

Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism

NCLC

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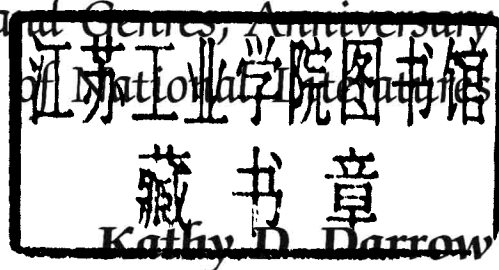
TOPICS VOLUME

Volume 196

Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism

Topics Volume

Criticism of Various
Topics in Nineteenth-Century Literature,
including Literary and Critical Movements,
Prominent Themes and Genres, Anniversary
Celebrations, and Surveys of National Literatures



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Preface

Since its inception in 1981, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism (NCLC)* has been a valuable resource for students and librarians seeking critical commentary on writers of this transitional period in world history. Designated an “Outstanding Reference Source” by the American Library Association with the publication of its first volume, *NCLC* has since been purchased by over 6,000 school, public, and university libraries. The series has covered more than 500 authors representing 38 nationalities and over 28,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical reaction to nineteenth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as *NCLC*.

Scope of the Series

NCLC is designed to introduce students and advanced readers to the authors of the nineteenth century and to the most significant interpretations of these authors’ works. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of this period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. By organizing and reprinting commentary written on these authors, *NCLC* helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in *NCLC* presents a comprehensive survey of an author’s career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of *NCLC* is devoted to literary topics that cannot be covered under the author approach used in the rest of the series. Such topics include literary movements, prominent themes in nineteenth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

NCLC continues the survey of criticism of world literature begun by Gale’s *Contemporary Literary Criticism (CLC)* and *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism (TCLC)*.

Organization of the Book

An *NCLC* entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author’s actual name given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the original date of composition.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose works have been translated into English, the list will focus primarily on twentieth-century translations, selecting those works most commonly considered the best by critics. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication. Lists of **Representative Works** by different authors appear with topic entries.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included. Criticism in topic entries is arranged chronologically under a variety of subheadings to facilitate the study of different aspects of the topic.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism.
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

Indexes

Each volume of *NCLC* contains a **Cumulative Author Index** listing all authors who have appeared in a wide variety of reference sources published by Gale, including *NCLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *NCLC* by nationality, followed by the number of the *NCLC* volume in which their entry appears.

A **Cumulative Topic Index** lists the literary themes and topics treated in the series as well as in *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism*, *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800*, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, and the *Contemporary Literary Criticism Yearbook*, which was discontinued in 1998.

An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *NCLC*, with the exception of the Topics volumes. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces an annual paperbound edition of the *NCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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Franklin, J. Jeffrey. "The Victorian Discourse of Gambling: Speculations on *Middlemarch* and *The Duke's Children*." *ELH* 61, no. 4 (winter 1994): 899-921. Reprinted in *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Vol. 168, edited by Jessica Bomarito and Russel Whitaker, 39-51. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006.

Frank, Joseph. "The Gambler: A Study in Ethnopsychology." In *Freedom and Responsibility in Russian Literature: Essays in Honor of Robert Louis Jackson*, edited by Elizabeth Cheresch Allen and Gary Saul Morson, 69-85. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1995. Reprinted in *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Vol. 168, edited by Jessica Bomarito and Russel Whitaker, 75-84. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006.

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Frank, Joseph. "The Gambler: A Study in Ethnopsychology." *Freedom and Responsibility in Russian Literature: Essays in Honor of Robert Louis Jackson*. Eds. Elizabeth Cheresch Allen and Gary Saul Morson. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1995. 69-85. Reprinted in *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Eds. Jessica Bomarito and Russel Whitaker. Vol. 168. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006. 75-84.

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Friendship in Nineteenth-Century Literature

The following entry presents criticism on the treatment of friendship in nineteenth-century literature.

