



PROJECT MUSE®

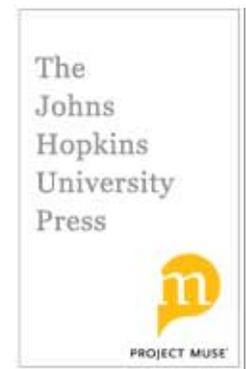
Dickinson and the Poetics of Whiteness

Vivian R. Pollak

The Emily Dickinson Journal, Volume 9, Number 2, Fall 2000, pp. 84-95 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/edj.2000.0019>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/11152>



VIVIAN POLLAK

Dickinson and the Poetics of Whiteness

Emily Dickinson's response to the racial rhetoric of the American Civil War has received comparatively little attention.¹ The reclusive Dickinson, it is often thought, had turned inward to pursue no cause but her own. Or not much of one, for after all she did write a demonstrable handful of poems about the war itself, and she was in active correspondence with an Abolitionist hero for some of it.² Yet her primary concern, many of us have said, was with an inner Civil War, with the struggle to articulate herself, and to discover in art what she called "the Art of Peace" (Fr665). I, for example, have noted that "though her most driven years as an artist included and may indeed have coincided with the period of the American Civil War — almost half of her . . . poems appear to have been written from 1861 to 1865 — she has almost nothing to say about its precipitating causes, its events, or its consequences. Instead, she flaunts a schismatic style which announces that she has seceded from 'their story' into hers" (*Anxiety* 18). Thus in my earlier work I presented a Dickinson who as an artist sought to transform a moral and political conflict in which men were the leading players into a more gender — neutral war of words. Though I still believe that Dickinson's style mobilizes contrasts — for example the contrast between the news she knows, the news that stays news, and the ephemeral battle reports she hasn't got time to bother with — in this talk I would like to examine Dickinson's constructions of whiteness in order to suggest that she occupies many subject positions and that one of them is that of a white person who identifies her psychological difference from other people with racial and ethnic others. Thus when she writes, "A solemn thing — it was — I said — / A Woman — white — to be — / And wear — if God should count me fit — / Her blameless mystery" (Fr307), her language encourages us to push against the

Vivian Pollak

obvious reading and to liberate the perverse text embedded within her poem. Whiteness functions as an ambivalent sign of historical privilege; the poet, I intend to argue, is ambivalent about her whiteness. Let's look at this somewhat representative poem more closely.

A solemn thing – it was – I said –
A Woman – white – to be –
And wear – if God should count me fit –
Her blameless mystery –

A timid thing – to drop a life
Into the mystic well –
Too plummetless – that it come back –
Eternity – until –

I pondered how the bliss would look –
And would it feel as big –
When I could take it in my hand –
As hovering – seen – through fog –

And then – the size of this "small" life –
The Sages – call it small –
Swelled – like Horizons – in my breast –
And I sneered – softly – "small"!

(Fr307)³

Written in about 1861 and transcribed by Dickinson into a fascicle beginning "The maddest dream – recedes – unrealized" (Fr304), this poem was first published in 1896 by Mabel Loomis Todd, who included only the first two stanzas and titled it "Wedded."⁴ Since its fuller publication in 1947,⁵ Dickinson's meditation on solemnity has inspired a fair amount of commentary, much of it interested in Dickinson's supposed spirituality, which in recent years has been linked to issues of sexuality and gender. Perhaps the boldest interpretation along these lines has been offered by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, who theorize that whiteness signifies gender and then fit this particular poem into that comprehensive scheme. They remind us that Dickinson's habit of dressing all in white seems to date from about 1862, and along with other critics suggest that for Dickinson whiteness connotes a rejection of various forms of worldliness. I agree with this line of argument, but would like to suggest that Dickinson herself undermines the value of this

rejection by figuring whiteness as a burden. To be blameless is to be less than human — to be alienated not only from other "spotted" persons (Fr321) but also from a multicolored, psychologically various self.

