

The Self-Swarm of Artemis: Emily Dickinson as Bee/Hive/Queen

JOSHUA M. HALL

Abstract

Despite the ubiquity of bees in Dickinson's work, most interpreters denigrate her nature poems. But following several recent scholars, I identify Nietzschean/Dionysian overtones in the bee poems and suggest the figure of bees/hive/queen illuminates as feminist key to her corpus. First, (a) the bee's sting represents martyred death; (b) its gold, immortality; (c) its tongue, the "lesbian phallus"; (d) its wings, poetic power; (e) its buzz, poetic melody, and (f) its organism, a joyful Dionysian Susan (her sister-in-law and love interest) to Emily's flower. Second, the hive represents her individual poems (with slants/dashes as stingers, wings as hymn meter, honey as rhymes, variant words as exiled bees, and accompanying flowers their Darwinian coevolution with bees), constituting her writing persona as a multi-voiced self-swarm, as organized in the apiary of her letters and fascicles. And third, the queen represents her Western cultural and religious inheritance wherein bees are symbols of the soul, reincarnation, poetic-philosophical vocation, and a Nietzschean, trans-Dionysian naturalist ontology—symbolized by apiarian Artemis.

Keywords: Emily Dickinson, Friedrich Nietzsche; Artemis, Bees, Dionysus, Mythology

Those that are worthy of Life are of Miracle, for Life is Miracle, and Death, as harmless as
a Bee, except to those who run—

—Emily Dickinson¹

Reading the entirety of Crisianne Miller's new edition of Dickinson's poems, one is likely to be struck by the ubiquity of bees, from the poet's earliest efforts to those written soon before her death.² By my count, bees are mentioned explicitly in 104 poems (along with one other reference to a swarm, and another to a hive and honey).³ Perhaps in recognition of this hymenopteran excess, Susan Kornfeld entitled her online compendium of Dickinson poems "The Prowling Bee" (an allusion to Dickinson's poem, "Bloom – is Result – to meet a Flower").⁴ This apiarian fullness is also acknowledged, albeit begrudgingly, by most major Dickinson scholars of the last forty years, though they nevertheless dismiss the bee poems (and other poems about humble natural beings) as unworthy of analysis.⁵

Representative of that contemptuous position is the influential work of Joanna Feit Diehl, who interprets Dickinson primarily as an inheritor and transformer of the Romantic tradition.⁶ On the one hand, Diehl acknowledges that Dickinson "forms a salutary, protective boundary in her garden; the domesticated, magnified landscape of bird, bee, and flower allows her to enact the drama of sexuality freed from overpowering self-consciousness" (84). More specifically, Diehl claims that Dickinson "identifies bee and flowers with lover and beloved" (86). More importantly, I would add, in one poem Dickinson directly and explicitly identifies the poem's speaker as a bee and describes it as worshipping a flower-symbolized beloved, which likely represents Susan Gilbert Dickinson, her sister-in-law and the love of her life.⁷ On the other hand, Diehl insists that, "although [Dickinson] begins by observing nature and continues to write descriptive poems throughout her life, her most powerful poems perform a solipsistic usurpation of nature" (50). But the latter claim is only one interpretive step away from insulting Dickinson's artistry, or

pathologizing her relationship to nature based on the relative minority of poems that adopt the solipsistic perspective.⁸ When in truth, much (if not most) of Dickinson's nature poetry is positive and celebratory, and she repeatedly identifies "nature" with "God"—which implicitly elevates the bee poems further.⁹

A similar view can be found in the even more influential work of Sharon Cameron.¹⁰ Like Diehl, Cameron asserts that "the poems that command the most interest "are concerned with certain substitutions that relegate the visible world to the second place accorded by the sharper demands of imagination and desire" (10). Yet Cameron elsewhere undermines this hard distinction between the visible and invisible worlds by quoting the following three relevant passages from Dickinson's correspondence. First, "The supernatural is only the natural disclosed" (L 278, quoted on 175). Second, "I have never believed [Paradise] to be a superhuman site" (L 391, quoted on 41). And third, "If God had been here this summer, and seen the things that I have seen – I guess that He would think His Paradise superfluous" (L 185, quoted on 40). To summarize: paradise, the divine, and immortality for Dickinson are found entirely in this natural world.

Cameron even provides evidence of Dickinson's rejection of Christian two-worldliness, via a transgression between the visible and invisible worlds, in the one bee poem that Cameron analyzes, namely "Bees are Black, with Gilt Surcingles –." In Cameron's words, it is as if "from another world, the bee is invested with priest-like powers" (9). It is precisely on this basis, channeling the bees' priestly powers, that I interpret Dickinson's bee-poems as offering this-worldly divinity, in Nietzschean kinship to Dionysus (though ultimately transcending him in favor of Artemis, goddess of bees). Put simply, the poems and fascicles are the swarms and hives of Dickinson's apiary, whose honey is not merely fermented into Dionysian mead, but preserved in the cells of Dickinson's letters and the bedroom drawers where she kept her work hidden.

In my first section, I consider several scholars who explore the figure of the bee, one in Western literature and two in Dickinson's work, which emphasize the bee's centrality for her corpus, its kinship with the Nietzschean Dionysian, and its queer feminist empowerment. In my second section, I trace these themes to several studies of Dickinson and Nietzsche which highlight her Dionysian power, perspectival epistemology, and ontology of creative linguistics. In my third section, I identify themes in three prominent Dickinson scholars, who reimagine her (a) self as an avatar of Apollonian violence, (b) slants/dashes as a revolutionary grammar of feminist polyglossia, and (c) correspondence's materiality as an affirmation of everyday nature. Finally, in my conclusion, I connect this to my own apicultural great-grandfather.

1. Apiarian Dickinson

There are multiple points in T. J. Haarhoff's essay, "The Bees of Virgil," that resonate with Dickinson and anticipate the analyses offered below.¹¹ In the interest of space, I enumerate them briefly here. First, he notes that "Varro had said: that bees are rightly called the birds of the Muses" (155). The central importance of birds to Dickinson is well-attested, including in her obituary by Susan Gilbert Dickinson (155).¹² Moreover, in Latin "bird" (*avis*) is only one letter removed from "bee" (*apis*). Second, Haarhoff notes that "Plato writes in the *Ion* (534): 'the souls of poets...have this peculiar ministrations in the world; ...these souls, flying like bees from flower to flower and wandering over the gardens and the meadows and the honey-flowing fountains of the Muses, return to us laden with the sweetness of melody'" (155). Dickinson, too, implicitly compares the soul to a bee.¹³ Third, Haarhoff writes that "Honey, in a very persistent ancient belief, was given to infants to impart wisdom and eloquence and prophetic qualities"; for example, "Pindar tells us that the

prophetess of Delphi, who gave oracular responses, was called the Delphic Bee” (155). And contemporary literary critic James Longenbach calls Dickinson “the Delphic Oracle.”¹⁴