INTRODUCTION

Nineteenth-century writers' ideas regarding the purpose and nature of friendship were strongly influenced by the rapid and often seismic changes in thought on social, economic, and political conditions that took place during the century. Writers such as Emily Dickinson, Gerard Manley Hopkins, John Keats, and Sarah Orne Jewett depicted friendship in their works as a means of exploring the notion of spiritual fulfillment within and outside the scope of organized religion. These authors and other writers sought to discern the meaning of friendship as part of the human condition. Such writers often used friendship as a metaphor for humankind's relationship to the divine, and encouraged friendships that imitated the love of God for humankind as a practical means of encouraging spiritual development.

The subject of friendship was also considered by many authors from a gender-based standpoint. Critics such as Robert K. Martin have discussed the ways in which nineteenth-century American male writers sought to define the nature of friendships and love between men and determine the status and significance of these relationships within contemporary society. Martin has posited that homophobia and a socially-enforced discomfort with discussing love between men have prevented critics from engaging in an open and thorough scholarly analysis of the nature of friendships between men during the nineteenth century. Literature, letters, and diaries written by men during the nineteenth century often contain passages discussing relationships with other men that have been assessed as expressions of homosexual desire, as well as expressions of a type of love that is unique to men, an intimate "comradeship" that is essential to men's survival, at times literally, as in relationships between soldiers, and at times spiritually, as in relationships between men who hold similar ideals and possess a need to engage in and reflect upon their thoughts and feelings with others who understand them. The idea of friendship between men as it was expressed by writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman has been examined by critics who have noted the tendency of these two writers, as well as others such as Herman Melville, to place such relationships both within and outside of the natural or traditional so-

cial order; such treatments of male friendship, it has been argued, illustrate the notion that friendship can be a revolutionary force, creating unions between men that reflect a democratic ideal of unions that transcend superficial differences in race, class, and culture. Commentators have explored the extent to which the representations of friendships between men are informed by Christian religious ideology and ancient Greek philosophy, and some critics have illustrated that considerations of the inherent difficulty in defining relationships between men can be found in nineteenth-century texts, including, as critic Eric Daffron has indicated, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818).

Literary depictions of women's friendships are viewed by critics as variously reflecting and opposing their identity and experiences within a patriarchal society. The Victorian idea that women's virtue and worth are derived from their strict adherence to traditional standards of behavior is challenged to some extent in narratives that involve supportive friendships between women who are considered virtuous and those who rebel against convention; rather than serving as negative foils for "ideal" heroines, unconventional women characters in such works as Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853) and George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) achieve success that is in many ways due to their mutually beneficial relationships with their more traditional counterparts. Critics have noted that adult women's friendships in literature, as in life, are traditionally assumed to be replacements for their lost mother-daughter relationships, serving as a source of nurturance, support, and recognition otherwise unavailable to women. In addition, commentators have examined narratives that either reinforce or challenge the opinion—informed by Classic Greek philosophy—that women's friendships are somehow inferior to men's friendships.

REPRESENTATIVE WORKS

Thomas Arnold

Sermons. 3 vols. (sermons) 1829-34

Jane Austen

Sense and Sensibility (novel) 1811

Charlotte Brontë

Shirley [as Currer Bell] (novel) 1849

Villette [as Currer Bell] (novel) 1853

Charles Dickens

The Personal History of David Copperfield (novel) 1850
Our Mutual Friend (novel) 1865
The Mystery of Edwin Drood (unfinished novel) 1870

Emily Dickinson

Poems by Emily Dickinson (poetry) 1890
Poems by Emily Dickinson, Second Series (poetry) 1891
Letters of Emily Dickinson. 2 vols. (letters) 1894; revised edition, 1931
Poems by Emily Dickinson, Third Series (poetry) 1896
The Single Hound: Poems of a Lifetime (poetry) 1914
Further Poems of Emily Dickinson (poetry) 1929
Unpublished Poems of Emily Dickinson (poetry) 1935
Bolts of Melody: New Poems of Emily Dickinson (poetry) 1945
The Poems of Emily Dickinson. 3 vols. (poetry) 1955
The Letters of Emily Dickinson. 3 vols. (letters) 1958
The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson (poetry) 1962
Emily Dickinson: Selected Letters (letters) 1971
The Poems of Emily Dickinson, Variorum Edition. 3 vols. (poetry) 1998
The Poems of Emily Dickinson, Reading Edition (poetry) 1999

