

Geology in Emily Dickinson's Poetry

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要 約

エミリー・ディキンソンの詩における地質学

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エミリー・ディキンソンは科学の教科書、特にエドワード・ヒッチコックによる『地質学入門』や、雑誌『アトランティック・マンスリー』誌から得た地質学の知識に魅せられ、それを詩の中に様々な形で取り入れた。例えば、彼女は比較解剖学によって普通目には見えない情報を得ることができることや、化石が古代の生物の姿や情報をいつまでも保存するという事実に興味を抱いたり、一見「静かな」火山も内にもすごいエネルギーを秘めていることにも注目していた。また、地球の表面の硬い地殻は、非常な熱でどろどろに溶けた巨大な内部の地核を被う薄い表皮に過ぎないという知識や、それを表す『地質学入門』の中に描かれた、ただの円のような挿絵は、彼女の詩の世界でキーワードとなった「周辺」(Circumference)という観念にヒントを与えたようである。彼女の「周辺」は、内なる心の世界と外の世界との境界や、生と死との境界など、様々な境界を表していたが、「周辺」の上のやはり丸い火口の「周辺」で、そこから内なるエネルギーが爆発するのではないかと恐れながら、様々な「周辺」について黙想した。また苦しみを乗り越えた末に現世を超越したかのような死火山の静かで美しい姿にあこがれていた。一方彼女は、しばしば絶望の末に精神的にも肉体的にも「石」のようになる状態を詩の中で描いた。さらには、わざと「石」のように感覚の麻痺した状態になって、地獄のような苦しみに耐えぬこうとする状況を描いた詩もある。しかもそのような、彼女の言う「墓の科学」や「生きのびるための術」は、彼女の生前においては彼女の詩が編集者たちに理解されないがために、あきらめざるをえなかった詩の出版と深く結びついていた。彼女は生きている間は、編集者に妥協をしてまで詩人として認められることを潔しとせず、彼女独自の詩の世界を頑なに守り、敢えて詩人としての死を選ぶのである。そして、その魂を詩に刻み付けることによって、言いかえれば、自身が詩という「化石」になることによって未来で復活しようとしたように思われる。そして実際、彼女の詩は20世紀半ばになって発掘され、蘇ったのであった。

Introduction

Emily Dickinson's work demonstrates her interest in geology; in her letter to her friend Abiah Root in 1845 she reported that she studied "Mental Philosophy, Geology, Latin, and Botany" at Amherst Academy (L-6).¹ In her poems there are many references to stones, rocks, minerals, volcanoes, and other things concerned with geology.

Richard Sewall recognizes the importance of geology in Emily Dickinson's poetry and says:

Her poems show a knowledge of chemical process, of botanic and especially geologic lore far beyond the usual nature poet's stock in trade. There are more earthquakes and volcanoes in her poems—phenomena which then were central in all geological inquiry, especially Hitchcock's—than in the poetry of Keats, Emerson, Browning, and Shelley combined. (345)

Although Sewall recognized Edward Hitchcock's influence upon Emily Dickinson's preference to those sciences, he did not closely examine each of her poems to see the way she was influenced or how she used her knowledge of science in her writing.

In this paper, I would like to examine the way Emily Dickinson incorporated the knowledge of geology. Especially that of fossils and volcanoes, gained from school textbooks, principally those written by Edward Hitchcock, and from the magazine *the Atlantic Monthly*, into her poetry. I would also like to see how deeply the knowledge was connected with her own way of life and her poetry.²

I. Fossils

Since the spring of 1835, when curious footprints in solid flagstones from Montague, MA, were found in Greenfield, which is about 16 miles from Amherst, geologists have been interested in this area, and even ordinary people in the neighborhood spent time looking for stone footprints at local quarries. The most prominent among them was the scientist Edward Hitchcock, who was a friend of the Dickinson family and was to later be President of Amherst College. For six years he collected and studied the footprints in the Connecticut Valley, including those of dinosaurs, and wrote many articles and books on them (Sanderson 5-6). Among those are a textbook *Elementary Geology* and a report *Ichnology of New England: A Report on the Sandstone of the Connecticut Valley, Especially Its Fossil Footmarks*. According to Struik's *Yankee Science in the Making*, Hitchcock explored Massachusetts, "travelling 4,550 miles and collecting 5,000 specimens of rocks," and "his collection of fossil footprints is still a pride of the college [Amherst College]" (242). When Emily Dickinson studied geology for the first time at Amherst Academy in 1845, she used the Third Edition of his *Elementary Geology* (1842), and it was kept in the Dickinsons' library (Lowenberg 57).

Emily Dickinson as well as other people must have been fascinated by the discovery of fossils in the Connecticut Valley. In the following poem she refers to "Comparative Anatomy":

A science - so the Savans say,
"Comparative Anatomy" -
By which a single bone - (no stanza break)

Is made a secret to unfold
Of some rare tenant of the mold,
Else perished in the stone -

So to the eye prospective led,
This meekest flower of the mead
Opon (sic) a winter's day,
Stands representative in gold
Of Rose and Lily, manifold,
And countless Butterfly!

(F-147, c. spring 1860 ; J-100, c. 1859)³

The French term “savans” meaning scholars appears in the article “The Fossil Man” written by C. L. Brace in *the Atlantic Monthly* Vol. X, No. LXII (December 1862), which the Dickinsons subscribed to and read. In the article the term especially refers to “distinguished” “geologists.” Here in the poem, “the Savans” may also refer to the great naturalists of the nineteenth century, including the French Zoologist George L. D. F. D. Cuvier (1769-1832), the Swiss biologist Jean Louis Rodolphe Agassiz (1807-1873), as well as the American geologist Edward Hitchcock. According to *Yankee Science in the Making*, Cuvier “amazed the world by his ability to perform the restoration of a fossil animal from the structure of a single bone or a portion of one, by using his principle of the unchangeable relations of organs” (underline mine). And “Agassiz’s work on living and on fossil fishes fitted exactly into Cuvier’s great scheme of natural classification” (348).

In Hitchcock’s *Elementary Geology*, which Emily Dickinson used as a textbook at school, “Comparative anatomy” is defined as “a science that compares the anatomy of different animals and the parts of the same animals” (85). And it is explained as follows :

This recent science [Comparative Anatomy] reveals to us the astonishing fact, that so mathematically exact is the proportion between the different parts of an animal, “that from the character of a single limb, and even of a single tooth, or bone, the form and proportion of the other bones, and the condition of the entire animal may be inferred.” . . . *Buckland’s Bridgewater Treatise*, Vol. 1. p. 109. See also *Cuvier’s Ossements Fossiles*, Tome 1. p. 47. *Troisieme Edition*. (emphases added) (85)

By the “Savans” studies of fossils in the layers of soil, the histories of the earth and its animals came to be revealed (“unfolded”) little by little. The examination of even “a single bone” can be the key to animals long extinct and now only existing as fossils which otherwise would have “perished” in vain, unidentified in “stone.” “Comparative Anatomy” could reveal an unknown, extinct animal from just “a single bone.” The term “mold,” although its spelling is different, is also from *Elementary Geology* :

Sometimes after the rock had become hardened, the animal or plant decayed and escaped through the pores of the stone, so as to leave nothing but a perfect *mould*.
(emphasis added) (84)

Thus, not only the idea, but also the terminology is borrowed from the textbook.