In "A solemn thing – it was – I said / A Woman – white – to be," Emily Dickinson imagines the possibility of severely disciplining this psychologically various self, as to some extent she did in life: for example by subjecting herself to a kind of unofficial house arrest which ended only with her death. But if in the poem quoted above Dickinson associates whiteness with religious grace, counts on "God" to authorize "Her blameless mystery," fears sin, and commits herself bravely to an unknown, though hopeful future, she also resists such abstractions and covertly celebrates a sensuous Eden of forbidden pleasures. Dropping her life into a "mystic well," where thirsts shall eventually be satisfied, she takes on some of the coloration she associates with romantic racialism: with "African Exuberance," and "Asiatic Rest," with the purples of the East, and a "Tropic Breast" (Fr1563). "Might I – but be the Jew," she writes elsewhere, imagining a life in which she could purchase the affection of her sister-in-law Susan Gilbert Dickinson and monopolize her love (Fr418). In writing of Asia, South America, or Africa, as Rebecca Patterson and others have observed, Dickinson indulges her taste for opulence: for diamonds and emeralds and rubies and all those other forbidden pleasure she associates with the "South" wind that brings "A Hint of Ports and Peoples – / And much not understood – / The fairer – for the farness – / And for the foreignhood" (Fr883). "His oriental heresies / Exhilarate the Bee," she notes (Fr1562), as she seeks to extricate herself from other, more immediate contests – for example a local, domestic, and to use her word, "Dimpled [*italics mine*] War / In which we each were Conqueror / And each of us were slain" (Fr1551). Fighting "Without a Formula," as she calls it, in this provocative late poem, and fighting another woman, she and her antagonist (who is also her lover) are ambivalently positioned in relation to genteel, heterosexual codes of "True Womanhood." Yet her speaker draws strength from other cultures, which she represents as less strict in their imposition of barriers between what a man may and what a woman might. The Orient, in poem 1562, functions as a reminder of an exotic world elsewhere, which is more willing to indulge the heretical sexual and political hungers of a woman like herself.

Thus, when Dickinson seems to retreat from social and political conflict in "A solemn thing – it was – I said – / A Woman – white to be" by emphasizing her duty to those numbing abstractions she associates with whiteness, we are right to be suspicious of her language. For however we understand the argument the speaker is conducting with herself, as well as with implied

audiences, one thing is clear. She associates such bliss as she has known with fog, a substance whose color mixes white and black, and in so doing, destabilizes gender ideologies as well. Mobilizing a system of contrasts, Dickinson sees "New Englandly" when she fights to preserve the purity of the white woman's vision. Yet she is also intent on creating a hybrid prosody: on blurring the distinction between poetry and prose, and on undermining stereotypical responses to power. "The Sun and Fog contested / The Government of Day," she wrote, about six years after the Civil War had ended, "The Sun took down his Yellow Whip / And drove the Fog away" (Fr1248). This victorious whip reminds me of other phallic figures in her poetry, and of the whip her brother Austin used when he was teaching poor Irish boys to respect their betters. "Father remarks quite briefly that he 'thinks they have found their master,'" she wrote to Austin in June 1851, "mother bites her lips, and fears you 'will be rash with them' and Vinnie [her sister] and I say masses for poor Irish boys souls. So far as I am concerned I should like to have you kill some," she continued,

there are so many now, there is no room for the Americans, and I cant think of a death that would be more after my mind than scientific destruction, scholastic dissolution, there's something lofty in it, it smacks of going up! (L43).

I don't like the whip in this early letter to a brother she admired and resented — she went on to compare him to a slaveowner, using the word "Massa" to puncture his self-conceit (L49) — and I don't like the sun's easy victory over the fog it destroys in her poem. So even if Dickinson seems to align herself with her brother's ethnic prejudice against the Irish in 1851 — a letter in which she speaks knowingly man to man, as it were — her poem opens a space for rebellion against ethnic and racial and sexual prejudice. As readers who rebel against "The Government of [the] Day," we may choose to align ourselves with the fog — the more ungendered, deracialized, and democratic element. (Even if the fog, as she notes in another poem beginning "'Tis whiter than an Indian Pipe," lacks "stature" [Fr1513].)

Granted, then, that Dickinson's language of war and color is not anchored to an ideologically consistent set of referents — what are we to make, for example, of a poet who writes the lines, "The Wound that was not Wound nor Scar / But Holidays of War" (Fr1505)? — there nevertheless exists an important linkage between unwhiteness and sensuous pleasure in her poetry, as she herself acknowledges when she speaks, famously, of "that White Sustenance – / Despair" (Fr706). Perhaps we should recognize that

Dickinson's representations of whiteness emerge out of a culture in flux: traditional definitions of both racial and gender subordination were hotly contested — as they are in such now classic texts as *Moby-Dick* and *Leaves of Grass*. And also, I would argue, in Dickinson's war of words. To the extent that Dickinson's poetry has changed our understanding of gender, it may also change our understanding of the interconnections between gender, sexual fantasy, and race. In "A solemn thing – it was – I said – / A Woman – white – to be," the speaker describes an erotic history beset by self — doubt. I understand her desire to escape from uncertainty by reaffirming her "whiteness," but I also understand her desire to explore and to exploit racial and sexual difference. If his Oriental heresies exhilarate the bee, why not We? Why should she feed on that white sustenance, despair, when there is a fuller and more colorful life to be had? Changes in gender and sexual freedom are thus figured as changes in color, as well as in changes of locale. These transformations in self-identity include changes in region and in country.

