

These poems are the selection for the April 15, 2015 Boulder Great Books discussion of Emily Dickinson. There are three criteria for selection: the poem was mentioned in Poisonwood Bible, the poem was cited in Voth's lecture on Emily Dickinson, or the poem was in the 20th fascicle (Emily's own selection and ordering of 18 of her poems that she bound by hand into one volume).

The numbers in bold below are the poem # from T. H. Johnson's The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson, who presented them chronologically.

Poems referenced in Kingsolver's, Poisonwood Bible:

pg. 250, 368 [p 185, 277] **254**

"Hope" is the thing with feathers —
That perches in the soul —
And sings the tune without the words —
And never stops — at all —

And sweetest — in the Gale — is heard —
And sore must be the storm —
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm —

I've heard it in the chillest land —
And on the strangest Sea —
Yet, never, in Extremity,
It asked a crumb — of Me.

pg. 392 [p 295] **764**

Presentiment — is that long Shadow — on the Lawn —
Indicatives that Suns go down —

The Notice to the startled Grass
That Darkness — is about to pass —

pg. 479 [p 365] **712**

Because I could not stop for Death —
He kindly stopped for me —
The Carriage held but just Ourselves —
And Immortality.

We slowly drove — He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility —

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess — in the Ring —
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain —
We passed the Setting Sun —

Or rather — He passed Us —
The Dews drew quivering and chill —
For only Gossamer, my Gown —
My Tippet — only Tulle —

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground —
The Roof was scarcely visible —
The Cornice — in the Ground —

Since then — 'tis Centuries — and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity —

pg. 528 [p 407] **1129**

Tell all the Truth but tell it slant —
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth's superb surprise

As Lightning to the Children eased
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind —

pg. 687 [p 527] **583**

A Toad, can die of Light —
Death is the Common Right
Of Toads and Men —

Of Earl and Midge
The privilege —
Why swagger, then?
The Gnat's supremacy is large as Thine —

Life — is a different Thing —
So measure Wine —
Naked of Flask — Naked of Cask —
Bare Rhine —
Which Ruby's mine?

pg. 694 [p 532] **441**

This is my letter to the World
That never wrote to Me —
The simple News that Nature told —
With tender Majesty

Her Message is committed
To Hands I cannot see —
For love of Her — Sweet — countrymen —
Judge tenderly — of Me

(page references from Kingsolver in red for large print edition,
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Poems mentioned in Voth's History of World Literature,
Lecture 32:

(Dickinson usually wrote in alternating lines of iambic
tetrameter and iambic trimeter, usually rhyming abcb.)

241

I like a look of Agony,
Because I know it's true —
Men do not sham Convulsion,
Nor simulate, a Throe —

The Eyes glaze once — and that is Death —
Impossible to feign
The Beads upon the Forehead
By homely Anguish strung.

214

I taste a liquor never brewed —
From Tankards scooped in Pearl —
Not all the Vats upon the Rhine
Yield such an Alcohol!

Inebriate of Air — am I —
And Debauchee of Dew —
Reeling — thro endless summer days —
From inns of Molten Blue —

When "Landlords" turn the drunken Bee
Out of the Foxglove's door —
When Butterflies — renounce their "drams" —
I shall but drink the more!

Till Seraphs swing their snowy Hats —
And Saints — to windows run —
To see the little Tippler
Leaning against the — Sun —

348

I dreaded that first Robin, so,
But He is mastered, now,
I'm accustomed to Him grown,
He hurts a little, though —

I thought If I could only live
Till that first Shout got by —
Not all Pianos in the Woods
Had power to mangle me —

I dared not meet the Daffodils —
For fear their Yellow Gown
Would pierce me with a fashion
So foreign to my own —

I wished the Grass would hurry —

So — when 'twas time to see —
He'd be too tall, the tallest one
Could stretch — to look at me —

I could not bear the Bees should come,
I wished they'd stay away
In those dim countries where they go,
What word had they, for me?

They're here, though; not a creature failed —
No Blossom stayed away
In gentle deference to me —
The Queen of Calvary —

Each one salutes me, as he goes,
And I, my childish Plumes,
Lift, in bereaved acknowledgment
Of their unthinking Drums —

216A

Safe in their Alabaster Chambers —
Untouched by Morning
And untouched by Noon —
Lie the meek members of the Resurrection —
Rafter of Satin — and Roof of Stone!

