into heaven. The imagery should be familiar:

Your Riches—taught me Poverty,  
Myself—a Millionaire  
In little Wealths, as Girls could boast  
Till broad as Buenos Ayre—  
You drifted your Dominions—  
A different Peru—  
And I esteemed all Poverty  
For Life's Estate with you—

The "Peru" of 1366 A, "Brother of Ingots,—Ah Peru—" and 1366 B, "Sister of Ophir/  
Ah, Peru—," already cited, reinforce the richness and distance of the Other. The  
girlish speaker must admit the lack in herself:

Of Mines, I little know—myself—  
But just the name of Gems—  
The Colors of the Commonest—  
And scarce of Diadems—  
So much, that did I meet the Queen  
Her glory I should know—  
But this must, be a different Wealth—  
To miss it—beggars so—

The speaker knows the *names* of gems and common colors and she would know  
the glory of the Queen if she met her, but the greater glory, which can only be the  
King's, eludes her. The metaphors by which this wished-for wealth is expressed in  
the next stanza point, like Peru, to the remote richness of the king's treasury:

I'm sure 'tis India—all day—  
To those who look on You—  
Without a stint—without a blame—  
Might I—but be the Jew—  
I'm Sure it is Golconda—  
Beyond my power to deem—  
To have a Smile for Mine—each Day,  
How better than a Gem!

The pseudo-millionaire of the beginning of the poem declines into a wistful  
school-girl whose lament is tinged with bitterness:

At least it solaces to know  
That there exists—a Gold—  
Altho' I prove it just in time  
In distance, to behold—  
Its far-far Treasure to surmise  
And estimate the Pearl—  
That slipped my simple fingers through—  
While just a Girl at School

But the near defeat and wilful withdrawal of Daisy in 299 should be contrasted  
with the fierce assertion of Sheba in J 506, "He touched me, so I live to know" in



which So. Emily Dickinson as the Queen of Sheba and the Approach to Solomon  
Hughes, Emily Dickinson as the Queen of Sheba and the Approach to Solomon  
Passion sign:

He touched me, so I live to know  
That such a day, permitted so,  
I groped upon his breast—  
It was as a boundless place to me  
And silenced, as the awful sea  
Puts minor streams to rest.

And now, I'm different from before  
As if I breathed superior air—  
Or brushed a Royal Gown—  
My feet too, that had wandered so—  
My Gypsy face—transfigured now—  
To tenderer Renown—

The difficult last stanza of the poem moves back from startled *touch* to *wish* again in which Solomon resumes his distance, but, this time, the erotic and the religious are joined in a passionate gesture:

Into this Port, if I might come,  
Rebecca to Jerusalem,  
Would not so ravished turn—  
Nor, Persian, baffled at her shrine  
Lift such a Crucifixal sign  
To her imperial sun.

Neither the Biblical Rebecca looking toward her Holy City nor the Persian woman at her shrine would pay such homage as "Sheba" would if she could come into the port that is Solomon Master; the "baffled" Persian lifts the Cross rather than the Crescent because, presumably, she is a convert to her Man of Noon, the imperial sun. But Solomon and Master are not fully one in Dickinson's work. As in the Biblical tale, we witness an exaltation and a departure but the sign remains, burning away its narrative container.

*For Meditation.* Piero della Francesca's great fresco in Arezzo picturing the meeting of Solomon and Sheba, part of the cycle of *The Legend of the True Cross*, depicts the Queen, dressed simply with a white veil over her red hair ("my Hair is bold like the Chestnut bur") inclining her head slightly to listen to Solomon's wisdom, their hands joined in a solemn clasp. Sheba's features are lucid and large, inexpressive but beautiful, as she listens reverentially but securely to the king. Solomon, wearing "a robe of sybaritic splendour," as Kenneth Clark points out, looks on with Oriental impassiveness from his heavy, nearly closed lids, but we are not overwhelmed in external splendours. Piero's "beauty of texture," writes Clark "resides in a synthesis of colour and tone, and not in the stuff represented: in other words, it is the product of spirit and not matter."<sup>9</sup> Indeed, it is another "sumptuous destitution" in which the simply dressed but wealthy woman who was so generous with the king appears in her humility and need, her grace against his weary fullness. Listen: she is saying:

University of Dayton Review, Vol. 19, No. 1 [1987], Art. 4  
Of all the Souls that stand create—  
I have elected—One—  
When Sense from Spirit—files away—  
And Subterfuge—is done—  
When that which is—and that which was—  
Apart—intrinsic—stand—  
And this brief Drama in the flesh—  
Is shifted—like a Sand—  
When figures show their royal Front—  
And Mists—are carved away,  
Behold the Atom—I preferred—  
To all the lists of Clay!

(J 664)

Wayne State University

- <sup>1</sup> Richard Howard, "A Consideration of the Writings of Emily Dickinson," *Prose* 6 (1973), p. 79. Richard Wilbur's important essay, "Sumptuous Destitution," first called attention to this important phrase in *Emily Dickinson: Three Views* by Archibald MacLeish, Louise Bogan, and Richard Wilbur Amherst, Mass., 1960.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson, Including Variant readings critically compared with all known manuscripts*. Ed. Thomas H. Johnson, vol. 3, Cambridge, Mass. 1955, p. 410.
- <sup>3</sup> Karl Keller, *The Only Kangaroo among the Beauty*, Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979, p. 313.
- <sup>4</sup> See the chapter, "The Art of Peace: Dickinson, Sunsets, and the Sublime," in *Emily Dickinson and her Culture* by Barton Levi St. Armand, Cambridge University Press, 1984 for a brilliant analysis of sunsets in the poetry of Emily Dickinson.
- <sup>5</sup> *The Madwoman in the Attic*. New Haven, Yale University Press 1979, 1984), p. 619.
- <sup>6</sup> See Jane Donahue Eberwein, *Emily Dickinson/Strategies of Limitation*, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts press, 1985 for the Tennysonian relevance of this passage, p. 101.
- <sup>7</sup> *Madwoman*, p. 619.
- <sup>8</sup> St. Armand, p. 82 and *passim*.
- <sup>9</sup> Kenneth Clark, *Piero della Francesca*. London and New York. Phaidon, 1966, p. 46.