George Eliot

The Mill on the Floss (novel) 1860

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Nature (essay) 1836
Essays (essays) 1838; also published as *Essays: First Series*, 1854
Essays: Second Series (essays) 1844
Poems (poetry) 1847
The Conduct of Life (essays) 1860
The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson. 12 vols. (essays and poetry) 1903-21

Elizabeth Gaskell

Ruth. 3 vols. [published anonymously] (novel) 1853

Gerard Manley Hopkins

Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins (poetry) 1918; enlarged editions, 1930, 1948, 1967
The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon (letters) 1935
The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges (letters) 1935
The Notebooks and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins (diary, journal, and notes) 1937
Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins (letters) 1938
The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins (diary, journal, and notes) 1959
The Sermons and Devotional Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins (sermons, journals, and notes) 1959

Thomas Hughes

Tom Brown's School Days [published anonymously] (novel) 1857; also published as *Schooldays at Rugby*

Sarah Orne Jewett

Deephaven (short stories) 1877
Old Friends and New (short stories) 1879
Country By-Ways (short stories) 1881
A Country Doctor (novel) 1884
The Mate of the Daylight, and Friends Ashore (short stories) 1884
A Marsh Island (novel) 1885
A White Heron, and Other Stories (short stories) 1886
The King of Folly Island, and Other People (short stories) 1888
Strangers and Wayfarers (short stories) 1890
A Native of Winby, and Other Tales (short stories) 1893
The Life of Nancy (stories) 1895
The Country of the Pointed Firs (sketches) 1896
The Queen's Twin (short stories) 1899
The Tory Lover (novel) 1901
Verses (poetry) 1916

John Keats

Poems (poetry) 1817
Endymion: A Poetic Romance (poetry) 1818
Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems (poetry) 1820
Life, Letters and Literary Remains of John Keats (letters and poetry) 1848
Another Version of Keats's "Hyperion" (poetry) 1856
Letters of John Keats to Fanny Brawne (letters) 1878
Letters of John Keats to His Family and Friends (letters) 1891
The Complete Poetical Works and Letters of John Keats (letters and poetry) 1899

Herman Melville

Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life. 2 vols. (novel) 1846
Moby-Dick; or, The Whale (novel) 1851

Christina Rossetti

The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti [edited by William Michael Rossetti] (poetry) 1904

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus. 3 vols. (novel) 1818

Bayard Taylor

Joseph and His Friend: A Story of Pennsylvania (novel) 1870
The Poetical Works of Bayard Taylor (poetry) 1880

Walt Whitman

Leaves of Grass (poetry) 1855, 1856, 1860-61, 1867, 1871, 1876, 1881-82, 1891-92

The Correspondence of Walt Whitman. 6 vols. (letters) 1961-77

Prose Works, 1892. 2 vols. (essays) 1963-64

Theodore Winthrop

Cecil Dreeme (novel) 1861

John Brent (novel) 1862

SPIRITUAL AND PERSONAL FULFILLMENT

Jeffrey E. Simpson (essay date June 1983)

SOURCE: Simpson, Jeffrey E. "The Dependent Self: ED and Friendship." *Dickinson Studies*, no. 45 (June 1983): 35-42.

[In the following essay, Simpson demonstrates how an examination of Emily Dickinson's treatment of friendship reveals the author's sense of her own identity as well as her deeper concerns with the human condition.]

Without Friends no one would choose to live, tho he
had all other goods.