Fourth from Haarhoff, “The philosopher Porphyry tells us in his work on the cave of the nymphs that the ancients gave Artemis the name Melissa (‘bee’), and that the souls of human beings come down into our world from the Moon-goddess, who is Artemis or Diana in her sky-function” (160). Dickinson’s similarities to Artemis are also central to Paglia’s interpretation of her, to which I return below. Fifth, “In Normandy, when a member of the family died, the bees were told: Your father, mother, or some other relation has died”; and “In America, Whittier’s poem, *Telling the Bees* (1858), shows how the custom spread across the Atlantic” (162). This aligns with Dickinson’s morbid fascination with death. Sixth, “Bees were early connected with the soul and the spirits of the departed”; for example, “There is a common Germanic tradition that the soul leaves the body in sleep or at death in the form of a bee,” and Artemis, “who is connected in one of her functions with the spirit-world, is represented on Ephesian bronze tesserae from Roman times by a stag on the one side and a bee on the other” (168). And clearly, there is no theme dearer to Dickinson than the experiences of a soul after death.

Seventh, Haarhoff notes that bees were historically linked to reincarnation, including in the myth depicted in Virgil’s *Georgics* in which a rotting ox carcass generates a swarm of bees, and in Virgil’s account of how the goddess “Ceres made bees come from the body of the old woman Melissa, slain because she refused to divulge the secret rites of Ceres” (169). And immortality or second life are also a constant theme in Dickinson. Eighth, “In the Egyptian book of the Spirit-world (*Am-tuat*) the voices of souls are compared to the hum of bees; and Virgil likens the souls by the river Lethe who are awaiting incarnation to a swarm of bees” (169). This also aligns with my suggestion that Dickinson’s poetic music is at least as much the bees’ buzz as it is birdsong, and that her writing persona can be meaningfully interpreted as a soul-swarm (169). Finally from Haarhoff, “All over Europe, in England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, we find the pleasant legend that bees sing a hymn in their hive on Christmas Eve” (170). The fact that Dickinson, too, alludes to this practice suggests that her swarm-souled, buzzing voice also taps into and repurposes the power of her religious inheritance.¹⁵

Against the background of this brief survey of bees in Western cultural history, the most comprehensive scholarly study of bees in Dickinson’s work is Victoria Morgan’s chapter in the anthology *Shaping Belief*. First, Morgan notes an affirming poem about bees by Dickinson’s fellow poet-philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, who is widely acknowledged as one of the primary influences on Dickinson (and on Nietzsche). The second stanza of Emerson’s “The Humble-Bee” in particular, anticipates the themes of Dickinson’s bee poems.

Insect lover of the sun,
Joy of thy dominion!
Sailor of the atmosphere;
Swimmer through the waves of air,
Voyager of light and noon;
Epicurean of June,
Wait, I prithee, till I come
Within ear-shot of thy hum,—
All without is martyrdom.¹⁶

First from this passage, as I noted above from Diehl, Dickinson repeatedly figures the bee as a lover. And indeed, “all without” the bee (and other positive nature) poems in her corpus suggests

a life of perpetual psychological martyrdom. More specifically, Dickinson mostly associates bees with joy and the central “Epicurean” value of pleasure. Secondly from this Emersonian stanza, it also features what Cameron notes is the most important time of the day and of the year for Dickinson, namely high noon in June, which is central to her concept of eternity.¹⁷

Zooming out to Emerson’s bee poem as a whole, and in accordance with his central influence on Dickinson’s generation’s self-understanding of their poetic vocation, Morgan claims that “bee imagery, more so than any other imagery in her work, illustrates her direct engagement with the idea of the poet” (76). Emerson’s poem also connects the bee to immortality (in its reference to the bees’ “immortal leisure”), which aligns with Morgan’s observation that Dickinson associated the color gold with immortality (as in the poem, “Bees are Black, with Gilt Surcingles –”) (78).¹⁸ An additional connection between bees and immortality is found in her poem, “the Bumble Bee’s Religion,” which Morgan notes was “one of the very few titles Dickinson gave to a poem” (78). In sum, Emerson’s conception of bees as figures of immortality strongly influenced Dickinson’s bee poems, which provides another reason for valorizing them as equally important to her poems on the psyche and on death.

As to the meaning of the bees in Dickinson’s work, Morgan writes that although she “retains the notion of the Puritan way of life and the surety of faith in the structure and design inherent in the bee’s life – going to and from the hive in order to produce honey for the collective good,” nevertheless, “the bee’s movements are always balanced in her poems with a definite lack of restraint and assertion of individuality as it is also defiantly errant and has the freedom of choice of which flower to visit and how long to linger” (80).¹⁹ More deviant still, and thereby even closer to Emerson (and thereby to Nietzsche), Morgan elaborates that “The idea of the morally dubious character or the association of the bee’s ecstatic nature with criminality is invoked in many of her representations of bees, as for example in” the poem “Buccaneers of Buzz,” which contains my own favorite description by Dickinson of bees (84).

More specifically, Morgan emphasizes “a group of poems in which the ecstatic bee is in turns [sic] ‘drunken’, ‘fainting’ and ‘lost’ in the ‘balms’ of its flowers” (85). Deploying Dionysian rhetoric, Morgan suggests that “the bee operates to connote a mystical immanence which is always in relation” (89). More precisely, this mystical immanence involves a “human relation with the divine in others and nature, as an outwards and horizontal relationality, as opposed to the vertical (God descending from above) and hierarchical (God-man-woman) assertions of spirituality to be found in Puritan theology” (89). In short, Dickinson’s bee poems offer a self-overcoming of Puritanical Christian transcendent resignation, in favor of a naturalistic immanent joy. In this way, Morgan echoes Landry’s affirmation of the bee as a symbol of deviance (in her case, that of lesbian desire), and anticipates Fraser’s construal of this deviance as a kind of transhumanism or becoming-bee in Dickinson.