In *the Atlantic Monthly* Vol. IX, No. LI (January 1862) there is an article by Agassiz “Methods of Study in Natural History,” in which Cuvier is highly regarded as a scientist who has

“combine[d] zoological and anatomical studies in order to arrive at a clear perception of the true affinities among animals” by “the method of ‘Comparison’” (7). Therefore, I guess the poet wrote this poem F-147 (J-100), after having read this article as well as that of “The Fossil Man,” which is mentioned above, in 1862, although Johnson’s presumptive date of this poem is about 1859 (77) and Franklin’s, about spring 1860 (188).

In the second stanza, Dickinson adapts this idea to a simple flower of the meadow. As “the condition of the entire animal may be inferred” by a fossilized “single bone,” the speaker can see beautiful golden summer days full of elegant flowers and butterflies in even “the meekest flower of the mead / Opon a winter’s day.”⁴ Although the flower is apparently not so elegant and beautiful as the “Rose and Lily” in spring and summer, the poet finds in it the same vitality and beauty as found in them. Because she has “the eye,” having such knowledge as “Comparative Anatomy,” with which we can see things usually invisible. Furthermore, she must have been happy to guess that even “this meekest flower” could be fossilized and become a “rare tenant of the mold” someday after being killed by frost in the near future, just as elegant flowers and butterflies could be.

“Comparative Anatomy” was especially interesting to Emily Dickinson because it divulged to her a body of knowledge that was normally invisible. Her textbook *Elementary Geology*, referring to *Buckland’s Bridgewater Treatise*, Vol. 1, p, 109, says that by “comparative anatomy”

not only the framework of the fossil skeleton of an extinct animal, but also the character of the muscles, by which each bone was moved, the external form and figure of the body, the food, and habits, and haunts, and mode of life of creatures that ceased to exist before the creation of the human race, can with a high degree of probability be ascertained. (85)

With this knowledge, she can see in fossils even the world “before the creation of the human race.”

Therefore, we can also say that in a single fossil many things, including things usually invisible, are “deposited” and preserved forever. Emily Dickinson says :

What care the Dead for Winter?
Themselves as easy freeze -
June Noon - as January Night -
As soon the South - her Breeze

Of Sycamore - or Cinnamon -
Deposit in a Stone
And put a Stone to keep it Warm -
Give Spices - unto Men -

(F-624, sts. 5 & 6, c. the second half of 1863 ; J-592, c. 1862)

“In a Stone” she can find even the warmth and spicy “Breeze” of “the South.” The information “deposited” “in a Stone” under layers of “deposits” or “depositions” over centuries is exotic and stimulating like “spices” to us human beings existing now.

Emily Dickinson must have been interested in the human remains as well as the fossils of flowers and animals. The article “The Fossil Man” of *the Atlantic Monthly* Vol. X, No. LXII (De-

ember 1862) discusses the recent “research for human origins, or the earliest historic and scientific evidences of man on the earth” is still “groping in the dark” (671). In it there is a report of the discovery of human bones :

Some ten years since, in Aurignac, [. . .] a cavern was discovered in the nummulitic rock. [. . .] In it were found the human remains. [. . .] Along with the bones were discovered the teeth of mammals, both carnivora and herbivora. [. . .] In 1860 M. Lartet visited the spot. In the layer of loose earth at the bottom of the cave he found flint implements, worked portions of a reindeer's horn, mammal bones, and human bones in a remarkable state of preservation. (676)

However, it also says that usually no human bones “are easily preserved, unless they are buried in sediment or in bog” (675). In her textbook *Elementary of Geology* it is said :

The remarkable specimens of human skeletons found imbedded in solid limestone rock on the shores of Guadaloupe, deserve attention. [. . .] At first view they may seem genuine examples of man in a fossil state. But they belong to the alluvial formation, and probably were buried there only a few hundred years ago. For the same rock contains shells of existing species, as well as arrows and hatchets of stone, and pottery [. . .]. (98-99)

Dickinson must have been fascinated by these discoveries, as her interest in “the Fossil Man” continued for years and she actually wrote the following poem later in her life :

How good his Lava Bed,
To this laborious Boy -
Who must be up to call the World
And dress the sleepy Day - (F-1472, c. 1878 ; J-1447, c. 1878)

The “Boy” in the “Lava Bed” must refer to a “Fossil Man” discovered in some excavated remains covered by “Lava” in Pompeii. Although systematic exploration of the ancient city Pompeii was begun in 1748, “more systematic excavation, together with preservation and restoration, began in 1860.” It was executed under the direction of G. Fiorelli, who “originated the method of obtaining impressions of the bodies of the victims by pouring plaster of paris into the hollows left in the ash” (“Pompeii,” *Britannica*). In the textbook *Elementary Geology*, there is a description of the three cities, Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabiae, which were buried by melted lava thrown out from Vesuvius (228-29). Interested in the excavation of Pompeii by Fiorelli, Dickinson must have used the name Pompeii twice in a letter in 1861 (L-233) and in a poem F-165 (J-175) (c. spring 1860), which will be discussed later in this paper.

In 1869 Mark Twain's *Innocents Abroad* was published, and “within its first year it sold over 70,000 copies” (Railton). In it there is a chapter on “The Buried City of Pompeii,” in which Twain vividly reports of the figures of people as well as the ruins excavated in the dead city. Among the figures he depicts, there is a very impressive one near the end of the chapter :

Compare the cheerful life and the sunshine of this day with the horrors the younger Pliny saw here, the 9th of November, A.D. 79, when he was so bravely striving to remove his mother out of reach of harm, while she begged him, with all a mother's unselfishness, to leave her to perish and save himself. (335-36)

Dickinson must have read this popular book *Innocents Abroad* and have been particularly

moved by this description ; when she wrote about the fire in her town of Amherst in a letter to Louise and Frances Norcrosses in 1879, she referred to "Pompeii" as follows :

At seven people came to tell us that the fire was stopped, stopped by throwing
sound houses in as one fills a well.

Mother never waked, and we were all grateful ; we knew she would never buy
needle and thread at Mr. Cutler's store, and if it were Pompeii nobody could tell her.

(L-610)

Here Dickinson humorously compares her own mother, who was soundly sleeping even during the big clamor of a fire, with Pliny's mother in Pompeii. Thus, when she wrote the poem F-1472 (J-1447) of "this laborious Boy," she must have referred to the boy Pliny in Pompeii described by Mark Twain.