—Aristotle, *Ethics*

Reclusive as she was, Emily Dickinson was no exception to Aristotle's aphorism. Her friendships were few but incredibly intense; friendship played a central role in her life and, as a recurring theme, in her poetry as well. Yet critics have largely ignored the crucial middle ground of friendship, focusing instead on her Emersonian self-reliance at one extreme and her idolatrous devotion to "Master" at the other. These polar dimensions are real enough, but they are too often distorted through caricature. Dickinson's poems dealing with friendship, together with her letters, define a fragile personal universe always threatening to turn "cold," "frigid,"—impersonal. They help, moreover, to illuminate her central preoccupations, her distinctive kind of vision. Emerson, so often invoked in Dickinson criticism, also illuminates here as much through contrast as through similarity to ED [Emily Dickinson].

In his 1841 essay, "Friendship," Emerson declares that "I should hate myself, if I made my friends my asylum," "for he viewed true friendship (in one mood at least) as a kind of living struggle (Jaspers' phrase) through which friends—treating one another with "roughest courage"—pushed each other to greater self-fulfillment.¹ Emerson's emphasis contrasts sharply with Dickinson's sense of friendship; the "Transcendent Self" Waggoner describes became very dependent indeed in this realm.

She was more independent intellectually than she was emotionally, and her extraordinary sensitivity made her reliance on friends both an extreme delight and an extreme torment.

Ernest Becker maintains in his splendid psychological study, *The Denial of Death*, that everyday "sanity" and emotional stability demand that one shut out much of the terror inherent in the human condition. Dickinson, however, remained intensely aware of a threatening universe, and this awareness made her feel "very puny alone"; she sought refuge in friendship.² She expresses this sense of vulnerability clearly if somewhat rhetorically in a letter thanking Susan Dickinson for her constancy: "when the world is cold, and the storm sighs e'er so piteously, I am sure of one sweet shelter, ONE covert from the storm" (L, 79). Writing in a similar vein to Dr. and Mrs. Holland in 1859, ED tells of eagerly awaiting their visit so that she may "hide in [them] again, as a safe fold." (L, 151). Dickinson often compared herself to the weak animals that folds and coverts are designed to protect, for she felt vulnerable and—especially in the open—defenseless. Because the psychological defenses, the toned down consciousness, that work for most people rarely worked for her, she became extremely dependent on such shelters and remained so through most of her life.

This craving for shelter is expressed just as emphatically in the poetry as in the letters, even if the "friendship poems" are not among her best or most impressive. In a short poem written in 1862, Dickinson again turns to the shelter motif, but she shifts the metaphor from land—covert and fold—to sea:

An Hour is a Sea
Between a few, and me—
With them would Harbor be—

(J 825)

Here again friends represent safety to Dickinson, not an opportunity for struggle, loving or otherwise. Significantly, in both letters and poems she usually conceives of the outside threat in terms of the indifferent, impersonal forces of storm and sea. Another poem suggests that friends can also have a more positive, nurturing function, serving as a home or nest rather than just a temporary shelter:

Her heart is fit for HOME—
I—a Sparrow—build I there
Sweet of twigs and twine
My perennial nest

(J 84)

Given this keen sense of dependence on her closest friends, it is not too surprising that the fear and pain of separation is a major theme in her poetry, a preoccupa-

tion in her letters. "Friends are too dear to sunder," she writes sister-in-law Sue, "they are far too few, and how soon they will go away where you and I cannot find them" (L, 90). By using "sunder" (even in her letters she chose words carefully) Emily underscores her sense of genuine friendships as an almost organic unity that dies only when forcibly broken apart. For Dickinson, as for Emerson, friends did not just exist side by side, through accident, with no more than an external connection. Both viewed genuine friendship as transcending a MERELY social, secular relation, as inescapably partaking of the divine and sacred (Cf., Emerson, "Friendship demands a religious treatment").

Yet the inevitability of separation of one kind or another made Dickinson sometimes question the desirability—tho she never questioned the need—of forming friendships:

Are Friends Delight or Pain?
Could Bounty but remain
Riches were good—

But if they only stay
Ampler to fly away
Riches are sad.

