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居於可能性：愛蜜莉・迪金森對居家空間及內部領域的特殊認知

Dwelling in Possibility: Emily Dickinson's Unique Perception on Domestic Space and Interiority

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Dwelling in Possibility: Emily Dickinson's Unique Perception on

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To my beloved family and friends,
獻給我親愛的家人與朋友們

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國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士班
碩士論文提要

論文名稱：居於可能性：愛蜜莉・荻金森對居家空間及內部領域的特殊認知

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論文提要內容：

本文主要探討狄金森如何運用獨特的居家空間，及其對於「內部」的概念，建構私人內部空間及外部領域。狄金森打破了內部及外部的既有界域，將有限制的空間轉化成意象式的家。本文第一章檢視狄金森的家庭環境，藉由生平史料研讀詩人的家人關係及詩人如何在隱居的過程中意識到自身的強烈獨特性。藉由詩人生平信件、詩作分析，及多位學者間的對話研讀，本章探討狄金森如何面對及自處於「關閉的空間」，並如何在最深處的密閉空間裡看待最熟悉卻又陌生的自我。第二章探討詩人如何從對居家空間的認知進入她的私人內部領域，並探索內部領域中的延展度及容量。藉由詩的討論來探討詩人如何解讀自身的心靈與意念，並能在自己「裡頭」構築一個家。第三章探討詩人如何從私人內部領域延展接觸外部空間。藉由自身經歷與非具象他者的相遇所累積的「內部」能量，得已「向外」伸展構出家的輪廓。即使詩人終其一生居於隱蔽的內部空間，藉由探索自身的內部領域及伸展向外的「偶遇」，並不被內部領域所困，詩人得以構築她自身的「家」。

Abstract

The dissertation explores the unique perception of Dickinson's domestic space and her cognition of interiority and examines how Dickinson makes use of the inner realm, crossing the boundary between interiority and exteriority and constructs her figurative home. The first chapter of this study examines Emily Dickinson's real home and her reclusion, providing historical and biographical study on Dickinson's familial relationships, parental influence, and the reclusion that is crucial to Dickinson's home-making at home. The second chapter explores how the poet probes into her inner realm, discovering its containing quality and extensibility, and sees it as a possibility to dwell in. The third chapter extends the examination on Dickinson's perception of interiority to an encounter with exteriority. Through the accumulations of experiences which are the source of power, the poet is able to draw a figurative home. By close readings on Dickinson's letters and poems, the study examines how Dickinson's awareness of her inner realm enables her to take the consciousness as a home. In the midst of confusions and disturbance in her life's journey, Emily Dickinson has figured out a possible dwelling space for her to reside in. She is not confined in the interior, but is strengthened to extend to draw her own picture of home.

Key words: Emily Dickinson, domestic space, reclusion, interiority, encounter

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Emily Dickinson: A Poet at Home

Emily Dickinson was born into a close family in 1830 in Amherst, Massachusetts. Besides Emily Dickinson, there w ere an older son and a younger daughter in the Dickinson family. Her father was a prominent lawyer who was very strict with his children, and her mother was a typical housewife in the nineteenth century who had suffered from chronic illness. The severity of Dickinson's father and the persistent physical weakness of the mother resulted in the poet's emotional detachment from the parents. In her youth, Dickinson learned of keeping privacy to deal with her inner turmoil, in an enclosed and quiet way. When Dickinson was growing older, her participation in social activities declined, which was a result from parental influence, especially the father. Alfred Habegger, the author of *My Wars Are Laid Away in Books: The Life of Emily Dickinson*, stated his study of the Dickinson family: "There was so much guarding, so many precautions, that even as the parents tried to create the perfect shelter they instilled a great anxiety in its very heart. For the Dickinson children, it was both official truth and heartfelt conviction that home was paradise. Yet home also oppressed; and as time passed, the children, Emily most of all, perfected the art of living separately in close proximity" (Habegger 91-2). Under the careful protection from the parents, Dickinson took up the advice to keep her distance to the outside world.