For example, take the word "South," as in "South Wind," which I used several paragraphs ago, though without suggesting that Dickinson was referring to the American South. Returning to this trope, I note that Dickinson locates earthquakes in the South, maelstroms in the South, volcanoes in the South, and so on. She also describes the South as a "better Latitude," in a poem beginning "Tis not that Dying hurts us so – / 'Tis Living – hurts us more" (Fr528). Should we understand these poems in the context of the Civil War, or should we understand her images as Robert Weisbuch and others have encouraged us to do — as antimimetic and unscenic. As a bird who stayed home, Dickinson seems to be longing for a better latitude — one she associates with a south of the mind, but also an actual place, where there is no more shivering. So even if Dickinson is not thinking specifically of the American South, she is thinking, again, of tropical climes. What are the implications of this antinorthern geography for her politics of race? And what does it mean when Dickinson elsewhere confesses that she sees "New Englandly," that "The Queen, discerns like me – Provincially" (Fr256)? Could Dickinson, for example, be describing her own reaction against romantic escapism? And is she perhaps accepting the racial status quo as the price of her regionally marked, secure class privileges? "Color – caste – denomination," she writes elsewhere, "These – are Time's Affair" (Fr836). As a regionally marked, and traditionally self-confident writer, she seems to reinscribe social, political, and cultural hierarchies. After all, modeling herself on the Queen of England is not obviously a democratic thing to do.⁶

Yet if we read "A solemn thing – it was – I said / A Woman – white –

to be" without thinking of the speaker as a woman whose race or region or social class or literary heritage is fixed, something interesting happens. And perhaps we should read in this way, against biography as destiny. For it is not at all clear whether the speaker is preserving, shedding, taking on, or rejecting whiteness, the characteristic associated with solemnity, mystery, and death. So I'm not clear which life is being dropped: a life in which color signifies caste, or a life in which color and caste are irrelevant. Moreover, as I suggested earlier, it seems to me that the speaker is tremendously interested in hybrid genres and colors, and that she views herself as a mongrel being. This may not be wise, or in terms of her immediate provincial environment politically correct, but she certainly affirms independence of judgment as a value. Thus she affirms unconventional female desire and subverts stereotypes of "correct female deportment" (to use the satirical language of one of her early letters). What other people call small, she calls big. And what other people call white, she calls purple, or foggy. Or hovering. Or blissful. I argue that whatever else her true life is, it isn't purely white. That is, to the extent that whiteness signifies traditions of correct deportment, of feminine self-denial and self-sacrifice and privatization, Dickinson associates herself with a crossdressing, culturally transgressive, and androgynous public style.

Of course, in reading this poem I can't help but recall that after a certain point in her life Dickinson had forsaken colored clothing and that when she entertained the Abolitionist hero Thomas Wentworth Higginson in Amherst in 1870, he observed that she was dressed in exquisitely clean white piqué. Higginson also noted, however, that she wore a blue net worsted shawl, and that she presented him with two day lilies, saying in a breathless tone of voice, "These are my introduction." According to Higginson, they rambled from topic to topic, looking for common meeting points, but it wasn't much of an interactive conversation. She talked and then stopped to let him talk. Then she talked again. In this disjointed form, Dickinson did tell him a good deal, however, about her experience of literature. For example, she mentioned Lydia Maria Child, to whom her father's law clerk (probably Benjamin Franklin Newton) had introduced her. And he had done so surreptitiously, against the will of her father who, in Higginson's judgment, was not so much "severe" as "remote." But they didn't discuss politics as such; they didn't say anything about the war or Reconstruction. Instead, according to Higginson, they talked about Dickinson's family, mutual friends and acquaintances, including "Major Hunt," who had died in the war, and such timeless topics as human weakness.⁷ "How do most people live without any thoughts," Dickinson asked him. "There are many people in the world

(you must have noticed them in the street) How do they live. How do they get strength to put on their clothes in the morning" (L342a). From there it was but a short leap to her eye problems ("When I lost the use of my Eyes it was a comfort to think there were so few real books that I could easily find some one to read me all of them") and to cooking. Higginson reported to his wife, "She makes all the bread for her father only likes hers & says '& people must have puddings' this very dreamily, as if they were comets — so she makes them."