Turning to the latter scholar, the title of Fraser’s essay is derived from the abovementioned “Buccaneers of Buzz.”²⁰ And her central concept of “becoming-animal,” a creation of the Nietzschean French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, also helped inspire my interpretation of Dickinson’s writing persona as the human-animal hybrid that is simultaneously a bee/hive/queen (with the forward slashes intended to represent Dickinson’s signature slanted marks, normally printed as dashes).²¹ As I explore elsewhere, for Deleuze it is crucial that becoming-animal consists, not in a wholesale transformation into a nonhuman animal (as in Kaka’s *Metamorphosis*), but rather in the adoption of certain practices, gestures, habits, comportments, etc. that are modeled on another species.²²

Returning to Fraser, her thesis is as follows: “Through a comparative analysis of Dickinson’s bee poems with the history of bees in America and the scientific developments of the nineteenth century, this essay shows how Dickinson reconsiders assumptions about human-centered hierarchies.” One important example of this reconsideration involves Darwinian evolution, in part because “scientific speculation and the new epithet ‘Darwinism’ were two of the central preoccupations of the periodicals in Dickinson’s lifetime.”²³ More specifically, “One of the centerpiece examples of natural selection in *On the Origin of Species* was the relationship between bee and flower.” That is, “As Darwin observed, ‘a flower and a bee might slowly become, either simultaneously or one after the other, modified and adapted to each other in the most perfect manner’ (75).”²⁴ It is in this spirit that I suggest thinking of (a) Dickinson’s poems as bees that consume (and thereby render immortal) the nectar of the flowers enclosed with those poems in the envelopes of her correspondence, and of (b) Susan as the bee in relation to Dickinson as flower (her preferred name for herself being “Daisy”).²⁵ Anticipating Shira Wolosky’s Nietzschean interpretation of Dickinson below, one could say that her world is woven from the linguistic creativity of female relationships.

Finally, consonant with Morgan’s Emersonian reading of Dickinson, Fraser observes that “Since Dickinson’s bees ‘Ride abroad’ not for unnamed flowers, but for the enjoyment of exploration and conquest, they deviate from instinctual, evolutionary bee behavior.” Moreover, Fraser adds, Dickinson also attends to the tragic dimension of bees’ existence (which also brings her closer to Nietzsche). “The drones’ pitiful fate,” in particular, Fraser observes, “is suggested” in the abovementioned poem “The Bumble Bee’s Religion –,” especially given that “Dickinson incorporated it in a letter for her nephew Gilbert to take, along with a dead bee, to his teacher.” To repeat, Dickinson included an actual dead bee along with her poem about dead bees (and about bees’ relationship to the divine).

I now conclude this section on Dickinson and bees with H. Jordan Landry.²⁶ “Through the use of bird and bee imagery,” she writes, “Dickinson images anew [sic] the erotic triangle of male minister-Christ-congregant underlying Puritan discourse” (42). More specifically, “Dickinson overlays the Puritan triangle of desire with a zoological frame in order to lesbianize the process of conversion” (43). Landry finds one source of evidence for this claim in Dickinson’s correspondence. “Nascent in Dickinson’s letters written in the 1850s to Sue Gilbert, lie Dickinson’s initial attempts to re-configure Puritanism’s erotic triangles as women-dominated,” Landry writes, “and to translate the female form into a powerful mode of being in the world, one not defined only through roles shaped by and played in relationship to men such as those of virgin, bride, and whore” (44). Here, Landry echoes Paul Crumbley’s analysis (discussed below) of the “child,” “bride,” and “Queen” poetic voices in Dickinson’s feminist polyglossia, but in Landry’s case harmonized around a singular queer love relationship.²⁷

For example, in one letter, Dickinson imagines her beloved Sue as a bird who has escaped from a masculine-dominated Christian worship-space. “Through this construction of a mythic narrative about Susie,” Landry notes, “Dickinson grants Susie qualities traditionally aligned in Puritan rhetoric with the male and masculine” (45). These qualities, Landry continues, include “a phallic body, transcendence, power, activity, and liberation from regulation”; meanwhile, Dickinson simultaneously “attempts to destabilize the sexed associations with these qualities by attaching them simultaneously to the non-human and female” (45).²⁸ More generally, “in the majority of the early letters written to Sue, a longing for and dwelling on Sue is represented by Dickinson as the mode by which she ignores and resists the minister’s design to indoctrinate her into Puritan discourse” (44-45). In sum, “in her letters, desire for the corporeal, immediate,

approachable, material person of a woman, namely Susan Gilbert, replaces the conventional Puritan desire for the alien, distant, unapproachable, immaterial male body of God or Christ” (47). For my part, I would emphasize that this queer apotheosis takes the form of Susan’s becoming (a flying) animal, specifically a bird-cousin of the bees.

Landry then offers additional evidence in Dickinson’s verse for her queering interpretation. Turning to a group of poems wherein a bee drinks nectar from flowers, Landry writes that Dickinson’s reimagined “trinity includes the bee delineated as a kind of feminine male body with heterosexual desire who enacts lesbian sex acts, an ‘I’ as a liminal indeterminable body with unknown desire who likewise enacts lesbian carnality, and the female or flower body with masculine echoes” (48). In comparative terms, “Whereas the Lord’s Supper presumes heterosexual sex in its apotheosis of marriage, the Lady’s Supper marks a departure into lesbian sexual praxis, not because lesbian bodies dominate the scene but because lesbian praxis — cunnilingus — among bodies does” (48). Following Judith Butler, Landry christens the tongue of the female bee in this context “the lesbian phallus.”

Summarizing her analysis with a reference to Elizabeth Grosz, Landry claims that Dickinson “believed that bodies could be ‘re-written, reconstituted’ through representation, and her particular vision was to see as emancipatory those representations which urged women to identification with natural forms operating outside the human and its discourses” (50). Moreover, “Through this strategy Dickinson hopes to instate a more fluid self, sexuality, and subjectivity not wholly fixed by the social” (50).²⁹ In conclusion, “By approaching the female body through discourses on the non-human, animal, and insect, Dickinson translates the female body and its possibilities into other models for being, thus, freeing the imagination and creating new ‘imaginary bodies’ for women” (51). A similar goal is operative for most of the scholars of my next section, albeit organized around the resonance between Dickinson and Nietzsche. Though, as one of these scholars acknowledges, “in Nietzsche, “woman” remains a complex and highly equivocal figure,” Nietzsche’s naturalistic Dionysian ontology can be repurposed for gendered justice (Wolosky 131).

2. Dionysian Dickinson

I preface my two primary scholarly investigations of Dickinson and Nietzsche with a few sympathetic insights from the most influential recent monograph on Dickinson and philosophy, namely Jed Deppman’s *Trying to Think with Emily Dickinson*.³⁰ Deppman classifies Dickinson as, among other postmodern things, a “Nietzschean accomplished nihilist” (8). The latter phrase is a technical term introduced by the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo, and it refers to one who embraces a radically interpretive, perspectival view of the world. As with Cameron, Deppman only interprets one bee poem, “A Thought went up my mind today,” and he suggests that “One might paraphrase [the poem] by saying that *thought behaves like a bee*,” although “this poem has committed to representing thought without precise imagery of any kind” (101, emphasis added). To this, I would respond that Dickinson’s thought essentially behaves like a bee, meaning that it is animalistic, disciplined, natural, energetic, relational, and Dionysian in its dancing joyfulness. But this is not a question of Apollonian representation, or of imagery; rather, it is an issue of presentation, of Dionysian drive. Picking up the bee-Nietzschean trail himself, Deppman then argues that this poem “employs the argument Nietzsche turns against the ‘superstitions of logicians’ in *Beyond Good and Evil*,” and describes its subject as “a mutant thought” (101-102). As with Fraser’s Deleuzian “becoming-animal,” Deppman’s figure of the mutant also dovetails with my figure of Dickinson’s writing persona as bee/hive/queen.