In the poem F-1472 (J-1447) Dickinson says that the "Lava Bed," which is a layer of stratum made of lava and which preserved the mold of the boy, serves as a wondrous bed to him, for his preserved body surprised and moved "the World" when excavated centuries after his death. Of course, at first the hot "Lava" must have been horrible to him, but after all it brought to him a surprising result. Besides, "Lava," which is defined in *Elementary Geology* as "the melted matter that is ejected from a volcano, or remains within it" (69), is also explained in the same textbook as :

Lava cooled rapidly, and not under pressure, forms glass, or scoria : but cooled slowly, and under pressure, it becomes crystalline. Now the older unstratified rocks, such as granite, syenite, porphyry, and green stone, are more or less crystalline [. . .].
(emphases added) (70)

The poet, who likes to use "Alabaster," "Amber," "diamond," "granite," and other crystallized stones in poems, must have liked the idea of the crystallization of lava. She might have also liked the idea that "Lava" "embraces all the melted matter ejected from volcanos" as explained in *Elementary Geology* (78), and is transformed into a unique and surprising existence like the "Boy." She seems to have wished to conceal all her emotions to become a transcendent existence to overcome worldly desires and conflicts.

Therefore, she exclaims "How good." It seems as if Dickinson herself wished to sleep for centuries as "a fossil man" in such a "Lava Bed" in order to surprise "the World" in the future just like the boy Pliny.

II. Volcanoes

The image of a volcano takes an especially very important role in Emily Dickinson's life and poetry, as it is used in one of the drafts of her love letters which might have been sent to an unknown lover, and which are now called "Master letters" :

Vesuvius don't (sic) talk - Etna - don't (sic) - [Thy] one of them - a syllable - A
thousand years ago, and Pompeii heard it, and hid forever - She couldn't look the
world in the face, afterward - I suppose - Bashfull (sic) Pompeii! (L-233, c. 1861)

Judith Farr says : "The volcano is her symbol for passion suppressed, not only love but rage. [. . .] Volcanoes like Vesuvius or Etna resembled herself ; they didn't 'talk'" (213). Adrienne Rich describes Emily Dickinson as a woman "who feels herself to be Vesuvius at home"

because she was “possessed by the daemon” or “her own active, creative power” and because she knew “the danger and risks of such possession” for a woman (108-11).

Emily Dickinson was interested in volcanoes because even if they apparently seem “still,” they actually conceal magnificent vitality within them. Here is a poem about a “still” “Volcano” :

A still - Volcano - Life -
That flickered in the night -
When it was dark enough to do -
Without erasing sight -

A quiet - Earthquake Style -
Too subtle to suspect
By natures this side Naples -
The North cannot detect

The Solemn - Torrid - Symbol -
The lips that never lie -
Whose hissing Corals part - and shut -
And Cities - ooze away -

(F-517, spring 1863 ; J-601, c. 1862)

Most of her knowledge of volcanoes is from Hitchcock’s textbook *Elementary Geology* (1842), in which there is the description of the “Phenomena of an Eruption” of a volcano as follows :

Descr. A volcanic eruption is commonly preceded by earthquakes in the vicinity ; stillness of the air, with a sense of oppression ; noises in the mountain ; and the drying up of fountains. The eruption commences with a sudden explosion, followed by vast clouds of smoke and vapor, with flashes of lightning, and showers of ashes and stones ; and finally by red hot lava ; which flows over the rim of the crater and spreads over the surrounding country. (emphases added) (228)

Just before the eruption of a volcano, the atmosphere is usually “still” and oppressive. The expression “stillness of the air” also reminds us of the description “the Stillness in the Air - / Between the Heaves of Storm” in another poem of hers F-591 (J-465), whose atmosphere is also very “oppressive” just before the “last Onset” of death.

The first stanza reminds us of the description of the volcano of Kerauea at night and its illustration in the same textbook :

Sometimes, and especially at night, such masses of lava are forced up, that a lake of liquid fire, not less than two miles in circumference, is seen dashing up its angry billows, and forming one of the grandest and most thrilling objects that the imagination can conceive. Fig. 114, is a view of this volcano taken by Mr. Ellis.

(emphasis added) (233)

Fig.114



Volcano of Kirauca : Sandwich Islands.

(234)

On the same page of the illustration, there is also a description of “Earthquakes,” the cause of which is explained as “the expansive efforts of volcanic matter, confined beneath the earth’s surface” (234). There is also an explanation: “[. . .] the ultimate cause of volcanos (sic) and earthquakes, is the same: whatever that cause may be” (235). Emily Dickinson must have been impressed by these descriptions of the volcanoes including the personification such as “angry,” and by the illustration of a volcano at night in the textbook.

In the poem F-514 (J-601) by the paradoxical expressions “A still - Volcano” and “A quiet - Earthquake,” both of which should be very violent and destructive, the poet renders the “Life” in which “Smouldering anguish” (F-165, J-175) lurks like the “masses of lava.” In other words this is a “Style” of life in which the “palpitating” (F-165) state of mind is hidden, so that most people do not even suspect such condition of the “Life” but believe that it is calm as “An acre for a Bird to choose”:

On my volcano grows the Grass
A meditative spot -
An acre for a Bird to choose
Would be the General thought -

How red the Fire rocks below
How insecure the sod
Did I disclose

Would populate with awe my solitude (F-1743, ? ; J-1677, ?)

Although the “spot” apparently looks quiet and calm, it is actually “insecure” with “red” “Fire rocks” and “angry billows” under it. In this poem the poet describes the paradoxical life of “solitude” with a destructive power hidden under the surface by using the metaphor of the “still volcano.”⁵

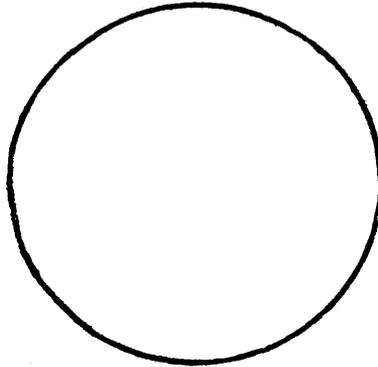
In *Elementary Geology*, there is a description of “the interior of the earth” :

It has been inferred that all the interior of the earth, except a crust from 50 to 100 miles thick, is at present in a state of fusion : that originally the whole globe was melted, and that its present crust has been formed by the cooling of the surface by radiation. [. . .] The existence of 300 active volcanos, and many extinct ones, whose origin is deep seated, and which are connected over extensive area. [. . .] But if the internal parts of the earth are in a melted state, that is, in the state of lava ; and if this mass be slowly cooling, occasional eruptions of the matter ought to be expected to take place by existing volcanos. (emphases added) (250-51)

And there is a figure of a circle (Fig. 118) explained as follows :

Fig. 118 is intended to represent the proportion of melted and unmelted matter in the earth, agreeable to the above inference ; and on the supposition that the solid crust is 100 miles thick. This is shown by the broad line that forms the circumference. (emphasis added) (250)

Fig.118



When Emily Dickinson compared her life or “Business” to “Circumference” in a letter to Thomas H. Higginson (L-268, July 1862), she might have the image of this “circumference” of the globe with a huge space of melted lava inside, showing only a thin cool surface to the outside world. The life has the danger of an eruption of emotions at any moment.