Being a nineteenth century female poet, Dickinson's reclusion was not a total surprise.[1] Being a daughter whose father was active in contemporary society;

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[1] Alfred Habegger explicates his observation on the similarity between two nineteenth century female writers, Emily Dickinson and Emily Brontë. He notices the life pattern of both women's reclusion and

however, the reclusion appeared to be contrasting. Indeed, the Dickinson house was constantly flooded with people, and was an outstanding social environment for the father:

> As a moderator of local town meetings, a twice-elected Massachusetts state senator, and a representative to the Thirty-third United States Congress, Edward Dickinson attracted to his home a steady stream of visitors, among them, newspaper editors, bishops, preachers, judges, lawyers, politicians, academics, writers, generals, and senators. (Fuss 53)

In the poet's youth, she was mostly accustomed to meeting numerous visitors and guests of the father. Moreover, she "lived her most social years, her correspondence filled with references to sleigh rides, charades, sugaring parties, country rides, and forests walk" (Fuss 28-9) when she was around fifteen. The historical study showed that Dickinson did lead a life which was close to public, and she performed much participation in these activities. However, there was an escaping nature of meeting people in the poet. Once addressed in a letter to her brother, Emily expressed her disgust and fear of "welcoming" people:

> Soon after tea, last night, a violent ring at the bell—Vinnie obeys the summons—Mr. Harrington, Brainerd, would like to see me at the door. I come walking in from the kitchen, frightened almost to death, and receive the command from father, "not to stand at the door" —terrified beyond measure, I advance to come in. . . Another ring at the door—enter W [Cowper] Dickinson—soon followed by Mr. Thurston! I again crept into the sitting room, more dead than alive, and endeavored to make conversation. (L 79)

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vocations as writers. "Brontë's motherlessness, attachment to home, elusiveness with strangers" (605) echoes with that of Emily Dickinson's own. The passage indicates that being a poet- at-home, Dickinson is not the odd one.

Though the description was expressed in a dramatic and exaggerating tone, it showed the anxiety that Dickinson experienced when confronting people. The tension she felt quietly prompted her to escape. It was a gesture of retreating from a face-to-face meeting to her most private place—her bedroom—for nearly thirty years.

Staying at home always, Emily Dickinson develops a unique style of art that conveys various messages. The works are the distillation of sharp observation and constant meditation. They are pieces that weave different moments of the poet's life. As a reader, I wonder how a recluse from the nineteenth century like Emily Dickinson creates her unique poems and what inspires her that keeps her staying fresh to her works? Moreover, as a recluse who seldom leaves home, how does she percept the most intimate space that she dwells in her everyday life, and what is a home to her? Living enclosed, Dickinson develops a perception of domestic space, and has mature knowledge of the housing structure. In her poems concerning home, words such as door, window, and room are often used as materials for her to construct her poems. In an autonomous way, the poet makes use of confining space of the house, and constructs her own interiority. The enclosed inner space thus is transformed to an expandable space which can reach to the outside. The enclosure of such private space is where the poet has no choice but to confront the most intimate presence of herself. She learns of staying with the strong presence of her inner realm, and explores to the deepest site of her soul. From the inside to the outside, Emily Dickinson accumulates, reflects, and forms her way of life. It is in the midst of her inner realm, she builds a home of her own.

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1.2 Literary Review

Most scholars who studied Emily Dickinson's reclusion probe into her mentality, and argue that the reclusion is a helpless situation due to several reasons, such as "avoidant personality disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, major depressive episode, schizotypal personality disorder, social phobia, . . . and severe agoraphobic syndrome" (Fuss 24).[2] And among the studies of Dickinson's reclusion, several scholars focus on Dickinson's home and the poet's bond to it. They explored the influence of home on Dickinson, approaching from psychoanalytic and architectural methodology.

Jean Mudge, in *Emily Dickinson and the Image of Home* (1975), took a thorough examination on the relation between Emily Dickinson and her home with a psychoanalytic approach. Providing handful introductions about the poet's home, Mudge explored Dickinson's home with two directions. She studied the substantial structure of the house, within which the function of every piece of furniture in the house was carefully examined. Moreover, she displayed the arrangement of each room with photos from the Homestead, and approached with psychoanalysis, explicating how Emily Dickinson's mentality was shaped and influenced by the house. There were two homes in the poet's life, one was where she spent her adolescent years, which was named by most scholars as "the house on Pleasant Street," and another was where she lived for nearly thirty years, being known as "the Homestead." The significance of separating two homes with different examinations lied in the

[2] There are several studies concerning Dickinson's illness. Maryanne M. Garbowsky in *The House Without the Door: A Study of Emily Dickinson and the Illness of Agoraphobia* (1989) suggested that Dickinson was a victim of agoraphobia: "the flight from fears, the need for protection within her father's house, the atmosphere of family conflict, and the desire for release from tormenting inner pressures" had led the poet unwilling to step out of the house (79). Another scholar Lyndall Gordon in *Lives Like Loaded Guns: Emily Dickinson and Her Family's Feuds* (2010) looked into Dickinson's medical records and argued that the secret behind Dickinson's reclusion was not a broken love, but was an infliction of epilepsy.