The most extensive discussion of Nietzsche and Dickinson in the literature, perhaps, is Wolosky's chapter in Deppman's recent coedited anthology, *Emily Dickinson and Philosophy*.³¹ She begins with a consideration of the two poet-philosophers' many similarities, including that (a) "neither married," (b) both lived reclusively for much of their lives, (c) their posthumous writings "suffered delayed and disjunctive publication," and (d) "both register a severe crisis in metaphysics: a break, long in preparation but increasingly explosive through the nineteenth century, that challenged not only religious faith but metaphysical structures" (131). Moreover, (d) although both thinkers "emphasized the temporality and inconstancy of immediate experience," nevertheless (e) "at other times Dickinson, like Nietzsche, seeks to transfer value from the next world to this one, from eternity to time, being to becoming," at which times she "then reaches out to embrace the world of phenomena as the true and exhilarating arena" (132). For example, Wolosky argues that the poem "To be Alive is Power" is "strikingly Nietzschean" (132), and then quotes its first stanza as follows:

To be alive – is Power –
Existence – in itself –
Without a further function –
Omnipotence – Enough –

Additional similarities between Nietzsche and Dickinson, as Wolosky continues to enumerate, include that (f) "Neither wrote in philosophically systematic ways – Nietzsche's aphoristic style is another tie linking him to Dickinson," and (g) each of them "critiques traditional metaphysical premises: in Nietzsche as direct philosophical assault; in Dickinson, often in veiled and strenuous ambivalence" (133). Most importantly for Wolosky, (h) "Given the world's multiplicity, the problem becomes," for both thinkers, "how to account for experience as meaningful in human terms," the solution to which problem "increasingly turns on language and interpretation itself" (133). Thus, Wolosky concludes, "reality in its multiplicity and transfiguration ultimately becomes constituted not by metaphysical principles but by representation, interpretation, and the words we use in their undertaking" (133). In short, existence is meaningful, for both Dickinson and Nietzsche, only through a multiplicity of linguistic interpretations.

Elaborating on the latter point, Wolosky writes that for Nietzsche, whom she interprets as neither a nihilist nor a relativist, "the only shape our world has for us is that of figuration, conducted in language – not as 'lie,' but as the only truth we have," and the phenomenon of meaning is "not then merely arbitrary or imposed, nor are signifiers simply free"; rather, "They are instead fundamentally, one might say foundationally, linked to one another in chains or networks or, as Nietzsche repeatedly insists in 'Truth and Lie,' in relationships" (144). This is also true for Dickinson, in Wolosky's view, insofar as "Dickinson enacts Nietzsche's arguments for the multiplicity of nonfixed meaning as generative and fertile rather than nihilistic" (145). For example, in "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant –," Wolosky writes, "truth only appears, only happens in the world, as slant, as figure" (148).

Finally, from Wolosky, she briefly cites my other primary scholar in this section, David Eddins. "In his discussion of Dickinson and Nietzsche in terms of 'The Rites of Dionysus,'" she writes, he "focuses on 'the dialectic between boundlessness and limitation' which circumference evokes" (148). Wolosky distances herself from Eddins, however, insofar as he "ultimately sees Dickinson's as a drive to a Dionysian boundlessness," whereas she insists that "many of Dickinson's images of 'circumference' are highly equivocal" (148). More specifically, rather "than affirming the transcendence of boundaries," these images of circumference "also question that

possibility” (148). On this note, Diehl observes that Dickinson inherited the figure of “Circumference” from Wordsworth, along with its correlate figure, “Centre,” but that she transformed both figures in such a way that, in her work, they refer “to the core of her creative self and the extent to which her poetry can carry her” (56).

It is here, in my view, that Dickinson passes through Dionysus on the way to Artemis, stemming the circumferential flood with the centering apiary of her poetic hives. On this point, Crumbley quotes Mary Loeffelholz’s claim that “if the containment of women within patriarchal discourse is a ‘dominant male Romantic trope...shared among women writers themselves,’” then “we must conclude that identity with a ‘uniquely feminine tradition’ is ‘self-divided’” (39).³² Thus, Crumbley concludes, “This discord enters Dickinson’s poems through the dialogizing of boundaries that pushes against limits at the same time that limits are affirmed and therefore embraced” (39). Like the domesticated bees, the white female writer in the nineteenth century is marked, oppressed, and also selectively empowered by her hive. In other words, if the feminine self in this historical context is necessarily divided, then it makes sense that Dickinson might be unable to abide eternally in the Dionysian dissolution (the latter being a male luxury), opting instead to sip its nectar before solidifying it as poetic honey.

I now turn to Eddins, this section’s final scholar, whose focus is much narrower than that of its others. “Nietzsche becomes the ontologist of choice,” he writes, “for establishing the larger framework in which the Dionysian poems”—but not the entirety of Dickinson’s corpus—“should be read” (96).³³ More specifically, “The essential Dionysian revelation in the poetry of Emily Dickinson is the revelation of infinity and eternity—of a boundlessness that makes a mockery of our human arrangements and value systems and renders the vision of our ultimate destiny opaque” (98). In Eddins’ view, “Terror is one result of such contemplation, and death by water is one of the images under which Dickinson figures this reaction” (98). More specifically, “The image of immeasurable space and time as a flood, as excess overmastering all Apollonian boundaries is constant with Dickinson” (98). Eddins then elaborates on this point. “This Dionysian approach means partaking of that power and boundlessness that had formerly shattered Apollonian serenity and reduced all human affairs to insignificance” (101).

This is also where the bees make their entrance in Eddins’ article. “Intoxication, singing, dancing, and revelry in general,” he writes, “are aspects of the bacchanalian behavior that not only refuses to recognize limitation and division, but rejoices ecstatically in their absence,” as for example in the bee in “I taste a liquor never brewed —” (101). In this poem’s “ultimate unity of Dionysian affirmation,” Eddins claims, “There is nothing left outside the circle, no ‘otherness’ anywhere in nature to serve as a vehicle of the menace of alienation” (101). In this way, he concludes, “The destructive powers that belonged only to nature, as well as the creative powers, now belong also to the reveler, whose ecstasy is the ecstasy of omnipotence” (101). To this, I would add, though there be nothing outside the circle, or no “Circumference,” there may nevertheless still be a “Centre.” No matter how drunk the bees become, they return to the hive.