(J 1199)

Because friends were so crucial to her emotional survival, ED felt intensely the vulnerability of all human relationships, the almost mocking injustice of temporary "Delight." "My Friend must be a Bird—," she concludes in a poem, "Because it flies!" (J 92). It is this sense of fleeting satisfaction that informs her playful rebuke of the Bowleses: "I am sorry you came because you went away" (L 142).

Thoreau was able to counter the stock death-bed question, "Are you at peace with God" with "I wasn't aware we had quarreled"—no so, Dickinson. Although she probably saw her friends less than Thoreau saw his, she needed them more, and she viewed separation as just cause indeed for quarrel. Her question in an 1852 letter to Sue, "what shall separate us from any whom we love" found an implicit answer in another question, this time from a poem written twelve years later: "Oh God / Why give if Thou must take away / The Loved?" (L 68; J 882). For Dickinson, being granted friends only to lose them appeared as cruel a divine jest as God's allowing Moses to view the Promised Land only to deny him entry. In both cases the Deity seemed to ED a mocking prankster indifferent to fundamental human feeling. This helps explain her frequent recalcitrance with God—she was "shrewd with Him" (L 150). The perpetual vulnerability of friends played a large part in her recurring protests against God's injustice.

Dickinson repeatedly complained that "my friends are very few," and yet the intensity of her devotion and the depth of her emotional commitment made this paucity

inevitable. As the poems and letters make clear, she invested too much psychic energy into her friendships to make large groups of friends conceivable. In fact, her friendships appear quite numerous in light of their intensity. What she lacked was a large circle of acquaintances; she eventually lost interest in socializing, but she never lost interest in friendship.

Because they were necessarily few, friends became all the more precious to Dickinson; they were "like gems—infrequent" (L 150). In J 245—a kind of miniature of the medieval poem "Pearl" without the redeeming vision—she again turns to gem metaphor to heighten the sense of the preciousness of her friends:

I held a Jewel in my fingers—

Here she, not God, seems responsible for the loss of her friend. Indeed, the sense of tense vigilance, the constant need for reassurance, that characterizes so much of her writing is at least partly a product of this fear of losing friends through negligence, through complacent inattention.

She gives this haunting fear of irrevocable loss resulting from inattention explicit statement in J 205:

I should not dare to leave my friend,

Throughout the poem, Dickinson conveys a sense of breathless agitation, of terrible urgency, through the repetition of key phrases. She was not one for casual friendships.

A crucial corollary of this solicitude for friends was ED's constant terror at the prospect of betrayal. As shown earlier, she found separation of any kind an extreme torment; separation through a lapse in devotion or love was well—nigh unbearable to her. "You love me—you are sure—" she asks in J 156, "I shall not fear mistake— / I shall not CHEATED wake" (J 156). Dickinson feared throughout her life that she would suddenly confront, that she would "awake" to, some form of rejection by her close friends, friends through whom, remember, she gained emotional sustenance and protection. The concern, "I'm so afraid you'll forget me," in this case voiced to Emily Fowler, emerges and re-emerges in various formulations throughout ED's writing. For love could be withheld from her, friendship forgotten, no matter how vigilant or caring she remained:

I showed her Heights she never saw—
'Would'st Climb,' I said?
She said—'Not so'—
'With ME,' I said—'With ME'?

(J 446)

So sensitive herself, she was both baffled and frightened when a trusted friend "could not find her Yes—" (J

446). Friendship had a religious significance for Dickinson, so that to be forsaken represented an ultimate threat to her sense of self-worth:

That she forgot me was the least

(J 1683)

As with God so with friends, Dickinson seems to be suggesting, faithfulness and constancy seldom ensure mutuality or justice. Too often devotion just exposed one to “shame” and humiliation (like Moses, again, “Canaan denied”).

Taken in isolation, much of ED’s lamenting and much of her rhetoric in dealing with friendship sounds sentimental, exaggerated, even insincere. Some of it is. Yet it is important to recognize that ED’s relationship with her friends helped structure her highly charged, if delicately balanced, emotional universe and that she therefore reacted with unwonted intensity to any actual or potential threat to her friendships. Excessive and inflated language was an unfortunate side-effect of this intensity. To her hair-trigger sensibility, small loss implied great, minor imbalance implied chaos. Thus when one of her “friends attacks [her] friend!” Emily senses an ultimate threat to herself as well, justifying the extreme response of shooting the entire human race:

How martial is this place!
Had I a mighty gun
I think I’d shoot the human race
And then to glory run!