Jane Donahue Eberwein analyzes “Circumference” in Emily Dickinson’s poetry as the boundary “between the circuit of personal space and whatever might be outside” (161).⁶ While “the circle is always inner space, separated by some boundary from external space or substance,” “Circumference” is “margin, never center” (160-61). Then, the circumferential line of the crust on the surface of the earth with the unknown space with incredibly high heat within (*Elementary Geology* 246-49) and with the other unknown vast space of the universe outside, as drawn in *Elementary Geology*, is a perfect image of Emily Dickinson’s “Circumference.” Besides, the crust has many circumferential volcano craters on it as cracks in the boundary. Thus, the inside of the “circumference” is her inner psychological world, which even she herself sometimes cannot grasp or control so that she was afraid of its eruption like of a volcano, while outside is the vast unknown universe of immortality and eternity. Eberwein says that “Dickinson’s simultaneous impulse toward withdrawal and self-protection and her ap-

petite for empowerment made her concentrate on circumference, that dreaded yet enticing barrier" (161). Dickinson meditates on various "Circumferences," barriers or transition points, such as "death," "transitional seasons," and "flying creatures," as suggested by Eberwein (166), or on the crater of a "volcano" as "a meditative spot" (J-1677, F-1743).

Also in another poem Dickinson says that she is "inclined to climb / A Crater" so that she may "contemplate / Vesuvius at Home" :

Volcanoes be in Sicily
 And South America
 I judge from my Geography
 Volcanoes nearer here
 A Lava step at any time
 Am I inclined to climb
 A Crater I may contemplate
 Vesuvius at Home

(F-1691, ? ; J-1705. ?)

As Farr says of this poem, although Dickinson might refer to Susan Dickinson, wife of Austin Dickinson, by the "Vesuvius at Home" in this poem, the poet herself must also have a volcano inside of herself. And as Farr also admits, it is "New Englandly to suppress" the eruption (214) and control the intense emotion without showing it to others.

However, the volcano has such enormous power under the surface that its dangerous condition cannot be completely concealed, but it "flickered in the night" like the volcano of Kirauea as cited above. If finally the volcano would erupt and "the melted lava is forced out" (*Elementary Geology* 234), or if the person would at last say what she really thinks with her "lips that never lie - ," others would be astonished and "Cities - ooze away - " (F-517 ; J-601).⁷ It is just as the people would be amazed "with awe," if the speaker "discloses" her real life with the red "Fire rocks below" (F-1743 ; J-1677).

The expression "hissing Corals" in the poem F-517 (J-601) shows both the poet's red lips and "the rim of the crater" (*Elementary Geology* 228), from which "the electric matter, or inflammable gas, or fire" (*Elementary Geology* 235) is issuing, or which is "dashing up its angry billows" (*Elementary Geology* 233). The term "hissing" is also found in the description of "red hot lava" on page 233 of *Elementary Geology* :

A powerful eruption of this volcano took place in May and June, 1840 [. . .] for three weeks continued to pour into the sea a stream of red hot lava with frightful hissings and detonations. (emphasis added) (233)

Thus, the description of volcanoes and earthquakes and the terms used in Hitchcock's textbook *Elementary Geology* are subtly incorporated in this poem.

Here is another poem of "still" "Volcanoes" :

I have never seen "Volcanoes" -
 But, when Travellers (sic) tell
 How those old - phlegmatic mountains
 Usually so still -

Bear within - appalling Ordnance,

(no stanza break)

Fire, and smoke, and gun,
Taking villages for breakfast,
And appalling Men -

If the stillness is Volcanic
In the human face
When upon a pain Titanic
Features keep their place -

If at length, the smouldering anguish
Will not overcome -
And the palpitating Vineyard
In the dust, be thrown?

If some loving Antiquary,
On Resumption Morn,
Will not cry with joy "Pompeii!"
To the Hills return!

(F-165, c. spring 1860 ; J-175, c. 1860)

In this poem, too, by using the analogy of "the stillness" of the volcano, and by using the knowledge of volcanoes gained from the study of geology, Emily Dickinson depicts "the smouldering anguish" which is concealed, and the effort to suppress its psychological explosion because of it.⁸

Then, the poet says that even if somebody tries to conceal the "pain" or "anguish," some day it might explode like a volcano and that its "lava" would cover all the circumstances of her life. By the psychological explosion, she would give up all the pleasures of this world and would put them away just as the whole city of "Pompeii" was covered by "red hot lava," ashes, and stones. In *Elementary Geology*, "Pompeii" is explained as one of the "fossil cities" where "almost every thing" is "enveloped":

That [eruption] which occurred in Vesuvius A. D. 79, is best known, from the fact that it buried three cities, Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabiae; which were flourishing at its base. Not much melted lava appears to have been thrown out at the eruption, which consisted chiefly of lapilli, sand, and stones. Hence it is, that almost every thing enveloped in those cities; —streets, houses, inscriptions, papyri, (manuscripts,) grain, fruit, bread, condiments, medicines, &c. &c. are in a most perfect state of preservation. They are, indeed, perfect examples of fossil cities! *Lyell's Prin. Geol. Vol. 2, p. 189. Dr. James Johnson's Philosophy of Travelling, p. 232.*

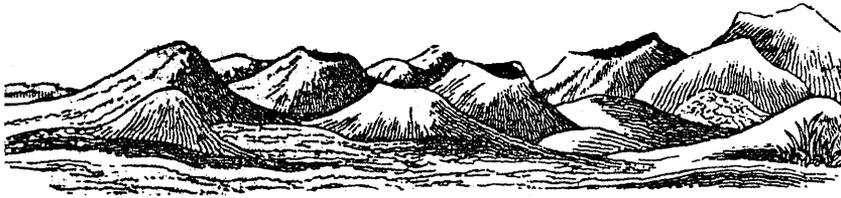
(emphases added) (228-29)

Thus, one of the "fossil cities" "Pompeii" is a symbol of the "perfect state of preservation." The poet might have wished to preserve everything that she would give up in this world and to get it back "On Resumption Morn" (l. 18).

However, if God would not revive the city of "Pompeii," that is, if God would not give it back to her at Resurrection, the speaker of the poem says, she would have no choice but to re-

duce to quiet "Hills." By "Hills" she must mean "Extinct Volcanoes." The illustration of "Extinct Volcanos (sic)" on page 239 of the same textbook *Elementary Geology* shows just "hills":

Fig.116



Extinct Volcanos : Auvergne.

(239)

Thus, when the poet composed the poem F-165 (J-175), she had in her mind at least the description of a volcanic eruption and that of Pompeii as a "fossil city" from Hitchcock's *Elementary Geology*, and they take important roles in the poem.

