

艾米莉·迪金森的欲望

——拉康式解读

*A Lacanian Psychoanalytical Approach to
Emily Dickinson's Desire*

岳凤梅 著



国防工业出版社

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· 北京 ·

内 容 简 介

本书重点分析迪金森诗歌中所运用的大量隐喻,进而揭示隐藏在诗歌表面内容之下的个人无意识欲望。本书的创新点在于运用拉康关于欲望的理论,从“个人的欲望是他者的欲望”的视角来扩展对迪金森的女性主义研究。

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ABBREVIATIONS

- P** refers to the Johnson edition of Emily Dickinson's poems (*The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson [Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1960]), followed by the numbers Johnson assigned to the poems.
- L** refers to the Johnson and Ward edition of Dickinson's letters (*The Letters of Emily Dickinson*. Eds. Thomas H. Johnson and Theodora Ward. 3vols. [Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1958]), followed by the pages the passages come from.

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Introduction

Wendy Martin remarks in her introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Emily Dickinson*, “Emily Dickinson has emerged as a powerful and persistent figure in American culture” (2002; 1). Richard Sewall also acknowledges in his introduction to *The Handbook of Emily Dickinson*, “That her presence is continuing — and growing—hardly needs documenting” (1999; 6). The founding of the Emily Dickinson International Society in 1988 is the most obvious evidence of Dickinson’s literary significance. In China, scholars began to show growing interest in Dickinson’s poetry from 1970s on. Dong Hengxun introduced Dickinson in *Brief Literary History of the United States* in 1978. Liu Haiping selected three poems of Dickinson in *Selections of Famous English Poems* in 1984. Jiang Feng is one of the earliest translators who introduced Dickinson’s poetry to the Chinese readers, first in journals, then in book form. Until 2004, there are more than ten books of translation of Dickinson’s selected poetry in China by different translators, Jiang Feng being one of the most prominent.¹ Over 70 literature criticisms on

¹ Jiang Feng translated Dickinson’s poetry in 1981, and his first book-length translation of Dickinson’s poetry *Selected Poems of Dickinson’s Lyrics* began in 1996, which is reprinted several times, and his another book-length translation *Selected Excellent Poems of Dickinson* was finished in 2004.

Dickinson have been published in periodicals or journals in China, with Dong Aiguo being one of the representatives.¹ One book-length study on the classification and rhythm of Dickinson's poetry by Wang Yugong was published in 2000.² The second volume of the *New Literary History of the United States* gives an insightful introduction and comment on Dickinson and her reception in China by Prof. Zhang Ziqing.³ Dickinson also becomes the subject of several MA theses in China. Yet there is no one dissertation exclusively on Dickinson in China, according to my knowledge.

However, Dickinson in many ways is inaccessible to her readers. Robert McClure Smith notes in *The Seduction of Emily Dickinson*, "Emily Dickinson left behind no formulated poetics" (1). Like Robert McClure, Raymond P. Tripp, Jr. also thinks in *Duty, Body, and World in the Works of Emily Dickinson* that Dickinson's ideas in her poetry is hard to understand, "Even though the order of the manuscript fascicles has been uncovered, and recent studies reflect revised groupings, the substance of her ideas has not" (75). As to Dickinson's refusal to publish her poetry, Donald MaQuade points out "[Dickinson's] intentions for her poetry remained intensely private" (1386). To Dickinson's mysterious intention for her poetry, Richard Sewall draws a conclusion in his introduction to *The Handbook of Emily Dickinson*

1 Dong Aiguo published two criticisms on Dickinson's poetry in *Foreign Literature Review* separately in 2001 and 2002.

2 Wang Yugong published his *Study on the Classification and Rhythm of Emily Dickinson's Poetry* in 2000.

3 For details of Emily Dickinson scholarship, see Zhu Gang, *New Literary History of the United States*, Vol 2 (Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2002); 186-212.

with a comparison: “[As] with the greatest, the strangeness never wears off. Shakespeare is still a mystery, and so is Dickinson” (1999: 6). To explore Dickinson’s mysterious intention for her poetry becomes the primary motivation of my dissertation.

Emily Dickinson was born in 1830 into a family in Amherst, Massachusetts. Her father Edward Dickinson was once a representative to Congress, and served as Treasurer of Amherst College from 1835 to his death. Her mother Emily Norcross Dickinson was a typical family woman. Her elder brother Austin Dickinson succeeded his father as the Treasurer of Amherst College. Her younger sister Lavinia Dickinson remained single as Emily in her life. From 1840 to 1847, Emily received her primary education at Amherst Academy. From September of 1847 to August of 1848, Emily studied in Mount Holyoke. After that, she seldom went away from Amherst except twice to Boston for her eye illness. She became more and more reluctant to be away from her family’s house. About 1860 or so, she had formed the habit of secluding herself in the family house and of wearing only in white. Dickinson made her contacts with the outside world by writing letters. She sent her poems and letters to her friends, while these friends brought her news or appreciation.