Eddins’ second poem illustrating this Dionysian perspective, “A Drunkard cannot meet a Cork,” also features a bee, namely “the Bumble Bee —” of its final line. On Eddins’ reading, the poem “praises wild overindulgence and indicts Apollonian moderation as undeserving of that exhilarating unity that the very impulse to temperance contradicts” (102). Though there is indeed an exuberance in the poem’s description, it nevertheless begins with the pejorative epithet of “Drunkard,” so it is not clear to me that the tone is best characterized as “praise.” A third bee poem in Eddins’ essay, “I think I was enchanted,” he interprets as “an apotheosis of the Dionysian mode in her poetry,” wherein “she affirms ‘Lunacy’ and ‘Insanity’ as conditions of blessedness” (104).

I would emphasize, however, that Dickinson frames that experience as a remembered prophecy, and its final stanza invokes “Tomes of Solid Witchcraft” along with “Magic” that “hath an element / Like Deity – to keep” (308). On my reading, this is where Apollonian Artemis returns, in poetic images that capture the experience, like honey in a hive.

The final bee poem Eddins considers is “The Soul has Bandaged Moments,” which is probably the most critically acclaimed bee poem in her corpus. “Dickinson puts the Dionysian state into perspective,” Eddins writes, “as a fortuitous and temporary escape from swathes of limitation that hold one prey to the ‘Goblin’ of generalized existential horror” (105). Here, he rightly notes the brevity of the Dionysian solution, which I would add is also true of Nietzsche’s corpus and philosophy as a whole, which always seeks (for better or worse) to restore the balance between Dionysus and Apollo, which inevitably entails a kind of sobering and the creation of new images (however strategic and temporary they turn out to be).³⁴

Equally so, on my apiarian reading of this poem, Dickinson is depicting the intermittent flights and bondages of the apicultural bee, whose “bandaged moments” are those trapped in the shelves of the apiary, and whose “moments of escape” are those when it is free to collect the flowers’ nectar. In support of this reading, the “Goblin” that “sips” in this poem alludes—though I have found no prior acknowledgment of this in the scholarship—to “the Goblin Bee” of one of the preceding poems (entitled “If you were coming in the Fall,”) in this seventeenth fascicle. Additionally, the poem’s phrase “dances like a Bomb” suggests what Dickinson elsewhere (in “To interrupt His Yellow Plan”) describes as the bees’ “booming” “Thunder” in preparation for “bombs.” Put in the terms of Dickinson’s writing persona, she and Susan are like bees segregated (by walls and marriage) from her each other, able to sing fully joyfully only when together.

3. Artemisian Dickinson

I now consider several more mainstream studies of Dickinson that resonate with the themes from the above apiarian and Dionysian readings. First, Camille Paglia’s infamous study, *Sexual Personae*, closes with the strangest interpretation of Dickinson in the literature.³⁵ As Jackson notes, this reading “did much to popularize the whip-and-stiletto S & M Dickinson as antithesis to the poetess in white,” which Jackson characterizes as an “intentionally shocking caricature” (262-263n37). For anecdotal evidence of the influence of this reading, Jackson relates her experience of “a cartoon I happened to see with my young son one afternoon in 1995,” in which Dickinson is transformed into a member of a superhero team “dressed in full dominatrix leather, whip in one hand and a very long cigarette holder in the other,” voiced with what Jackson terms “a good Joan Crawford snarl” (263n37). My own interpretation of Dickinson’s writing persona as bee/hive/queen also connotes super-heroism, but rather than black S&M leather, or her favored Puritan white dress, it seems closer to a huntress’ leathers, painted the amber of honey, with stinger-barbed winged arrows—flying as swift as slanted truths, to the targets of her divinely-inspired poetic-philosophical sight.

Before turning directly to Paglia’s Dickinson, I will first consider her compelling reimagining of Artemis, which dovetails with Haarhoff’s analysis of the latter as Melissa, goddess of bees. Like Haarhoff, Paglia sees Artemis as a central persona in Western history, symbolizing more specifically a female Apollonian rejection of conventional gender norms and a masculinist violent wresting of order from Mother Nature’s Dionysian chaos. Key to Paglia’s refiguring is her identification of Artemis with various ancient mother goddesses (sometimes identified interchangeably as the Goddess of the Beasts) including Cybele and Rhea, whom scholars such as Arthur Evans identify as the mother of Dionysus qua god of wild vegetation (Evans 63).³⁶ In

Paglia's words, "The autonomy of the ancient mother goddesses was sometimes called virginity," which is how Artemis could be "honored both as virgin huntress and patron of childbirth" (43). More generally, "The Great Mother is a virgin insofar as she is independent of men," as "a sexual dictator, symbolically impenetrable" (43). In support of this claim, Paglia notes that "The Greeks popularly connected Artemis' name, which has no apparent Greek root, with *artamos*, 'slaughterer, butcher,'" and the "Early Artemis was" known as "the dream Mistress of the Beasts" (74). This domination of various animal species, lifelong independence from men, and a penchant for sharp, cutting violence all connect Paglia's Artemis to her Dickinson.

In addition to this reconceiving of the goddess' virginity, Paglia also differs from the scholarly consensus on Artemis in emphasizing (what she takes to be) her original Ephesian form, wherein she is "symbol of animal nature"—or in more precise, apiarian terms—"the swarming hive of mother nature" (75). In words that could just as easily describe Dickinson (or at least the myth of the poet as recluse), Paglia claims that Artemis "is assertion and aggression, followed by withdrawal and purification through self-sequestration" (78).³⁷ Also like Dickinson, but this time closer to the historical personage, Paglia's Artemis "is woman imperiously eluding the world and definitions of men," and "is solitude and action joined" (80). In a third Dickinson resonance, the goddess as huntress with her signature bow-and-arrows is called "Artemis Heerge, 'the far-shooter,' 'she who works from afar'" (450). This could also apply to Dickinson's letters and poems, in both their frequently violent subjects, and also the eccentrically detached modes in which she communicated them. Paglia even connects Artemis directly to Dickinson herself, referring to "the many-breasted Ephesian Artemis" as a symbol for "the animalism of procreative woman," which Paglia links to the poem "A Small Leech on the Vitals—" (508). Linking this back to Haarhoff's interpretation of Artemis as bee-goddess, one could also reinterpret these many breasts, qua organs or machines for producing sweet sustenance, as the organs of the bees who produce that even sweeter nourishment that is honey.