Thus, the description of volcanoes and earthquakes and the terms used in Hitchcock's textbook *Elementary Geology* are subtly incorporated in her poems. The illustration as well as the information in the textbook must have been the source of inspiration for Dickinson.

The following poem is about the volcanic island Teneriffe, "the largest of the Canary Islands," which "is located in the Atlantic Ocean opposite the northwest coast of Africa," and whose "relief is mountainous and volcanic" (Beckinsale):

Ah, Teneriffe!
Retreating Mountain!
Purples of Ages - pause for you -

Sunset - reviews her Sapphire Regiment -
Day - drops you her Red Adieu!

Still - Clad in your Mail of ices -
Thigh of Granite - and thew - of Steel -
Heedless - alike - of pomp - or parting

Ah, Teneriffe!
I'm kneeling - still - (F-752 A, c. 1863 ; J-666, c. 1863)

In this poem, the poet adores and describes the beauty of the mountain in the sunset as if she were looking at a painting of it or the mountain itself.⁹

Although Vesuvius is treated many times, Teneriffe is mentioned only three times, in *Elementary Geology*. However, one of the descriptions of Teneriffe just after that of Vesuvius in the section of "Extinct Volcanos" is very impressive:

The volcanic peak of Teneriffe stands in the centre of a plain, covering 108 square miles, which is surrounded by perpendicular precipices and mountains, which were probably the border of the ancient crater. (241-42)

The "Retreating Mountain" in the second line of the poem F-752 (J-666) does not only refer to

the mountain disappearing in the dusk, but also suggests that the mountain is very ancient and is no more active as a volcano.

Emily Dickinson knew very well how Mount Teneriffe had exploded violently in the past. She read Washington Irving's *A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (1828) (Capps 122), in which "the crew were terrified at beholding the lofty peak of Teneriffe sending forth volumes of flame and smoke."¹⁰ The reason why the poet respected the mountain was that although it exploded or erupted many times in ancient times, it was then very quiet and calm as if without any agony or pain, paying no longer attention to the worldly things ("Heedless - alike - of pomp - or parting").¹¹

In his article "Mountains and Their Origin" in *The Atlantic Monthly* Vol. XI, No. LXVII (June, 1863), which the Dickinsons regularly read, Louis Agassiz, after explaining the formation of mountains, writes about one of the most important geologists of those times Leopold von Buch, who refuted "many erroneous ideas then held regarding volcanoes."¹² Agassiz says that Von Buch studied various volcanoes and found that "fire had been an active agent in the rock-formations of past times" (755). Agassiz also writes :

He [Von Buch] went also to the Canary Islands ; and it is in his extensive work on the geological formations of these islands that he showed conclusively not only the Plutonic character of all unstratified rocks, but also that to their action upon the stratified deposits the inequalities of the earth's surface are chiefly due. He first demonstrated that the melted masses within the earth had upheaved the materials deposited in layers upon its surface, and had thus formed the mountains. (755)

Thus, according to Von Buch, who studied Mount Teneriffe, the beautiful shape of the mountain is also just "the result of volcanic action" (*Elementary Geology* 231). The idea that after having gone through various terrible fights and struggles in "mail of ices" with "Thigh of Granite - and thew - of Steel - ," it is "retreating" to rest quietly in beautiful shape, must have touched the cord of Emily Dickinson's heart. She pays her reverence to the mountain by calling to the mountain passionately, "Ah Teneriffe!" at the beginning and again at the end of the poem.

Besides, in the same article, Agassiz also writes about Von Buch's behavior that he witnessed as follows :

All great natural phenomena impressed him [Von Buch] deeply. On one occasion it was my good fortune to make one of a party from the "Helvetic Association for the Advancement of Science" on an excursion to the eastern extremity of the Lake of Geneva. I well remember the expressive gesture of Von Buch, as he faced the deep gorge through which the Rhone issues from the interior of the Alps. While others were chatting and laughing about him, he stood for a moment absorbed in silent contemplation of the grandeur of the scene, then lifted his hat and bowed reverently before the mountains. (756)

Emily Dickinson must have been deeply impressed by such a humble attitude as Von Buch's toward the mountains or nature. Therefore, she wrote this poem F-752 (J-666) in 1863, after reading the article in the magazine issued in June 1863. She says at the end of the poem that the speaker is "kneeling - still - " to express her own adoration toward Teneriffe, which has been studied and whose formation was described by Leopold von Buch. Thus, this poem was

written, inspired by the article written by Agazzis, and using the information learned from Hitchcock's textbook *Elementary Geology*.¹³

III. Life in Stone

Emily Dickinson has written many poems that treat a mental breakdown or a psychological collapse after a great agony. In those poems she almost always describes the condition of losing all the senses, feeling extreme numbness or helplessness. Among them are some poems in which such a paralyzed condition is compared to being a "stone"; for example, "After great pain, a formal feeling comes - / The Nerves sit ceremonious, like Tombs - / [. . .] / A Quartz contentment, like a stone - " (F-372 ; J-341). Also in the poem F-614 (J-519), the process of becoming a stone is depicted by stages: "there crept upon / A Chill [. . .] / Till all the scene - be gone." Then the "Forehead copied Stone" while "The Fingers grew too cold - / To ache." The eyes also "congealed." The existence after experiencing despair, called "it" here, "crowded Cold to Cold" and "multiplied indifference." And finally it was "lowered, like a Weight," making "no Signal" or "demur[ring]," but "dropped like Adamant."

In another poem she says :

More Life - went out - when He went
Than Ordinary Breath -
Lit with a finer Phosphor -
Requiring in the Quench -

A Power of Renowned Cold,
The Climate of the Grave
A Temperature just adequate
So Anthracite, to live -

For some - an Ampler Zero -
A Frost more needle keen
Is necessary, to reduce
The Ethiop within.

Others - extinguish easier -
A Gnat's minutest Fan
Sufficient to obliterate
A Tract of Citizen -

Whose Peat life - amply vivid -
Ignores the solemn News
That Popocatapel exists -
Or Etna's Scarlet, Choose -

(F-415, c. autumn 1862 ; J-422, c. 1862)

When the speaker of this poem had despaired after parting with her lover, she experienced not only a psychological death, but also a physical experience of feeling cold as if she were dead

as described in other poems. Although according to the distinction written in Ike Marvel's *Reveries of a Bachelor* (1850), which the poet read (Johnson, *Poems* 328), there are two types of people "anthracite" type being "stable, devoted, profound," and "sea-coal" type being "mercurial, shallow, unsteady, brilliant," Dickinson shows here three types she herself classifies. The first type of people are very passionate ("The Ethiop within") as described in the third stanza, and the second are people who are frivolous and easily change their mind, as described in the fourth stanza.