(J 118)

This poem finds a biographical analog in a letter written to John Graves in which she rejoices over the reconciliation of John and another mutual friend:

Then you and your former college friend are reconciled again—he told me all about it, and tears of happiness came shining in my eyes . . . I have hoped for this very often, John, when you were fast asleep, and my eyes will shut much sooner, now all is peace. I loved to have you both my friends, and friends to one another, and it grieved me very often that you were enemies—now all is safe.

(L 120)

Disruptions among friends seemed to threaten her sense of security and safety in a fundamental way. Small battles, they pointed to larger ones, underscoring the vulnerability of all human relations.

The kind of pain she associated with failed friendship or lost friends reflected her tau, high-strung temperament. Emotional wounds always seemed sharp, focused, sudden to her. She complained more of piercing pain than of dull aches. “Perhaps Death gave me awe for friends,” she writes Higginson in 1863—“striking sharp

and early” (L 182). What’s more, this pain that strikes sharp and early does not just subside, “for every jostling of the spirit barbs the loss afresh” (L 300). Even friends alive could hurt Dickinson in the same pointed fashion:

“My friend must be a bee [variant=Bird] / Because it stings.”

(J 92)

But just as the pain of friendship could be sharp and extreme for her so could the delight; paradoxically, the delight could be equally incapacitating for her. Sheer intensity of feeling often overwhelmed her; “Fervor suffocates me,” she writes Higginson in 1886 (L 329). This fervor was not a mere death-bed heightening of consciousness, for a full thirty years earlier she expressed a similar passion that overwhelmed reason: “in thinking of those I love my reason is all gone from me, and I do fear sometimes that I must make a hospital for the hopelessly insane, and chain me up there such times, so I won’t injure you” (L 79). Of course, this kind of involuntary reaction made her feel very vulnerable in the presence of friends. She was very much aware, often painfully aware, that hers was not a typical or “normal” response to others. This helps to explain her constant concern that people will “stare at [her],” that they will “laugh at [her],” that they will consider her hopelessly “old-fashioned.” She would “delight to meet [her] friends” but such meetings make her “grow incongruous,” make her “quite forget time and sense and so forth” (L 134).

Seen in this light, Dickinson’s reclusive lifestyle can never be mistaken for misanthropy. Her refusal to greet friends reflects, rather, an inability to sustain an overwhelmingly oppressive emotional and psychic pressure. J 635 gives a markedly Poesque treatment of this paradox of oppressive joy in greeting friends:

I think the longest Hour of all

In the pendulum stanza a relentless rhythm combines with a preponderance of hard consonant sounds to effectively convey a sense of tense foreboding, prompted—paradoxically—by an inexorable “Joy.” The friends or guests never are mentioned in the poem, thus intensifying the situation through an added element of mystery.

The association between friendship and mystery was crucial to Dickinson, crucial because without mystery her world threatened to become cold and impersonal. A brief one-stanza poem written in 1875 underscores the intimate connection between friendship and mystery:

Nature assigns the Sun—
That—is Astronomy—

Nature cannot enact a Friend—
That—is Astrology.

(J 1336)

For Dickinson, friendship transcended the impersonal natural pattern that the Astronomer can describe. A friend, as Dickinson knew so well, was above all unpredictable, immune to the quantifying spirit of Astronomy. She always saw in friendship something "past what ourself[ves] can estimate" (J 509).

