

# The Agora Foundation

December 14, 2013

*Thomas Aquinas College*

## Poems by Emily Dickinson

• • •

### **204 • I'll tell you how the Sun rose –**

I'll tell you how the Sun rose –  
A Ribbon at a time –  
The Steeples swam in Amethyst –  
The news, like Squirrels, ran –  
The Hills untied their Bonnets –  
The Bobolinks – begun –  
Then I said softly to myself –  
“That must have been the Sun”!  
But how he set – I know not –  
There seemed a purple stile  
That little Yellow boys and girls  
Were climbing all the while –  
Till when they reached the other side –  
A Dominie in Gray –  
Put gently up the evening Bars –  
And led the flock away –

(ca. 1860)

• • •

### 259 • A Clock stopped –

A Clock stopped –  
Not the Mantel's –  
Geneva's farthest skill  
Can't put the puppet bowing –  
That just now dangled still –

An awe came on the Trinket!  
The Figures hunched, with pain –  
Then quivered out of Decimals –  
Into Degreeless Noon –

It will not stir for Doctors –  
This Pendulum of snow –  
The Shopman importunes it –  
While cool – concernless No –

Nods from the Gilded pointers –  
Nods from Seconds slim –  
Decades of Arrogance between  
The Dial life –  
And Him –

(ca. 1861)

• • •

### 319 • Of Bronze – and Blaze

Of Bronze – and Blaze –  
The North – Tonight –  
So adequate – it forms –  
So preconcerted with itself –  
So distant – to alarms –  
An Unconcern so sovereign  
To Universe, or me –  
Infects my simple spirit  
With Taints of Majesty –  
Till I take vaster attitudes –  
And strut upon my stem –  
Disdaining Men, and Oxygen,  
For Arrogance of them –

My Splendors, are Menagerie –  
But their Completeless Show  
Will entertain the Centuries  
When I, am long ago,  
An Island in dishonored Grass –  
Whom none but Beetles – know.

(ca. 1861)

**320 • There's a certain Slant of light,**

There's a certain Slant of light,  
Winter Afternoons –  
That oppresses, like the Heft  
Of Cathedral Tunes –

Heavenly Hurt it gives us –  
We can find no scar,  
But internal difference,  
Where the Meanings, are –

None may teach it – Any –  
'Tis the Seal Despair –  
An imperial affliction  
Sent us of the Air –

When it comes, the Landscape listens –  
Shadows – hold their breath –  
When it goes, 'tis like the Distance  
On the look of Death –

(ca. 1861)

• • •

**372 • After great pain, a formal feeling comes –**

After great pain, a formal feeling comes –  
The Nerves sit ceremonious, like Tombs –  
The stiff Heart questions was it He, that bore,  
And Yesterday, or Centuries before?

The Feet, mechanical, go round –  
Of Ground, or Air, or Ought –  
A Wooden way  
Regardless grown,  
A Quartz contentment, like a stone –

This is the Hour of Lead –  
Remembered, if outlived,  
As Freezing persons, recollect the Snow –  
First – Chill – then Stupor – then the letting go –

(ca. 1862)

• • •

**448 • I died for Beauty – but was scarce**

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

He questioned softly “Why I failed”?  
“For Beauty”, I replied –  
“And I – for Truth – Themselves are One –  
We Brethren, are”, He said –

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

(ca. 1862)

• • •

**615 • God is a distant – stately Lover –**

God is a distant – stately Lover –  
Who, as He states us – by His Son –  
Verily, a Vicarious Courtship –  
“Miles”, and “Priscilla”, were such an One –

But, lest the Soul – like fair “Priscilla”  
Choose the Envoy – and spurn the Groom –  
Vouches, with hyperbolic archness –  
“Miles”, and “John Alden” were Synonym –

(ca. 1862)

• • •

**729 • The Props assist the House**

The Props assist the House  
Until the House is built  
And then the Props withdraw  
And adequate, erect,  
The House support itself  
And cease to recollect  
The Augur and the Carpenter –  
Just such a retrospect  
Hath the perfected Life –  
A Past of Plank and Nail  
And slowness – then the Scaffolds drop  
Affirming it a Soul.

(ca. 1863)

**760 • Pain – has an Element of Blank –**

Pain – has an Element of Blank –  
It cannot recollect  
When it begun – or if there were  
A time when it was not –

It has no Future – but itself –  
Its Infinite contain  
Its Past – enlightened to perceive  
New Periods – Of Pain.

(ca. 1862)

• • •

**800 • I never saw a Moor –**

I never saw a Moor –  
I never saw the Sea –  
Yet know I how the Heather looks  
And what a Billow be.

I never spoke with God  
Nor visited in Heaven –  
Yet certain am I of the spot  
As if the Checks were given –

(ca. 1865)

• • •

**857 • She rose to His Requirement – dropt**

She rose to His Requirement – dropt  
The Playthings of Her Life  
To take the honorable Work  
Of Woman, and of Wife –

If ought She missed in Her new Day,  
Of Amplitude, or Awe –  
Or first Prospective – Or the Gold  
In using, wear away,

It lay unmentioned – as the Sea  
Develop Pearl, and Weed,  
But only to Himself – be known  
The Fathoms they abide –

(ca. 1863)

• • •

## 1100 • The last Night that She lived

The last Night that She lived  
It was a Common Night  
Except the Dying – this to Us  
Made Nature different

We noticed smallest things –  
Things overlooked before  
By this great light upon our Minds  
Italicized – as ‘twere.

As We went out and in  
Between Her final Room  
And Rooms where Those to be alive  
Tomorrow were, a Blame

That Others could exist  
While She must finish quite  
A Jealousy for Her arose  
So nearly infinite –

We waited while She passed –  
It was a narrow time –  
Too jostled were Our Souls to speak  
At length the notice came.

She mentioned, and forgot –  
Then lightly as a Reed  
Bent to the Water, struggled scarce –  
Consented, and was dead –

And We – We placed the Hair –  
And drew the Head erect –  
And then an awful leisure was  
Belief to regulate –

(ca. 1866)

• • •

**1263 • Tell all the Truth but tell it slant –**

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

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

(ca. 1868)

• • •

**926 • I stepped from Plank to Plank**

I stepped from Plank to Plank  
A slow and cautious way  
The Stars about my Head I felt  
About my Feet the Sea.

I knew not but the next  
Would be my final inch –  
This gave me that precarious Gait  
Some call Experience.

(ca. 1864)