But if I recall Dickinson's exquisitely clean white piqué, I also remember her descriptions of herself as "freckled," "spotted," "dun," as well as a strain of Orientalism in poems which seem to emerge in part out of her professional and erotic rivalry with her brother — an Amherst and Harvard educated attorney who married her best friend. Thus, if we consider her poem "The Malay – took the Pearl" (Fr451) from this social and biographical perspective, several readings emerge which will take us further into her use of race as a politically subversive form of self-definition. This poem describes a competition in which the speaker appears to lose out: if we assume that she is an upper middle class white woman who understands power as something she doesn't have. In love with a figure she emblemizes as "the Pearl," she watches as another character captures her treasure. This Other is first identified as a "Malay," then as "The Swarthy fellow," and then as "The Negro." Whatever else he is, he isn't white, and as an id figure, he spontaneously expresses the erotic self-confidence she does not have. Now I'm not suggesting that this view is without its own kind of racism — the association of dark skin and sexual power being all too familiar — but rather that in figuring whiteness as a burden, Dickinson also opens up a space to dwell in possibility, a fairer house than prose. And if she is capable of dwelling in possibility, so are others. We need to distinguish then, between the racial stereotypes the poem absorbs, its ambivalent critique of imperialism, and the larger vision it projects. In the reading I advance, desire entitles her to a richer life. We want her to have the treasure that is rightfully hers; and it is hers because she wants it so much. If desire becomes the focus of entitlement, color, caste, and denomination do indeed become time's affair. They matter, but they don't matter definitively. To return to the poem. The treasure is rightfully hers because of the intensity of her longing. But the racial and sexual other gets to take her jewel "Home – / Home to the Hut!" This quick – acting, but slow – thinking Other doesn't know that, as she explains, "I – wooed it – too." While she stands by consumed with jealousy, his is the victory. And victory is a subject about which Dickinson has a great deal to say. "My Portion is Defeat – today," she writes, "A paler luck than

Vivian Pollak

Victory – / Less Paeans – fewer Bells,"

The Drums don't follow Me – with tunes –
Defeat – a somewhat slower – means –
More Arduous than Balls –

'Tis populous with Bone and stain –
And Men too straight to stoop again,
And Piles of solid Moan –
And Chips of Blank – in Boyish Eyes –
And scraps of Prayer –
And Death's surprise,
Stamped visible – in Stone –

There's somewhat prouder, Over there –
The Trumpets tell it to the Air –
How different Victory
To Him who has it – and the One
Who to have had it, would have been
Contenteder – to die –

(Fr704)

In much of her poetry, then, Dickinson ponders the meaning of victory and defeat, and proclaims the interdependence of these seemingly opposed experiences, so that "Success is counted sweetest / By those who ne'er succeed" (Fr112). This system of creative antagonisms produces intense jealousy, the emotion with which "The Malay – took the Pearl" is primarily concerned. In many respects semantically unstable, the poem clearly associates phallic power with the darker races. But Dickinson projects this sexy dark power outside the United States, and thereby contains it — as did a number of other writers of her time, Harriet Beecher Stowe, for example, at the utopian but also depressing conclusion of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The fairer for the farness and for the foreignhood, darkness and glamour cavort with each other. In Amherst, different principles prevailed.

So did Dickinson ever know a black person? Yes. But not well. In Amherst, there were black servants, as her father noted while writing to his future wife in 1826. Mainly, however, the Dickinsons had Irish servants.⁸ There may have been some black servants at Mount Holyoke, which Dickinson attended in 1847-48, though most of the housekeeping chores were performed by the students themselves. And in Boston, where she