However, the speaker of this poem does not belong to either of them; she is not either like passionate volcanoes such as "Popocatapel" famous for its smoke (*Elementary Geology* 230 and 233) and "Etna" for its amount of lava (*Elementary Geology* 230 and 232), or like dull "Peat." She is of a unique type who in despair lives a kind of death in life in the "Climate of the Grave" with "A Temperature just adequate" "to live" as "Anthracite." She is not too hot or too cool. She is moderately quiet or cool without showing her own emotions outside, but still keeping some energy inside like "Anthracite" in the earth, which is defined as "nearly pure carbon" like a diamond, which is "pure crystallized carbon" in one of her textbooks Benjamin Silliman's *Elements of Chemistry* (1830) (355). She would burn quietly without exhaling any smoke or fire like "Anthracite."

Because of the ambiguity of the structure of this poem, the relative pronoun "Whose" in the fifth stanza could be interpreted to connect with the life as "Anthracite" in the second stanza, leaving the third and fourth stanzas for the other kinds of lives. In this case, "Peat life" has a positive meaning, "Peat" as the origin of bitumen and carbon (*Elementary Geology* 222). According to *Elementary Geology* :

Peat bogs are remarkable for their antiseptic power, or the power of preserving animal substances from putrefaction; some remarkable cases of which are on record.

(222)

The poet would endure or enjoy the quiet "Peat life" of "Anthracite" preserving precious "Life" "Lit with a finer Phosphor" underground as if being in "the Grave," paying no attention to active lives of other people on earth for the time being.

Therefore, in order to endure despair and keep her own "Life" for the future, the poet tries to be "numb," or to pretend a dead person.¹⁴ Such a strategy is called "the Science of the Grave" in another poem :

The Province of the Saved
Should be the Art - To save -
Through Skill obtained in Themselves -
The Science of the Grave

No Man can understand
But He that hath endured
The Dissolution - in Himself -
That Man - be qualified

To qualify Despair

(no stanza break)

To Those who failing new -

Mistake Defeat for Death-Each time -

Till acclimated - to - (F-659, c. the second half of 1863; J-539, c. 1862)

The poet says that this "Art" to save oneself could be understood only by a person who has "endured / The Dissolution" or the process of dying physically as well as mentally after a great agony or despair, as described in the poem F-614 (J-519), which is quoted above. She believes that only those who have the experience of such "Dissolution" can ("be qualified" to) abate ("qualify") another person's "Despair" like "Death" until the person could be "Acclimated - to -" "the Province of the Saved."¹⁵ Thus, the negative experience of mental breakdown is changed into a positive power to "qualify" another person's "Despair." The contrast between the passive and the positive in expressions, such as "the Saved" and "To Save," and "be qualified" and "to qualify," demonstrates the poet's transformation of a negative experience into a positive way of living.

The following poem shows the transformation of the speaker into a kind of "stone" in order to survive some psychological hell :

I've dropped my Brain - My Soul is numb -

The Veins that used to run

Stop palsied - 'tis Paralysis

Done perfecter on stone.

Vitality is Carved and cool.

My nerve in Marble lies -

A Breathing Woman

Yesterday - Endowed with Paradise.

Not dumb - I had a sort that moved -

A Sense that smote and stirred -

Instincts for Dance - a caper part -

An Aptitude for Bird -

Who wrought Carrara in me

And chiselled all my tune

Were it a Witchcraft - were it Death -

I've still a chance to strain

To Being, somewhere - Motion - Breath -

Though Centuries beyond,

And every limit a Decade -

I'll shiver, satisfied

(F-1088, c. 1865; J-1046, c. 1865)

About this poem Paul J. Ferlazzo says, "Her stillness, her inability to function, the poet suggests, is more than a human ailment subject to possible remedy" (85). And, referring to another poem, he also says, "Her ailment can best be described as a form of petrification in which her

spirit and her enthusiasm for life have been drained from her and replaced with a cold insensibility" (85). However, the speaker of this poem protests that before the transformation she was "Not dumb" to be "numb" easily, but was a kind of person who was very active and sensitive, having "Instincts for Dance - a caper part" and a talent of singing ("An Aptitude for Bird"). The statement that the speaker was "A Breathing Woman / Yesterday - Endowed with Paradise" suggests that she has experienced Hell. As a result of such a dreadful experience as hell, she became "numb," "palsied," and cold, like a dead person or a "stone," whether deliberately or not deliberately. This condition is a result of extreme agony or despair.

Whether it is "a Witchcraft" or "Death" which has produced such a condition, the poet at least knows that she can survive the hell by the strategy of being like a "stone" for a while ("I've still a chance to strain / / To Being, somewhere - Motion - Breath - / Though Centuries beyond"). Although the speaker asks, "Who wrought Carrara in me [. . .]," pretending not to know the cause, she herself must have deliberately caused the condition in herself, as she says at the beginning of the poem, "I've dropped my Brain," not "My brain has dropped." This itself is "the Art - To Save - " (F-659 ; J-539). In order to save herself she has petrified herself and "Carved" "Vitality" and "chiselled all my tune" on it as on a sculpture of "Marble" from "Carrara."

Then, the poet seems to have believed that the speaker will revive "somewhere" "centuries beyond." This is similar to the "Fossil Man" who will surprise the world in the future when excavated, as discussed above. Dickinson might have wanted to deposit and preserve herself in a "stone" or in "fossil" for years. However, it is not just "stone," but "Marble" that she deposits herself in. Since she has a talent for writing poems ("An Aptitude for Bird"), and since she says that "all my tune" is "chiselled" on it, the stone into which she transforms herself should be like "Marble" for a great sculptor. The "Marble" here can be interpreted as to symbolize her own poems in which she has reproduced herself.

But how long does she have to wait? According to Jeremiah Day's *An Introduction to Algebra* (1836), which Emily Dickinson read as a textbook at school, "A Mathematical Quantity is said to be infinite, when it is supposed to be increased beyond any determinate limits" (227). And it is also said :

We may increase a number by continual addition, till we obtain one that shall exceed any limits which we please to assign. By this, however, we do not arrive at a number to which nothing can be added ; but only at one that is beyond any limits which we have hitherto set. Farther additions may be made to it with the same ease, as those by which it has already been increased so far. It is therefore not infinite, in the sense in which the term has now been explained. It is absurd to speak of the great possible number. No number can be imagined so great as not to admit of being made greater. (emphases added) (227)

Therefore, the poet does not name any number of years for waiting but says "every limit a Decade" in this poem. Although she has some hope in the "Marble" or "fossil," she is yet afraid that she has to wait, being like a "stone," for "infinite" numbers of years, adding "a Decade" after "a Decade" forever.

At the end of this poem the speaker paradoxically says, "I'll shiver, satisfied." Although

she is cold giving up the life in this world and being a “stone” in death in life, she is “satisfied,” expecting the bright future when she will resurrect. At the same time this line can be also interpreted as although she has positively decided to revive in the future, being dead now, she cannot but feel uneasy without knowing how long she has to wait in stone and fear that she would not wake up forever.