Grand go the Years – in the Crescent – above them —
Worlds scoop their Arcs —
And Firmaments – row —
Diadems – drop – and Doges — surrender —
Soundless as dots – on a Disc of Snow —

449

I died for Beauty — but was scarce
Adjusted in the Tomb
When One who died for Truth, was lain
In an adjoining room —

He questioned softly "Why I failed"?

"For Beauty", I replied —
"And I — for Truth — Themselves are One —
We Brethren, are", He said —

And so, as Kinsmen, met a Night —
We talked between the Rooms —
Until the Moss had reached our lips —
And covered up — our names —

Poems from Fascicle 20:

Sharon Cameron, Choosing not Choosing: Dickinson's Fascicles.

(Appendix B has photographs of most of the poems from fascicle 20 in Emily Dickinson's handwriting. The figure numbers are **noted in Green** alongside the poem numbers.)

1725

I took one Draught of Life —
I'll tell you what I paid —
Precisely an existence —
The market price, they said.

They weighed me, Dust by Dust —
They balanced Film with Film,
Then handed me my Being's worth —
A single Dram of Heaven!

1761

A train went through a burial gate,
A bird broke forth and sang,
And trilled, and quivered, and shook his throat
Till all the churchyard rang;

And then adjusted his little notes,
And bowed and sang again.
Doubtless, he thought it meet of him
To say good-by to men.

(Figure 11)

364

The Morning after Woe —
'Tis frequently the Way —
Surpasses all that rose before —
For utter Jubilee —

As Nature did not care —
And piled her Blossoms on —
And further to parade a Joy
Her Victim stared upon —

The Birds declaim their Tunes —
Pronouncing every word
Like Hammers — Did they know they fell
Like Litanies of Lead —

On here and there — a creature —
They'd modify the Glee
To fit some Crucifixal Clef —
Some Key of Calvary —

(Figure 12)

524

Departed — to the Judgment —
A Mighty Afternoon —
Great Clouds — like Ushers — learning —
Creation — looking on —

The Flesh — Surrendered — Cancelled —
The Bodiless — begun —
Two Worlds — like Audiences — disperse —
And leave the Soul — alone —

(Figure 13)

525

I think the Hemlock likes to stand
Upon a Marge of Snow —
It suits his own Austerity —
And satisfies an awe

That men, must slake in Wilderness —
And in the Desert — cloy —
An instinct for the Hoar, the Bald —
Lapland's — necessity —

The Hemlock's nature thrives — on cold —
The Gnash of Northern winds
Is sweetest nutriment — to him —
His best Norwegian Wines —

To satin Races — he is nought —
But Children on the Don,
Beneath his Tabernacles, play,
And Dnieper Wrestlers, run.

(Figure 14)

365

Dare you see a Soul at the “White Heat”?
Then crouch within the door —
Red — is the Fire's common tint —
But when the vivid Ore

Has vanquished Flame's conditions,
It quivers from the Forge
Without a color, but the light
Of unanointed Blaze.

Least Village boasts its Blacksmith
Whose Anvil's even ring
Stands symbol for the finer Forge
That soundless tugs — within —

Refining these impatient Ores
With Hammer, and with Blaze
Until the Designated Light
Repudiate the Forge —

(Figure 15) 526

To hear an Oriole sing
May be a common thing —
Or only a divine.

It is not of the Bird
Who sings the same, unheard,
As unto Crowd —

The Fashion of the Ear
Attireth that it hear
In Dun, or fair —

So whether it be Rune,
Or whether it be none
Is of within.

The "Tune is in the Tree —"
The Skeptic — showeth me —
"No Sir! In Thee!"

(Figure 16) 301

I reason, Earth is short —
And Anguish — absolute —
And many hurt,
But, what of that?

I reason, we could die —
The best Vitality
Cannot excel Decay,
But, what of that?

I reason, that in Heaven —
Somehow, it will be even —
Some new Equation, given —
But, what of that?