The cold was a pre-eminent threat to her fragile personal universe, and the shelter of friendship was one of her key defenses. Yet even friends were often ineffectual in the face of extreme spiritual numbness, for "A shady friend—For Torrid days— / Is easier to find— / Than one of higher temperature / For Frigid—hour of Mind" (J 278). Robert Frost may have been equivocal about whether "Fire" or Ice" was the preferable torment, but Dickinson, for one, entertained no such doubt. Although friends sometimes failed during her "Frigid hour of mind," they were her only genuine recourse. Indeed, in J 278 she describes the death of a friend in terms of a world gone cold:

If anybody's friend be dead

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How warm they were, on such a day,
You almost feel the date—
So short way off it seems—
And now—they're Centuries from that—

.

How pleased they were, at what you said—
You try to touch the smile
And dip your fingers in the frost—

(J 509)

Her writing on friendship is probably the least Emersonian of all her work. Emerson was more concerned with transcendence than with dependence, and his conviction that "The condition which high friendship demands is the ability to do without it" was anathema to ED. She saw the ability to do without one's friend as evidence that friendship never really existed, just as she saw the fact that a pain had disappeared was evidence there was really no hurt.

Even so, a number of important parallels remain. Both could place such a heavy value on friendship because both viewed intuition or non-conceptual knowledge as a valid, even superior, form of knowledge. Emerson would have had no difficulty in understanding Emily's claim that "the inferential knowledge" is "the distinctest one" (L 270). There was, they insisted, little need for abstract concepts in friendship; Dickinson found that "the earth's most graphic transaction is placed within a syllable, nay, even a gaze" while Emerson advised that people "Read the language of wandering eyebeams" (L 302).

Moreover, they both placed an extraordinarily high value on the role of letters in friendship, for they both possessed a strain of idealistic yearning for spiritual perfection and purity. Letters were Dickinson's primary access to her friends, and Emerson chose to write his essay on friendship in the form of a Letter to a Friend. In a particularly transcendental mood ED could write, "A Letter always feels to me like immortality because it is the mind alone without the corporeal friend:" (L 189). Expressing a similar sentiment, Emerson wrote, "To my Friend I write a letter and from him I receive a letter . . . It is a spiritual gift worthy of him to give and me to receive. It profanes nobody."

Finally, Dickinson's faith in a personal Heaven was her greatest source of strength in dealing with the pain of separation. Although they were temporarily lost through death or distance, they would eventually be reunited in the "House Above." She notes all this very explicitly in a letter to Mrs. Holland:

My only sketch, profile, of Heaven is a large,
blue sky, bluer and larger than the biggest
I have seen in June, and in it are my friends—
all of them—every one of them—those who are
with me now, and those who were 'parted' as we
walked, and 'snatched up to Heaven.'

(L 136)

Despite her reclusive ways, then, ED remained intensely devoted to friends, and friendship played an indispensable role in her life and poetry. Although the topic of friendship did not, by and large, inspire great poems, it did help shape and define her vision of the human predicament. There was a limit to self-reliance for Dickinson as for all of us. The Master Figure, tho obviously critical to her life and poetry, was in no sense an all-precluding substitute for friendship, for "no one would choose to live without friends," including ED.

Notes

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essay: Second Series* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1969), p. 166.
2. ED, *Selected Letters* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1971), p. 35. Hereafter citations from this edition will be documented by page number, preceded by L in parentheses.

Abbreviations

J: Johnson, Thomas H., ed. *The Poems of Emily Dickinson, Including Variant Readings Critically Compared with All Known Manuscripts*. 3 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955.

Domenico Pezzini (essay date 1992)

SOURCE: Pezzini, Domenico. "Images of Friendship in Hopkins' Poetry." *Gerard Manley Hopkins Annual* (1992): 83-103.

[In the following essay, Pezzini surveys the manner in which Gerard Manley Hopkins treats friendship in religious or spiritual contexts within his poetry.]