As for Paglia's interpretation of Dickinson, in addition to its being based (like the rest of her book) on Nietzsche's Apollonian/Dionysian distinction (from *The Birth of Tragedy*), what I value most about it is her claim that for Dickinson (as for Nietzsche) the "premier subject is power" (654). When one considers this point alongside Paglia's previous point regarding Artemis, there is a strong temptation to agree with Paglia's observation that "Our poet's honeyed words have a secret sting" (665). Paglia sees this power radiating from every level and orifice of Dickinson's works. At the compositional level, "Words are rammed into lines with such force that syntax shatters and collapses in on itself" (624). At the semantic level, "Dickinson strews puncture wounds liberally through her poetry," and "she treats the body like a pincushion" (627, 628). More generally, "Violence is her love song and lullaby," including in most of the many bee poems, which are prime examples of how "Dickinson assumes the persona of a male raptor" (635, 642). Though "raptor" technically refers to a bird of prey, it is easily extended from *avis* to *apis*, and its connotations also suggest the subject of sexual assault, which is a problematic dimension of Paglia's text, as well the work of Nietzsche and Dickinson.³⁸

Crumbley's monograph reaches similar conclusions to Paglia's, but primarily through an emphasis on poetic form and composition. His central subject is "what is perhaps Dickinson's most intriguing stylistic characteristic, her signature 'dashes'"—or, as I will name them, for both chirographic and strategic reasons, the "slant"—which Crumbley interprets as part of "a graphocentric poetics within which they perform as highly nuanced visual signals intimately linked to Dickinson's experiments with poetic voice" (1).³⁹ More specifically, as Crumbley continues, in "disrupting conventional thought patterns," the dashes are "Dickinson's primary punctuation" (2).

The result of these disruptions, for Crumbley, is a fragmenting of the poetic subject, self, mind, etc., into a polyglossia of multiple voices, or what I am calling a “self-swarm.” More precisely, Crumbley identifies a three-part typology of voices that he names “the child, the bride, and the Queen” (2). Translated into my own apiarian terms, Crumbley’s child is the worker bee, his bride is the drone, and his queen is indeed the queen.⁴⁰

The feminist importance of these slants is suggested by Dickinson’s persistence in using them, in her signature anti-grammatical ways, as Crumbley notes, “in spite of objections raised first by [her brother] Austin and later by Higginson,” her mentor (75). Unpacking this feminist potential, Crumbley builds on Vivian R. Pollak’s observation that Dickinson favors “the ‘comparison of women to flowers who depend on the sun’s potency’,” adding that Dickinson “undermines this hierarchy of male dominance in letters where she identifies Susan with the sun’s power” (25).⁴¹ To show that Susan (whom Crumbley describes as “a partner in Dickinson’s life as an author”) was worthy of this solar exaltation, he quotes from the obituary Susan wrote for Emily, which “describes Dickinson’s ‘swift poetic rapture’ as ‘the long glistening note of a bird one hears in the June woods at high noon’,” the time that (as I noted above) Cameron identifies as central to Dickinson’s symbolism of eternity (66, 65). Moreover, Susan’s birdsong reference, Crumbley continues, “associates the bird with the explosive potential of the phoenix,” an avian figure “central to Dickinson’s own self-representation in her letters” (65). And as also noted above, the bird, as Dickinson knew from her Latin education, is just one letter from the bee.

Elaborating on Dickinson’s polyglossia, Crumbley writes that “One of the greatest challenges Dickinson set herself was that of discovering a speaker,” which Crumbley calls the Queen, “whose voice could express limitless power and at the same time not perpetuate a hierarchy that dismisses other voices as inferior” (116). Altogether, he elaborates, these three “voices” of child, bride, and Queen “that constitute stages in her growth toward poetic omnipotence become members of her community of self” (117). Especially when thought together with Paglia’s abovementioned description of Artemis as the “swarming hive of mother nature,” this phrase “community of self” suggests my figure of Dickinson’s “self-swarm” as bee/hive/queen. That is, the multiple feminist voices that Crumbley finds in her poetry, as harmonized by the Apollonian rule of the goddess-Queen Artemis, reorders the Dionysian swarm into a more virtuous and powerful community. In support of this apiarian interpretation, Crumbley later affirms “Irigaray’s injunction that ‘woman’ voice a pluralistic, multifaceted body,” which I suggest can be helpfully rendered as a matriarchal beehive (146).⁴²

Finally, from Crumbley, he also echoes Paglia’s insistence on the centrality of “power” for Dickinson. “In her June 1869 letter to Higginson, Dickinson writes, ‘When a little Girl I remember hearing the remarkable passage and preferring the ‘Power,’ not knowing at the time that ‘Kingdom’ and ‘Glory’ were included (*L* 460, #330)” (125).⁴³ Elaborating on her conception of power, Crumbley endorses Juhasz’s interpretation of the poem, “The Soul selects her own Society,” according to which “Not control over vast populations but the ability to construct a world for oneself comprises the greatest power, a god-like achievement” (128).⁴⁴ Put in my apiarian terms, Dickinson abjures a literal empire over fellow humans, preferring a figurative empire of the workers-bees of her brain, and the martyred drones of her heart for Susan.

The last scholar I consider here is Virginia Jackson, who indirectly affirms the role of Artemis’ teeming nature in Dickinson, by arguing that her writing has been anachronistically misinterpreted as poems in the lyric genre (timelessly defined as solitary metaphysical addresses to everyone and no one). Instead, her work is better understood, for Jackson, through a variety of poetic genres (including riddles, medleys, *carpe diems*, odes, and elegies), many of which are more grounded in

and engaged with the natural world.⁴⁵ Jackson finds evidence for this nature-affirmation in the technical term “fascicles,” chosen by Mary Loomis Todd (one of Dickinson’s first editors) to refer to Dickinson’s handmade collections of her writings. The word, as Jackson explains, is a “botanical term” for “a bundle of stems or leaves” (57-58). The aptness of this description becomes clearer given that, in the nineteenth century, “the relation between flowers and poems” was that “‘flowers’ would be a term used to refer to poems” (71). Thus, each fascicle is a bundle of stems and leaves, and the poems are like their flowers.

The primary form of nature-affirmation Jackson finds in Dickinson, though, is her lifelong practice of enclosing flora and fauna with the writings she sent to personal and professional correspondents. “Like so many of Dickinson’s letters,” Jackson writes of one such enclosure, “the rather long 1851 letter to Austin that closes with” several lines of poetry, “contained an enclosure: a leaf pinned to a slip of paper inscribed ‘We’ll meet again and heretofore some summer morning’” (11). Jackson’s analysis continues as follows: “The ‘little forest, whose leaf is ever green’ to which to the lines-become-verse point is and is not the leaf that Austin held in his hand, and that difference is the enclosure’s point” (11-12). More generally, Jackson notes that her usage of various enclosed natural entities (including “dead insects” and “pressed flowers”) “as companions for her writing not only expand that writing’s reference but should expand our notion of the genre on which her lines so often comment” (62). Simply put, some of Dickinson’s poetry can be interpreted as referring to the items with which they were originally enclosed.