(Figure 17)

527

To put this World down, like a Bundle —
And walk steady, away,
Requires Energy — possibly Agony —
'Tis the Scarlet way

Trodden with straight renunciation
By the Son of God —
Later, his faint Confederates
Justify the Road —

Flavors of that old Crucifixion —
Filaments of Bloom, Pontius Pilate sowed —
Strong Clusters, from Barabbas' Tomb —

Sacrament, Saints partook before us —
Patent, every drop,
With the Brand of the Gentile Drinker
Who indorsed the Cup —

(Figures 18 & 19) 366

Although I put away his life —
An Ornament too grand
For Forehead low as mine, to wear,
This might have been the Hand

That sowed the flower, he preferred —
Or smoothed a homely pain,
Or pushed the pebble from his path —
Or played his chosen tune —

On Lute the least — the latest —
But just his Ear could know
That whatsoe'er delighted it,
I never would let go —

The foot to bear his errand —
A little Boot I know —
Would leap abroad like Antelope —

With just the grant to do —

His weariest Commandment —
A sweeter to obey,
Than "Hide and Seek" —
Or skip to Flutes —
Or all Day, chase the Bee —

Your Servant, Sir, will weary —
The Surgeon, will not come —
The World, will have its own — to do —
The Dust, will vex your Fame —

The Cold will force your tightest door
Some February Day,
But say my apron bring the sticks
To make your Cottage gay —

That I may take that promise
To Paradise, with me —
To teach the Angels, avarice,
You, Sir, taught first — to me.

(Figure 20) 367

Over and over, like a Tune —
The Recollection plays —
Drums off the Phantom Battlements
Cornets of Paradise —

Snatches, from Baptized Generations —
Cadences too grand
But for the Justified Processions
At the Lord's Right hand.

(Figures 21 & 22) 670

One need not be a Chamber — to be Haunted —
One need not be a House —
The Brain has Corridors — surpassing
Material Place —

Far safer, of a Midnight Meeting
External Ghost
Than an interior Confronting —
That Cooler Host.

Far safer, through an Abbey gallop,
The Stones a'chase —
Than Unarmed, one's a'self encounter —
In lonesome Place —

Ourselves behind ourselves, concealed —
Should startle most —
Assassin hid in our Apartment
Be Horror's least.

The Body — borrows a Revolver —
He bolts the Door —
O'erlooking a superior spectre —
Or More —

(Figure 23) 302

Like Some Old fashioned Miracle
When Summertime is done —
Seems Summer's Recollection
And the Affairs of June

As infinite Tradition
As Cinderella's Bays —
Or Little John — of Lincoln Green —
Or Blue Beard's Galleries —

Her Bees have a fictitious Hum —
Her Blossoms, like a Dream —
Elate us — till we almost weep —
So plausible — they seem —

Her Memories like Strains — Review —
When Orchestra is dumb —
The Violin in Baize replaced —
And Ear — and Heaven — numb —

(Figure 24) 303

The Soul selects her own Society —
Then — shuts the Door —
To her divine Majority —
Present no more —

Unmoved — she notes the Chariots — pausing —
At her low Gate —
Unmoved — an Emperor be kneeling
Upon her Mat —

I've known her — from an ample nation —
Choose One —
Then — close the Valves of her attention —
Like Stone —

(Figure 25) 368

How sick — to wait — in any place — but thine —
I knew last night — when someone tried to twine —
Thinking — perhaps — that I looked tired — or alone —
Or breaking — almost — with unspoken pain —

And I turned — ducal —
That right — was thine —
One port — suffices — for a Brig — like *mine* —

Ours be the tossing — wild though the sea —
Rather than a Mooring — unshared by thee.
Ours be the Cargo — *unladen* — *here* —
Rather than the "*spicy isles* —"
And thou — not there —

(Figure 26) 528

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 in Veto!
Mine — by the Grave's Repeal —
Tilted — Confirmed —
Delirious Charter!
Mine — long as Ages steal!

(Figure 27) 369

She lay as if at play
Her life had leaped away —
Intending to return —
But not so soon —

Her merry Arms, half dropt —
As if for lull of sport —
An instant had forgot —
The Trick to start —

Her dancing Eyes — ajar —
As if their Owner were
Still sparkling through
For fun — at you —

Her Morning at the door —
Devising, I am sure —
To force her sleep —
So light — so deep —

(Figure 28) 370

Heaven is so far of the Mind
That were the Mind dissolved —
The Site — of it — by Architect
Could not again be proved —

'Tis vast — as our Capacity —
As fair — as our idea —
To Him of adequate desire
No further 'tis, than Here —

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