Dickinson was contemporary with Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman. Ralph Emerson once lectured at the village church in Amherst and spent night at Dickinson’s brother’s house. There is no record whether Dickinson went to the lecture or visited Ralph Emerson. When Dickinson began to seek for literary advice of the literarily renowned, she turned to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, rather than Ralph Emerson. Later scholars wondered what the result would be if Dickinson wrote her

letter "Are you too deeply occupied to say if my Verse is alive?" to Ralph Emerson rather than Thomas Wentworth Higginson. While Mr. Higginson did not think Dickinson's poems were conformed to the conventions and would be welcomed by the readers even though he was attracted by the vigor of Dickinson's poetry, these scholars hoped Ralph Emerson perhaps would appreciate Dickinson's poetry and help her to become a renowned poet.

Dickinson died on May 15th, 1886, with 10 poems published during her lifetime. After Dickinson passed away, her sister, Lavinia Dickinson found in one of her elder sister's drawers a cherry-wood casket. There were 40 fascicles of poems, and some loose leafs, altogether over 800 poems. Dickinson's poems were published posthumously all by her younger sister Lavinia Dickinson's endeavor. The strong-willed woman insisted on seeing the wisdom of her elder sister of whom she was proud come to foreground. With the help of Mabel Loomis Todd, their elder brother Austin Dickinson's mistress, a brilliant and intelligent woman, Dickinson's first volume *Poems by Emily Dickinson* was published in 1890.¹ Since then, the posthumous work of the mysterious woman has begun attracting the attention of the world. As Peter Conn points out, Dickinson's attraction to the world lies in the originality of her poetry: "Whatever her affinities, the hallmark of Dickinson's poems is in fact their striking originality" (226).

The 1890 volume of Dickinson's poems together with the following publication of *Poems by Emily Dickinson* (1891), *Letters of Emily Dickinson* (1894), and *Poems by Emily Dickinson*

1 *Poems by Emily Dickinson* published by Roberts Brothers, edited and promoted by Mabel Loomis Todd and Thomas Wentworth Higginson.

(1896)¹ attracted a lot of readers at the end of the nineteenth-century literary world. Critics showed their complex attitudes toward this “new-born” literary star. Comments and criticism flourished thereafter. This can be seen from *Emily Dickinson’s Reception in the 1890s: A Documentary History* (1989, edited by Willis J. Buckingham).² According to this book, one of the most representative critics on the approving side was William Dean Howells (73), who showed his warm appreciation of Dickinson’s poems, and that on the disapproving side was the British reviewer Andrew Lang, who thought the poems of Dickinson queer and the person of Dickinson eccentric (232).

1955 is the monumental year of Dickinson scholarship. Thomas Johnson, a Harvard professor, published his devoted work *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: including variant readings critically compared with all known manuscripts* (1955).³ In 1958, Thomas H. Johnson, together with Theodora Ward, published their co-operative work *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*. With the appearance of nearly all the extant works of Dickinson, Dickinson scholarship developed quickly, reaching a climax in 1988 when the Emily Dickinson International Society was founded.

Dickinson scholarship developed with the literary theories of the twentieth-century. The approaches are various, with the impressionistic theory of Ezra Pound as the beginning, followed by the New Criticism, structuralism, psychoanalytical criticism, bi-

¹ The 1891 *Poems* is the second series of The 1890 *Poems*; The 1894 *Letters* and 1896 *Poems* are edited by Mabel Loomis Todd.

² Various reviews are collected in *Emily Dickinson’s Reception in the 1890s* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), edited by Willis J. Buckingham.

³ Thomas Johnson edits *The poems of Emily Dickinson* in three-volume variorum that has attracted critical attention and artistic recognition.

ography study, cultural criticism, feminism, dialogic criticism, reader response theory, phenomenology, deconstruction, hermeneutic study, etc.¹

From the beginning of Dickinson Scholarship to the present, the most commonly used approach is the biographical study, spliced with psychoanalysis. Critics attempt to delineate Dickinson's psychosocial development through psychoanalytic and psychobiographical perspectives, and more often than not these two approaches overlap. Thomas H. Johnson's *Emily Dickinson: An Interpretive Biography* (1955)², for instance, was published in 1955, and this book was built on George Frisbie Whicher's *This was a Poet: A Critical Biography of Emily Dickinson* (138).³

In the 1960s, Dickinson scholarship focused on biography and contextualization, with an increased interest on her thematic range and her use of language. Jay Leyda's compiled the documentary materials chronologically without any comments in his *Years and Hours of Emily Dickinson* (1960)⁴, as he intended it to be a basis for further biographical studies. Theodora Ward's

¹ Roland Hagenbuchle surveys the impact of literary theory on Dickinson's study in his essay "Dickinson and Literary Theory," *The Emily Dickinson Handbook* (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), edited by Gudrun Grabher, Roland Hagenbuchle, and Cristanne Miller, 356-384.

² Thomas H. Johnson has many insightful ideas about Dickinson's psychology, especially her love toward William Wordsworth, in *Emily Dickinson: An Interpretive Biography* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1955).

³ One of the earliest biography of Emily Dickinson by George Frisbie Whicher. A special edition with an introduction by Richard B. Sewall republished as an Archon Book in 1980 on behalf of Amherst College to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Emily Dickinson.