lived in a boardinghouse for a number of months in 1864 and 1865, the poet might have encountered middle class blacks on the street, or elsewhere — as did Walt Whitman, for example, when he met a black lawyer in 1860 and commented on his own attempts to stifle the racial prejudice he associated with his home towns, Brooklyn and New York.⁹ But there are only several places in Dickinson's letters where she describes observing or meeting a nonwhite person, as we might perhaps expect, given the limitations of her social experience. In Boston, in the mid 1840s, she visited the Chinese Museum ("a great curiosity"), and was entertained by several reformed opium eaters: one a professor of music, the other a professor of writing. "There is something peculiarly interesting to me in their self denial," she remarked (L13). The Dickinsons apparently employed black men or boys as agricultural workers — for example, to harvest cherries in their orchard. And they had a "black man" to do heavy work around the Homestead — for example the "new Black Man" described in letter 721. There was a small African American community in Amherst, one that her friend Helen Hunt Jackson wrote about in *Mercy Philbrick's Choice*. And there were African American soldiers from Amherst who were killed in the Civil War. But Dickinson's experience of ethnic and racial difference was mainly filtered through others — or through hearsay. Thus, when she writes, "Might I – but be the Jew," she inhabits a stereotype which associates Jews and money, but in the process of freeing herself from biographical realism, she impersonates a new type: a Jew who is powerful without being obnoxious. "The Malay – took the Pearl" is perhaps her most extended dramatic meditation on race. It is, as I have suggested, not wholly successful in freeing itself of racism. Dickinson's larger project, however, depended on validating desire as it pushed against cultural stereotypes. This larger project subsumed most other forms of public occupation. For example, in 1862, a soldier on his way to battle called at her house for a nosegay. She was not pleased. The Dickinson who refused to join the Sewing Society was not about to offer him a flower from her garden (L272). But the other Dickinson, the writing Dickinson, sought to transcend "Color – Caste – Denomination," by writing elegies for dead soldiers, for example, but also by producing those intermittent and self-contradictory elegies for whiteness we have been examining. Whereas her brother Austin hired a substitute to take his place in the war, Dickinson contributed what she had to contribute through a war of words. This woman's war critiques the racial exclusions on which her own class privilege also depended.

Notes

1. For a now classic account of the Africanist presence in American literature, see Morrison. Although Dickinson's poetry is just beginning to be discussed as racially marked, interesting sources that historicize her war response include: Ford (1965), Aaron (1973), Wolosky (1984), Hoffman (1994), and Marcellin (1996).
2. A shortlist of Dickinson war poems would include "It dont sound so terrible – quite – as it did" (Fr384); "It feels a shame to be Alive" (Fr524), "When I was small, a Woman died" (Fr518), "The Only News I know" (Fr820), "The Battle fought between the Soul" (Fr629), and the last stanza of "That after Horror – that 'twas us" (Fr243), which she included in a letter (L282) to Higginson, as a commentary on the dangers they were mutually facing. Recent efforts at canon expansion prove more or less persuasive. See, for example, Hoffman, who argues that "The name – of it – is 'Autumn'" (Fr465) was inspired by the Union defeat at Antietam. Wolosky notes that over half of the 1656 poems dated by Thomas H. Johnson were written during the War, and that there are at least fifteen letters referring to it. An unpublished 1995 conference paper by Margaret Dickie argues that the public background of death and dying enhanced Dickinson's personal imagination of suffering, an idea with which I concur. (See also Wolosky 41). Moreover, once we begin to look at poems responding to the larger topos of violence in the culture, the potential canon of war poetry is greatly expanded.

Wolosky further notes that at least fifteen of Dickinson's letters "directly refer to the war" (36). For example, in the fall of 1864 she wrote to her cousins Louise and Fanny Norcross, from Cambridgeport, where she was being treated for persistent eye disease, "Sorrow seems to me more general than it did, and not the estate of a few persons, since the war began; and if the anguish of others helped on with one's own now would be many medicines" (L298). Dickinson first wrote to Higginson on April 15, 1862, when he was still in Worcester. He was in South Carolina, training a Negro regiment, by November. Johnson notes that "*The Springfield Republican* carried long items about Higginson and his troops in the issues of 1 January and 6 February 1863" (*Letters* 2: 424). He was wounded in July 1863 and left the army in May 1864. On Higginson as Abolitionist hero, see Edelstein. There was, however, a hiatus of more than a year in the Dickinson-Higginson correspondence, and in L290 (June 1864), the poet remarks, "I did not know that you were hurt." She herself had been ill since September and "since April, in Boston, for a Physician's care."

Reconstructing the politics of Dickinson's male friends and relatives is an interesting project and remains to be done. Wolosky notes that "Her father's term in Washington spanned the period of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Fugitive Slave Act, and the first attempts to found a new party, out of which the Republican party later emerged. (One meeting to discuss this issue was held in

the rooms shared by Edward Dickinson and Thomas D. Eliot — granduncle to another American poet) [35]."