A second example of these nature enclosures, Jackson describes as follows: “Enclosed within the lines was a small square of white paper, and enclosed in that square was a dead cricket, which has miraculously survived in the archive in disarticulated fragments” (90). Objects such as this cricket “may never have been the subject of the lines,” Jackson concedes, “but in any case they could only have formed part of what the lines were about” (90). Thus, by substitution, the abovementioned bee poem that Dickinson sent to her nephew’s teacher really was (also) about the dead bee that she enclosed with it. And perhaps, by extension, all 104 bee-poems really are, at least in part, about actual bees in Dickinson’s natural world, brimming with life and power. If so, this suggests yet another reason for treating her bee poems with the same level of respect as the most abstract and obviously philosophical texts in her corpus, and as bearers of equally valid insights into her own philosophy.

4. Conclusion

To summarize, I have argued in the above interpretations that the key to Dickinson’s philosophy can be found by respecting her bees—specifically (1) the literal Nietzschean/ Dionysian bees described in her nature poems, (2) the figurative beehives of literary form constituted by all the poems in her corpus, and (3) the mythological queen bee that is the feminism-inspiring career and life of the poet herself, the Artemis of American philosophy. This respect for bees is something I learned first from my great-grandfather, Theo Preston. In addition to being a farmer and a steelworker, “Papa Preston” was also a parttime apiculturist, a beekeeper. Or, as he used to say, he “robbed bees,” as a kind of kingpin of cross-species organized crime, for which he was duly punished with an incalculable number of stings. By the time I became part of his life, his hands, mottled with black and purple wounds, had become so filled with bee venom that he no longer felt even the slightest pain when stung. As Nietzsche writes in *The Gay Science*, “The poison from which the weaker nature perishes strengthens the strong man – and he does not call it poison” (43).⁴⁶

Perhaps unconsciously, I suspect Papa Preston was a major inspiration for this chapter, the person who always insisted that honey was the universal miracle cure (long before scientists demonstrated that, for example, eating local honey helps with allergies from local flora). And who kept his hives in white wooden drawers, much like the hives of Dickinson's poems, hidden and buzzing in the drawers of her bedroom furniture. But if my great-grandfather deserves the next-to-last word in this investigation, then the last word should go to apiarian Dickinson herself. I now close by quoting one of the most scholarly significant bee poems in its entirety.

The nearest Dream recedes – unrealized –
 The Heaven we chase,
 Like the June Bee - before the School Boy,
 Invites the Race –
 Stoops – to an easy Clover –
 Dips – evades – teases – deploys –
 Then – to the Royal Clouds
 Lifts his light Pinnacle –
 Heedless of the Boy –
 Staring – bewildered – at the mocking sky –
 Homesick for steadfast Honey –
 Ah, the Bee flies not
 That brews that rare variety!

William Paterson University
 j.maloy.hall@gmail.com

¹ Emily Dickinson, *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, 3 vols., ed. Thomas H. Johnson and Theodora Ward (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1958), L 2:294, quoted in Jackson 68.

² For evidence that Dickinson also regarded her bee poems highly, van der Heydt notes that when Dickinson first wrote to her literary mentor, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, “Out of perhaps four hundred texts, she chose four poems to represent her writerly identity to a potential instructor,” and three of the four included bees (106).

³ Morgan's count is similar, identifying “at least ninety poems in the Dickinson corpus which include bee imagery and cognate words associated with the bee's movements and noises” (77). The bees also populate her letters, as in the following quote, sent in April 1856 to John L. Graves: “- as I live, here's a bumblebee - not such as summer brings - John - earnest, manly bees, but a kind of Cockney, dressed in jaunty clothes. Much that is gay - have I to show, if you were with me, John, upon this April grass” (quoted in Morgan 83). See Victoria Morgan, “Repairing Everywhere without Design?: Industry, Revery, and Relation in Emily Dickinson's Bee Imagery,” in *Shaping Belief: Culture, Politics, and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Writing*, ed. Victoria Morgan and Clare Williams (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 73-93.

⁴ Susan Kornfeld, *The Prowling Bee*, <http://bloggingdickinson.blogspot.com/>.

⁵ There are however several counterexamples in the secondary literature. For example, analyzing the poem “The most important population,” Tursi notes that “Bees, of course, serve as her model in many poems; she remains a steady observer of their collective enterprise, their uncharted movement, their contentment in the task at hand. These ideas are in concert with [William] James's

argument that knowing is ultimately a social or multifarious communicative process” (167). Renée Tursi, “Emily Dickinson, Pragmatism, and the Conquests of Mind,” *Emily Dickinson and Philosophy*, ed. Jed Deppman, Marianne Noble, and Gary Lee Stonum. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 151-174.

⁶ Joanne Feit Diehl, *Dickinson and the Romantic Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

⁷ See the poem, “Because the Bee may blameless hum.” And in another poem, the speaker expresses that “The lovely flowers embarrass me, / They make me regret I am not a Bee.”

⁸ Noting a similar objection in earlier Dickinson scholarship, Aaron Shackelford’s recent article notes that “One of the more explicit condemnations of anthropomorphism in Dickinson’s poetry appears in Charles Anderson’s *Emily Dickinson’s Poetry: Stairway of Surprise*”; more specifically, Anderson refers to her playful and “childish habit” of anthropomorphizing animals and landscapes in her letters and later excuses her inability to “successfully” write a poem about bees or butterflies because “with these traditional favorites she too had difficulty avoiding fantasy and sentimentalism.” See Charles R. Anderson, *Emily Dickinson’s Poetry: Stairway of Surprise*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1960, 103, quoted in Aaron Shackelford, “Dickinson’s Animals and Anthropomorphism,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 19(2): 2010, 47-66, 62-63n2.

⁹ See, for example, the poems entitled “I could suffice for Him, I knew –,” and “Nature and God - I neither knew.”

¹⁰ Sharon Cameron, *Lyric Time: Dickinson and the Limits of Genre* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979).

¹¹ T. J. Haarhoff, “The Bees of Virgil,” *Greece & Rome* 7(2): 1960, 155-170. In support of Virgil’s relevance for Dickinson, von der Heydt interprets her as consciously “rejecting” the “georgic” mode, to present “a scenario in which cognitive development is not awarded in exchange for any amount of exertion” (114). Jim von der Heydt, “‘Perfect from the Pod’: Instant Learning in Dickinson and Kierkegaard,” *Emily Dickinson and Philosophy*, ed. Jed Deppman, Marianne Noble, and Gary Lee Stonum. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 105-128. Additionally, Crumbley finds significance in the fact that in Dickinson’s home dictionary, namely “the 1828 edition of Webster’s *An American Dictionary of the English Language*,” the entry for “dash” is illustrated with an example using Virgil (15). Finally, in support of Dickinson’s incorporation of ancient epic poetry, “Apology for Her” includes an allusion of Homer’s *Iliad*, in a shared comparison of a buzzing assembly of men to a “Parliament” of bees.