Therefore, the “Sleep” in the following poem does not refer to the sleep of good Christians in graves to wait for the Resurrection morning, but to the sleep in stone or death in life, in which Dickinson conceals herself :

A long - long Sleep - A famous - Sleep -
That makes no show for Morn -
By Stretch of Limb - or stir of Lid -
An independent One -

Was ever idleness like This?
Upon a Bank of Stone
To bask the Centuries away -
Nor once look up - for Noon?

1 long - long] vast - vast - / Brave - brave -
5 idleness] Arrogance 6] Within a Hut of Stone.

(F-463, c. late 1862 ; J-654, c. 1862)

Emily Dickinson was deeply disappointed by the failure of her poems to be understood by the editor of the *Springfield Republican*, Samuel Bowles, about the time when this poem, as well as the other poems discussed above, was written. Sewall says :

One imagines the first step in the process as a decision to have nothing more to do with any concerted effort in the direction of the *Springfield Republican*. After three years during which she sent many poems to Bowles, he had printed only one before the winter of 1862: “I taste a liquor never brewed,” which was given the title “The May Wine,” and was printed anonymously, with two lines altered to get an exact rhyme and one line changed in the interest of a more understandable metaphor.

This had come out on May 4, 1861. Then, a month before he sailed for Europe, and perhaps as a gesture of friendship before leaving, the *Republican* printed “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers” (issue of March 1, 1862), called it “The Sleeping,” and regularized punctuation, capitalization, and lineation. Articles, comments, and reviews in the paper of about this time, as well as the utterly routine verse it regularly printed, may have helped persuade her to stop trying. (emphasis added) (489)

Dickinson must have been upset by the fact that the poems were meddled with by the editor, especially because she was sure of the high quality of the poem “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers,” as she writes in a letter to Susan Dickinson referring to the poem as follows :

Your praise is good - to me - because I know it knows - and suppose - it means -
Could I make you and Austin - proud - sometime - a great way off -

(L-238, Summer 1861)

She wished to be recognized as a poet in the future. Therefore, her disappointment must have been very keen. Later when another poem was treated in the same way, she wrote to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "it was robbed of me - defeated too of the third line by the punctuation [. . .]" (L-316, early 1866). She was fatally disappointed by Higginson himself, especially by his response to her letters of inquiring his opinion of her poems as the last means in 1862, as she writes in the second letter to him on April 25, "Thank you for the surgery" (L-261).¹⁶ In writing to him, "I smile when you suggests that I delay 'to publish' - that being foreign to my thought, as Firmament to Fin - / If fame belonged to me, I could not escape her - if she did not, the longest day would pass me on the chase" (L-265, June 1862), Dickinson just pretended to have no intention of publishing her poems. Inside of herself, she must have been in agony, bitterly giving up the hope of publication in her lifetime. Then in 1863 she wrote the poem: "Publication - is the Auction / Of the Mind of Man - " (F-788, c. late 1863; J-709 c. 1863). Even later, when Helen Hunt Jackson asked Dickinson to publish her poems in 1878, she first refused the request, and finally allowed just one poem to be published anonymously after Jackson's persistent and urgent requests.

Judith Farr feels that because of the "eruption" of her passion like "Vesuvius" and "the disappearance of the beloved" Samuel Bowles as its result, Emily Dickinson withdrew from society :

In her poetry about volcanoes, she fears that the fire "below," her suppressed passions, will come to the surface, shocking "the General thought." In Master letter 2 she declares that Vesuvius has finally erupted. The result, she fears, may be (as in the case of Pompeii in poem 175) the burial or "appalling" disappearance of the beloved. (Curiously, of course, it was Dickinson herself who ceased to "look the world in the face" shortly after the Master letters were written. Having spent several months in 1862 mourning Bowles' absence in Europe, she could not summon the nerve to greet him upon his return.) This conceit of burial and destruction after love's explosion surely has some relation to her own life. (215)

However, as Farr herself admits the contradiction of her theory in the parentheses, the burial is not of the beloved, but of the poet herself. If the burial of the poet herself had been connected only with the disappointment of love, she would not have "chiselled all [her] tune" in "Marble" (F-1088, J-1046). This decision of hers must have been more connected to the renunciation of the publication of poems as a poet in her life time, and must have been strictly concealed as she reveals in another poem :

The reticent volcano keeps
His never slumbering plan;
Confided are his projects pink
To no precarious man. (F-1776, st. 1, ?; J-1748, st. 1, ?)

Thus, the poem F-463 (J-654) as well as the other poems discussed in this chapter must have been connected with her renunciation of publishing her poems and her resurrection as poet in the future. Dickinson gave up the hope of being known as a poet in her life, but still had some hope to be read and understood some day, after a "long Sleep," maybe for "Centuries" (F-463, J-654). Therefore, she could endure the hard reality ("strain") to resurrect ("To

Being, somewhere - Motion - Breath -") "some time - a great way off" (L-238) or "Though Centuries beyond" (F-1088, J-1046). The title "The Sleeping" of the poem "Safe in their Alabaster's Chambers" added by the editor of the *Republican*, referring to the dead until the Last Judgement, might have suggested Dickinson's choice of a way of life in the "Sleeping" and resurrection as a poet in the distant future.

Actually, less than a century later, she was excavated and woke as a poet when Thomas H. Johnson edited her poems in 1955. As a result her "Sleep" as well as the poem once named "The Sleeping" is famous now. We the readers understand her "famous - Sleep - " has saved her integrity and originality ; therefore, she is not "idle" nor "Arrogant" at all, but she must be praised for her having been very "Brave."

She believed that her works would be appreciated centuries later :

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 Competeless Show
 Will entertain the Centuries
 When I, am long ago,
 An Island in dishonored Grass -
 Whom none but Beetles-know.

(F-319, c. early 1862 ; J-290, c. 1861)

Having seen the majestic beauty of an aurora, which is unconcerned with its audience ("An Unconcern so sovereign / To Universe, or me"), Dickinson could have decided to take the "vaster attitudes," that is, not being worried about publication or readers. And she could have even dared to choose a death in life ("Disdaining Men, and Oxygen") in order to write her own poems. She believed that although she was neglected and lonely in her life, her works of poetry ("Splendors") would be appreciated in the future, although she also admitted that her works are only a "Menagerie," when compared with the celestial beauty of nature.