3. I have also consulted *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson*. The facsimile contains a number of suggested word changes, for example "purple" for mystic, "hallowed" for timid, and "vest" for "breast." It is not clear whether Dickinson intended to adopt these latter changes for any possible publication. On the issue of Dickinson's variants, see Cameron.
4. Todd's title is not unreasonable. See, for example, "The World – stands – solemnner – to me / Since I was wed – to Him" (Fr280), as well as other associations between solemnity, status, and marriage in the poetry.
5. See *New England Quarterly* 20 (1947): 23.
6. For the view that Dickinson set herself against the "abolitionist, reformist, and democratizing energies of the times," see Erkkila, p.46 and passim. Erkkila believes that she manifested "an almost Know-Nothing aversion to outsiders" and clung to "a royalist dream of rule by hereditary and divine right" (50, 51). For an opposing view, see Wardrop.
7. Major Edward Bissell Hunt (1822-1863) was the first husband of Helen Hunt Jackson. For Dickinson and Jackson, see my essay "American Women Poets Reading Dickinson: The Example of Helen Hunt Jackson."
8. Edward writes, "The house has been cleaned by a black woman, but I suppose it will have to pass thro' other hands, again, under your own inspection — I told her, that if there was one speck left on the windows, they would be all taken out & washed anew! — So you see, I have done my duty" (*A Poet's Parents* 209). For Irish servants, see Murray, "Kitchen Table Poetics," and "Miss Margaret's Emily Dickinson."
9. Quoted in Whitman, *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts* 1: 422-23.

Works Cited

Unless otherwise indicated the following abbreviations are used for reference to the writings of Emily Dickinson

- Fr *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Ed. R.W. Franklin. 3 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1998. Citation by poem number.
J *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Ed. Thomas H. Johnson. 3 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1955. Citation by poem number.

- L *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*. Ed. Thomas H. Johnson and Theodora Ward. 3 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1958. Citation by letter number.
- Aaron, Daniel. *The Unwritten War: American Writers and the Civil War*. New York: Knopf, 1973. 355-56.
- Cameron, Sharon. *Choosing Not Choosing: Dickinson's Fascicles*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992.
- Dickinson, Emily. *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson*. 2 vols. Ed. R. W. Franklin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1981.
- . "A Solemn Thing." *New England Quarterly* 20 (1947): 23.
- Edelstein, Tilden. *Strange Enthusiasm: The Life of Thomas Wentworth Higginson*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1968.
- Erkkila, Betsy. *The Wicked Sisters: Women Poets, Literary History and Discord*. New York: Oxford UP, 1992.
- Ford, Thomas W. "Emily Dickinson and the Civil War." *University Review of Kansas City* 31 (1965): 199-203.
- Gilbert, Sandra M., and Gubar, Susan. "A Woman – White: Emily Dickinson's Yarn of Pearl." *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979. 581-650.
- Hoffman, Tyler B. "Emily Dickinson and the Limit of War." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 3 (1994): 1-18.
- Marcellin, Leigh-Anne Urbanowicz. "Emily Dickinson's Civil War Poetry." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 5 (1996): 107-112.
- Murray, Aife. "Kitchen Table Poetics: Maid Margaret Maher and Her Poet Emily Dickinson." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 5 (1996): 71-87.
- . "Miss Margaret's Emily Dickinson." *Signs* 24 (1999): 697-732.
- Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1990.
- Patterson, Rebecca. "Emily Dickinson's Geography." *Emily Dickinson's Imagery*. Ed. Margaret H. Freeman. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1979. 141-79.
- Pollak, Vivian R. "American Women Poets Reading Dickinson: The Example of Helen Hunt Jackson." *The Emily Dickinson Handbook*. Ed. Gudrun Grabher, Roland Hagenbüchle, Cristanne Miller. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1998. 323-42.
- . *Dickinson: The Anxiety of Gender*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984.
- , ed. *A Poet's Parents: The Courtship Letters of Emily Norcross and Edward Dickinson*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1988.
- Wardrop, Daneen. "'That Minute Domingo:' Dickinson's Cooptation of Abolitionist Diction and Franklin's Variorum Edition." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 8 (1999): 72-86.
- Weisbuch, Robert. *Emily Dickinson's Poetry*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1975.
- Whitman, Walt. *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*. 5 vols. Ed. Edward F. Grier. New York: New York UP, 1984.
- Wolosky, Shira. *Emily Dickinson: A Voice of War*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1984.