¹² For considerable evidence that Susan was Dickinson’s longest and most important romantic relationship, see for example, Lillian Faderman, “Emily Dickinson’s Letters to Sue Gilbert,” *The Massachusetts Review* 18(2): 1977, 197-225.

¹³ For example, in one poem (“To try to speak, and miss the way”) she refers to “the Soul” as “the Mutineer,” and she frequently describes bees as pirates, who are often associated in genre fiction with mutiny. Additionally, the immediately subsequent poem in Miller’s edition (“A Drunkard cannot meet a Cork”) closes with the claim that “Your connoisseur in Liquors consults the Bubble bee,” and connoisseurship of liquor is another phenomenon often linked to pirates.

¹⁴ James Longenback, *The Virtues of Poetry* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2013), 59, quoted in David Hills, “The Uses of Construction,” in *The Poetry of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Elisabeth Camp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 145-181, 148.

¹⁵ See her poem, “As Sleigh Bells seem in Summer.”

¹⁶ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Humble-Bee,” <https://poets.org/poem/humble-bee>.

¹⁷ See Cameron's *Lyric Time*, 2. For a concurring scholarly judgment, see Oren Izenberg, "How to Know Everything," in *The Poetry of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Elisabeth Camp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 83-107, 105.

¹⁸ A surcingle, according to an Oxford Language's entry on Google, is "a wide strap that runs over the back and under the belly of a horse, used to keep a blanket or other equipment in place," which suggests that Dickinson thinks of bees as comparable to horses in being domesticated beasts of burdens for humanity.

¹⁹ On the historical roots of this Puritan view, Haarhoff observes, "'It is right', says Pliny, 'to admire the bees most of all, because they alone of insects have been created for the sake of man,'" because "In them, he maintains, Nature has created something incomparable, something even superior to man: 'They certainly excel mankind in this, that they recognize only the common good'" (157). For this reason, for example, "The Roman quality of pietas, loyalty that asks for no reward, in which there is the motive of service, was specially noted in bees by Virgil, as by modern writers" (163).

²⁰ Alison Fraser, "Buccaneers of Buzz": Dickinson's HumAnimal Poetics," *Emily Dickinson Archives*, 2016, <http://www.emilydickinson.org/emily-dickinson-lyrical-ecologies-forays-into-the-field/buccaneers-of-buzz-dickinson-s-humanimal-poetics>.

²¹ Interestingly, as Haarhoff notes, "The sex of the queen-bee was proved" by a Dutch researcher named Swammerdam, "who lived in the seventeenth century, though his great work was published only in 1752," whereas "Virgil and all the ancients, except for a passage in Xenophon, refer to the 'king' of the bees" (161).

²² See Joshua M. Hall, "Becoming-Fantastic: Deleuze and Mackay on Fantasy RPG Performance," *Odradek: Studies in Philosophy of Literature, Aesthetics, and New Media Theories* 1(1): 2015.

²³ Quoting Joan Kirkby, "'[W]e thought Darwin had thrown 'the Redeemer' away': Darwinizing with Dickinson," *Emily Dickinson Journal* 19(1): 2010, pp. 1-29, 9.

²⁴ Darwin, Charles. *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. 1859. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1884.

²⁵ See Miller 21.

²⁶ H. Jordan Landry, "Animal/Insectual/Lesbian Sex: Dickinson's Queer Version of the Birds and the Bees," *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 9(2): 2000, 42-54.

²⁷ Paul Crumbley, *Inflections of the Pen: Dash and Voice in Emily Dickinson* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997).

²⁸ In support of this claim, Eileen John quotes the following Nietzsche-resonant passage from Dickinson's letters: "Every day life feels mightier, and what we have the power to be, more stupendous." Eileen John, "Dickinson and Pivoting Thought," in *The Poetry of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Elisabeth Camp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 182-205, 182.

²⁹ Citing Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994, 61.

³⁰ Jed Deppman, *Trying to Think with Emily Dickinson* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008).

³¹ Shira Wolosky, "Truth and Lie in Emily Dickinson and Friedrich Nietzsche," *Emily Dickinson and Philosophy*, ed. Jed Deppman, Marianne Noble, and Gary Lee Stonum. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 131-150.

³² Quoting Mary Loeffelholz, *Dickinson and the Boundaries of Feminist Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 106.

³³ Dwight Eddins, “Emily Dickinson and Nietzsche: The Rites of Dionysus,” *ESQ* 27(2): 1981, 96-107.

³⁴ For more on the limits of Nietzsche’s Dionysian commitments, see Joshua M. Hall, “Newton Contra Alt-Right Nietzsche: Dionysus as Androgynous Black Panther,” *The Pluralist* 15(2): 110-128.

³⁵ Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae* (New York: Vintage, 1991), 63.

³⁶ Arthur Evans, *The God of Ecstasy: Sex Roles and the Madness of Dionysus* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1988).

³⁷ As Higginson unfortunately and influentially put it, Dickinson is the “half-cracked poetess” of Amherst (quoted in Cameron’s *Lyric Time*, 12).

³⁸ More specifically, one could plausibly connect Dickinson to aphorism 92 in Nietzsche’s *Gay Science*, which figures the relationship between poetry and prose as the theatrical staging of an assault on the goddess of poetry. For more, see Joshua M. Hall, “Slanted Truths: *The Gay Science* as Nietzsche’s *Ars Poetica*,” *Evental Aesthetics* 5(1): 2016, 98-117.

³⁹ In support of Crumbley’s emphasis on the slants, Miller asserts that “Whether, or how, to reproduce the poet’s various slanting marks in standard type remains the largest editorial question” (50). Or, as Cameron puts it in her first book on the poet, “The dashes that punctuate Dickinson’s poems do their level best to accentuate language’s freedom from even the most momentary or minimal of stopping places” (196). Tracing the feminist bases and implications of this freedom is Crumbley’s key contribution to the literature.

⁴⁰ For evidence for this hymenopteran variation on Crumbley’s trinity of feminist voices, in two of her poems Dickinson herself explicitly brings the bee and Queen together (namely the poems entitled “Could – I do more – for Thee –,” and “I dreaded that first Robin, so,”). Moreover, in one other poem, Dickinson describes the bees’ buzz as a “sovereign – Swerveless Tune –” (“There is a flower that Bees prefer –,”).

⁴¹ Vivian R. Pollak, *Dickinson: The Anxiety of Gender* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

⁴² Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Lillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

⁴³ Emily Dickinson, *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, 3 vols., ed. Thomas H. Johnson and Theodora Ward (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1958).

⁴⁴ Suzanne Juhasz, *The Undiscovered Continent: Emily Dickinson and the Space of the Mind* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).

⁴⁵ Virginia Jackson, *Dickinson’s Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁴⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff and Adrian del Caro. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.