⁴ Jay Leyda was once Lavinia Dickinson's lover, and he had some authority over the biography of Emily Dickinson.

The Capsule of the Mind (1961) attempted to link Dickinson's creative output to an emotional and psychological crisis. Clark Griffith's psychoanalytic study *The Long Shadow Emily Dickinson's Tragic Poetry* (1964) argued that Dickinson's anger and terror were manifestations of her tragic outlook on the world, and suggested that Dickinson's psychological problem existed in her rejection of her female identity.¹

In the 1970s, biographical, psychological, and linguistic study continued, joined by feminist approach. John Cody's *After Great Pain: The Inner Life of Emily Dickinson* (1971)² is the representative of psychobiographical study. John Cody's psychoanalysis focuses on the relationship between Dickinson and her mother. The failure of Dickinson's mother to provide sufficient love and affection, for instance, is seen as the cause of Dickinson's "Terror—since September." John Cody regards Dickinson's poetry as the result of a personal neurotic disposition. Albert Gelpi's *Tenth Muse: The Psyche of the American Poet* (1975) modifies somewhat the view of John Cody. Combining gender with a Freudian/Jungian approach, he argues that Dickinson has internalized the psychological burden imposed on the nineteenth-century women in general.³ Written at the end of

1 About the introduction of *The Capsule of the Mind* and *The Long Shadow Emily Dickinson's Tragic Poetry*, see Marietta Messmer, "Dickinson's Critical Reception," in *The Emily Dickinson Handbook*, 308.

2 John Cody's *After Great Pain: The Inner Life of Emily Dickinson* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971) focuses on analyzing Emily Dickinson's mother's insufficient love for her and arguing this is the exact reason of Emily Dickinson's painful life, and the method of John Cody is traditional Freudian.

3 Marietta Messmer's comments on John Cody's work "After Great Pain." See Marietta Messmer, "Dickinson's Critical Reception," in *The Emily Dickinson Handbook*, 309.

the decade, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979)¹ provides a feminist and psychological explanation of Dickinson's sources of creation and her renunciation of the world.

1980s saw a shift in critical interest from thematic studies to the aspect of gender in linguistic and psychoanalytic studies. The most comprehensive feminist psychobiography of Dickinson of the decade, Cynthia Griffin Wolff's *Emily Dickinson*, was published in 1986. Wolff explores Dickinson's psychological world from the voice of the verse because she thinks that Dickinson deliberately decided to live in the poetic world. However, Hagenbuchle (1988) interprets Dickinson's renunciation differently. He regards Dickinson's denial of a social self "as the writer's search for an authentic self and an act of self-transcendence" (Messmer, 310). To Hagenbuchle, Dickinson's seclusion was intentional. She gave up social interaction with others in order to seek for the independence of self.

In the 1990s, the primary critical focus was on Dickinson's relationship with women and her mysterious lover. Paula Bennet in her work *Emily Dickinson: Woman Poet* (1990) argues the importance of women friendship for Dickinson, especially her affection for her sister-in-law, Susan Gilbert Dickinson. By analyzing the erotic imagery in Dickinson's poems, Bennet discloses that Dickinson's sexual desire and imagination are autoerotic and homosexual. Similarly, Judith Farr's *The Passion of Emily*

¹ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar examine Dickinson's life and work in the tradition of female literature in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979).

Dickinson (1992) focuses on Dickinson's androgynous character by psychoanalyzing the poems and letters of Dickinson. Judith Farr also thinks that Dickinson had the homosexual passion for Susan Gilbert, but Judith Farr goes further than Paula Bennet on this point by taking Samuel Bowles not Susan Gilbert as the master of the three mysterious love letters. Dickinson regarded Samuel Bowles as a redeemer "who keeps her from the peril of drowning at sea; her ambiguous sexual identity, wherein she might have been lost" (192) ¹. Taking a different viewpoint from the above two critics, Mary Loeffelholz in her *Dickinson and the Boundaries of Feminist Theory* (1991) ² examines the uneasy relationship between feminist studies and psychoanalytic approach in Dickinson Scholarship. From a feminist-deconstructionist-psychoanalytic viewpoint, she argues that the traditional feminist's emphasis on the mother-daughter relationship is too exclusive. Rather than thinking of Dickinson's life as a symptom of failure, she regards it as a typical example of a woman's development.

Generally, critics would like to focus their interests on giv-

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- 1 Judith Farr argues in *The Passion of Emily Dickinson* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992) that Dickinson's passion toward her sister-in-law Susan Gilbert Dickinson and her passion toward Samuel Bowles, the editor of *The Springfield Republican* wove through her whole life.
 - 2 Mary Loeffelholz's study bases heavily on the conjunction of feminism and deconstruction in *Dickinson and the Boundaries of Feminist Theory* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991). The theory of deconstruction she uses refers to Lacan's theory of the symbolic Father. She argues that the traditional Freudian reading of Dickinson's art as an idiosyncratic, individual symptom is narrow in contrast with the new theories of women's psychology. She believes: "In light of the new psychoanalytic theories of women, Dickinson's art can be related in some ways to 'typically' female development, rather than viewed as a symptom of developmental failure." (5)