When I think of the idea of friendship in Hopkins' poetry, the first thing that comes to my mind is not exactly an image, or a group of images, but a solid block of four monosyllables defining Christ as "first, fast, last friend." These words form the concluding half-line of a sonnet Hopkins wrote at St. Beuno's in 1877 which he entitled first "The Lantern," and then "The Lantern out of Doors" (40). It is not properly a poem about friendship, a topic Hopkins never chose as his subject matter, and were it not for the final attribute applied to Christ, the sonnet could be quickly labelled as a "priestly" poem, as McChesney suggests, "in the sense that it is one of a number that he produced expressing his vocational concerns" (76). I understand that "priestly" is used here to indicate something related to pastoral care; that is a kind of relationship which does not necessarily include the "mutual harmony in affairs human and divine coupled with benevolence and charity" (omnium divinarum humanarumque rerum cum benevolentia et caritate consensio. De Am. 20) which, according to Cicero, is the very substance of friendship. The interpretation of the sonnet in terms of priestly ministry was actually encouraged by Hopkins himself when, sending to Bridges "The Candle Indoors" (46) (Oxford, 1879), a sonnet much more priestly and pastoral in its outlook, he said that it was meant as "a companion to the Lantern," adding significantly "not at first meant to be though, but it fell in" (B 84). It was on this occasion that, to mark the "companionship" of the two poems, Hopkins completed the title of the first by the addition "out of Doors" as an evident complement to the "indoors" of the later sonnet.

For all that an afterthought may matter, I maintain that the content of the latter poem should not impinge on the interpretation of the former. In my view "The Lantern" is first of all a poem about friendship, and only on a secondary level a poem dealing with pastoral care. That these two kinds of relationship are not mutually exclusive is proved by a priestly poem par excellence, "Felix Randal," in which that essential aspect of friendship which is reciprocity receives its best illustration. Another point that may be raised against my reading of the poem is the fact that it is Christ who is called "friend," and that this could have little to do with our human friendships. Again, while it is clear that this attribute has undoubtedly a primary theological meaning, it is also beyond question that it mirrors Hopkins' idea

of friendship, precisely the idea he develops through the images he used in "The Lantern" as well as in other poems. This is the reason why I keep this sonnet at the center of my analysis: its deep, rich meaning will deliver itself in the light of what precedes and what follows in Hopkins' poetical works. This is also the limit of my study, which is not about Hopkins' experience or philosophy of friendship, but is concerned with what he chose to express in his poems touching this subject.

1. EARLY POETRY

An investigation into Hopkins' early poetry in search of what he thought and felt about friendship yields a tiny and discouraging crop: two poems written at Oxford in 1865, concerning which the least we can say is that we do not find here a particularly positive idea of human friendship. The first poem, "Where art thou friend, whom I shall never see" (13), is apparently addressed to Digby Dolben, a young man whom Hopkins greatly admired, "pleading with him to accept Christ's love" (MacKenzie 23) possibly by entering monastic life. Rudy Bremer has interpreted the poem as addressing a friend who "may not even have been born yet," but who does—or will—appreciate his writings (13). In any case the stress is either on the impossibility of meeting (he "shall never see" the friend, who is "sundered from [his] sight in the age that is, or far-off promise of a time to be"), or on the love of Christ, who has "foreknown and loved" the friend, a priority we shall find again in "The Lantern" where Christ is said to be the "first" friend. The second Oxford poem, "Myself unholy" (16), is more relevant in that it shows what Hopkins expected from friends: support radiating from an exemplary sanctity. Feeling unworthy and impure he looks "To the sweet living" of his friends. The answer he receives is disappointing; "they are purer" than him, but not pure enough:

And so my trust, confusèd, struck, and shook
Yields to the sultry siege of melancholy.

"Siege" is an important word here; it hints at the recurring assaults of depression Hopkins had to fight against all through his life. It also expresses in an oblique way how desperately he needed to ground his trust on solid rock. And this is what he does:

Knowing them well I can but see the fall.
This fault in one I found, that in another:
And so, though each have one while I have all,
No better serves me now, save best; no other
Save Christ: to Christ I look, on Christ I call.

In this young religious enthusiast, human friendship is too poor a thing; it cannot help, it cannot give what it promises. Except for Christ's companionship, man is thrown back to his radical loneliness, a condition Hopkins describes in another Oxford poem of the same year, "The Alchemist in the City" (15):