As we have seen, Emily Dickinson was fascinated by various geological knowledge gained from the textbooks, especially *Elementary Geology* written by Edward Hitchcock, and from the magazine *The Atlantic Monthly*. "Comparative Anatomy" particularly appealed to her because

it gives information that was normally invisible, and because fossils preserve a lot of things from the past forever. She was also interested in a “still” volcano because it conceals enormous power in it. The “circumferential” line of the crust on the surface of the earth with the vast unknown space with incredibly high heat within, drawn in *Elementary Geology*, gave her a perfect image of her “Circumference,” which is one of the key words in her poetry. It represents various boundaries or margins, such as between her inner world and the outside world or between life and death. She often meditates on a “circumferential” volcano craters on it as cracks in the boundary, fearing its eruption like of a volcano. She was also impressed by the fact that the beautiful shape of a quiet “Retreating Mountain” was “the result of its volcanic action.” On the other hand, Dickinson often compares the paralyzed condition after despair to the state of being a “stone” in her poetry. In some poems the speaker deliberately becomes “numb” like a “stone” in order to survive some psychological hell, and the poet herself calls such a strategy “the Science of the Grave” or the “Art - To save - .” It also seems that the poet, after having given up the hope of publishing her poems in her life-time, tried to deposit herself into her own poems as “fossils” in order to be excavated and resurrect in the future. Thus, she was inspired by geological lore and illustrations in the textbooks and magazines, and subtly and effectively incorporated the information as well as the terminology into her poems. And she even adapted the knowledge of volcanoes and fossils for her way of life as a poet.

- 1 “L” refers to the letter number of the Johnson edition of Dickinson’s letters.
- 2 The first half of this paper is originally published as “Geology in Emily Dickinson’s Poetry (1)” in *Memoirs of Faculty of Education, Shiga University* 48, II (The Humanities & Social Science) (1998) : 83-92, but it has been completely revised and expanded. Chapter III of this paper was read at the Emily Dickinson International Conference, “Zero at the Bone : New Climates for Dickinson Study,” held in Trondheim, Norway, on August 4, 2001.
- 3 Texts of Emily Dickinson’s poems are from the variorum edition : *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* edited by R. W. Franklin (Cambridge, MA : The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998). However, the poem numbers in parentheses following citations refer to both the Johnson’s edition and the Franklin edition for reader’s convenience.
- 4 Cynthia Wolff says, “Hitchcock’s influence is inescapable here (in P-100), for the speaker of this poem has surely learned her lessons in geology and fossil findings from him” (296). Wolff interprets this poem as “the last remnant of a vanished past, a reminder that spring and summer have disappeared and that with them have gone all those supposed talismans of some human resurrection.” For Emily Dickinson, according to Wolff, rejected the traditional interpretation of “the flower found blooming in winter” as “a sign that winter is not final and that spring will return,” and that “human death is not the end and that the faithful will be born again into incorruption” (296).
- 5 Wendy Barker says in her *Lunacy of Light* :
 [. . .] in this poem Dickinson suggests that where as “natures” close to Naples would understand her torrid symbols, her fiery words, natures “this side Naples,” or those living in northern climates such as New England (or perhaps those inhabiting a logical world of broad daylights), simply have no idea of her enormous verbal and artistic energies. (118)
- 6 Eberwein also says :
 Dickinson’s most important symbols were circumferential ones, those dealing with any barrier or transition point within the range of human experience : natural circumferences like sunrises and

- (166)
- 7 Wendy Barker also says :
- Whether genital or linguistic, these “lips” hold a power she recognizes and acknowledges as strength derived from the dark compression of the “female” earth. And this volcano can effortlessly “ooze away” cities—or the constructor of a patriarchal, rather than “another,” sunshine.
- (118)
- 8 David Porter says :
- [. . .] certain of her finest early works deal conversely with the stoical ideal of controlled emotions and of the power to be possessed from pain. Though “I have never seen “Volcanoes”” (P-175) is one of these superior poems, it has had little critical regard. Its effectiveness springs from the sustained and perfectly appropriate adoption of the volcano metaphor to embody the idea of intense emotions under control.
- (172)
- 9 Dickinson might have written this poem, being inspired by a painting of some volcanic mountain. Judith Farr says : “[Frederic] Church’s images of Chimborazo, for example, or of the volcanoes—Popocatepet, Vesuvius, Etna—were also available to Dickinson through scientific and other painterly works of her day” (185).
- 10 Washington Irving, *Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, New Sunnyside Edition, Vol. I, New York : The Nickerbocker Press, n. d., 168. Rebecca Patterson misunderstands this poem and says :
- She [Dickinson] seems not to have remembered that it is volcanic, as she read in Irving’s *Life of Columbus*, for she does not identify Tenerife with her volcanoes and in fact describes this tropical mountain, with its light winter coat of snow, its lava, pumice, and luxuriant vegetation, as a snow-girt alp clad in “Mail of ices” with “Thigh of Granite - and them - of Steel - ” (666). It sounds suspiciously like Ruskin’s vivid picture of the Matterhorn [. . .].
- (168)
- Emily Dickinson well remembered that Tenerife is a volcanic mountain and knew that it is possible that it has snow on top in winter because its summit is 3, 710 meters in height. Patterson also says :
- It is not the actual Tenerife that interests this poet but rather the Tenerife of Mrs. Browning and others, and most especially of that magnificent Satan who “dilated stood, / Like Tenerife . . . Unremov’d”; 62 for though this mountain is spoken of as “receding” or “retreating,” the burden of her poem is that Tenerife is not yielding an inch, and she is “kneeling still” at its feet (666).
- (168)
- 11 Cynthia Wolff interprets this poem as follows :
- This image of nature as distant from human concerns and utterly independent both of God’s force and of mankind’s needs is sometimes invoked as an example of strength and endurance. (P-666) Yet the longing to personalize this eminence of ice and stone cannot be eliminated from the speaker’s diction : the mountain is “Clad” in “Mail”; it has a “Thigh” that has never been wounded by some wrestle with the Lord. The impenetrable indifference of its endurance seems a kind of fortitude, worthy of admiration ; and because the speaker knows no other way to manifest her respect, she concludes her meditation by “kneeling” in reverence—even though God’s presence is never suggested and the inanimate mountain is not equipped to recognize obeisance.
- (434)
- 12 “Buch, Christian Leopold von,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1969 Ed.
- 13 Judith Farr says of this poem :

- It is probable that Austin, had he intercepted this message when it was delivered to the Evergreens, would have thought his sister was continuing her lyrical salutes to volcanoes, far-off islands, and the mysteries of nature. But Vesuvius was one of Emily's nicknames for Sue, and "Teneriffe" is its analogue. That she was "retreating," growing more aloof toward Emily, time had shown. She was "Still"—important word—unyielding. The code here is explicit: her thighs are "Granite." The last lines with their last "still" are as servile as any Sue could wish. (146)
- 14 Eberwein discusses that Dickinson unsuccessfully performs the role of a dying person in drama in order to "fling consciousness across circumference" of "death" "from a position of safety in the circuit world" (219).
- 15 Weisbuch says of this poem as follows:
 Only the man who has suffered the despair which foreshadows the death of the grave can differentiate between type and antitype, can convincingly give assurance of recovery, of "resurrection"—if only because he knows from his own painful experience that many terrible typological "endings" will precede the final death. Oppositely, and more positively, the typology vitalizes the daily life by constantly reminding consciousness of death's proximity. (87)
- 16 As to the mentor and scholar relationship between Dickinson and Higginson, see Sewall 532-576.

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