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diversified meanings and memories that the homes had to the poet.

Mudge explored Dickinson's estrangement from the Homestead with a Freudian study. In the years between 1855 and 1858, after returning to the Homestead, Dickinson struggled with the acclimation to the new home, which was also a striving adjustment to "the new self."[3] With a strict paternal expectation, the Homestead was both a literal and figurative confinement to Emily Dickinson. In a sense, the house itself was rather a prison than a home. Mudge then proposed that Dickinson's unstable identity was influenced by the instability of her home.[4] The pleasant memory of living in the house on Pleasant Street contrasted to the turmoil incidents in the Homestead. Thus, Mudge argued that Dickinson's "need to discover a locus or center" and her "search for position or status" (76) was a result of the failing of a warm home. The way to reconstruct the lost center was established by composing poetry. As Mudge indicated, the process of Dickinson's poetry-making was to build the lost self, center, and her identity as a woman. The sense of fragmentation and the smallness of the self were restored by her own poems. "Her creative inner space becomes the place

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[3] Approaching from feminist and Freudian study of women's development of socialization, Mudge explicates that home orients women toward a complete identity. In "Womanhood and the Inner Space," Erik Erikson "supports Freud's supposition that the womb, place of creation, . . . , becomes symbolized quite naturally by a house or by home. In structure and function, uterus and house parallel each other" (Mudge 94-5). Like a "womb," home with its "nurturing and pacific nature" (95) provides protection to a girl who receives a sense of security that later enables her to develop identity. Basing on the study, Mudge argues that Dickinson's belated attainment of feminine maturity is probably resulted from the acclimation to this new home.

[4] Alfred Habegger in *My wars are Laid Away in Books : the Llife of Emily Dickinson* (2002) provided detailed informations about the Dickinson family. After the family returned to the Homestead, they experienced various troubles from inside and outside. The mother's "perplexing illness" caused her "invalid" with the sickness, and the father's failure in lawsuit caused tension in the house. Then, it was "Emily's panic" coming after such turmoil in the family (Habegger 341, 345). The silence and the breakdown of the mother caused emotional detachment to her children. She was absent when the daughter needed her comfort.

where poetry is conceived, a complement to, if not a surrogate for, a procreative biological center" (111). By creating poetry, Dickinson discovered the center and the goal. "Poetic consciousness was thus at once her goal, center, and ultimate home" (Mudge 111). However, Mudge's study of Dickinson's home relied heavily on psychoanalytic examination, which limited the study on the house's strong influence on the poet's mentality and femininity. Moreover, the poetic home that the poet constructed and dwelled in was taken too certainly by Mudge.[5]

A more recent study of Emily Dickinson's house was dedicated by Diana Fuss, who focused on the housing structure and its positive influence on the poet. In her book *The Sense of an Interior: Four Rooms and the Writers that Shaped Them* (2004), Fuss justified that Dickinson was more than an odd recluse who was pathetically isolated. It was the reclusion that prompted Dickinson to take up her vocation as a poet. Examining Dickinson's preference of solitude, Fuss pointed out that Dickinson "freely chose her seclusion, opting to sequester herself in her father's house in order to assume the life of a professional poet" (24). When examining Emily Dickinson's reclusive life, critics "seemed to agree that interiority, modeled on the architectural space of tomb or prison, was the necessary prerequisite for her poetry" (Fuss 24). Emphasizing the architectural study on the Homestead, Fuss argued that the house certainly "idealized the family residence as a refuge from the outside world, [and was] a private domain dedicated to nurturing the interior life of its newly leisured citizens" (Fuss 30). As the family improved the facility of the house with a better light and installed heating stove in every room, the renovation provided "individual member

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[5] "Finding her center in creating poetry, she writes for future readers and thus, while still alive, inhabits another world which only succeeding generations will know" (112). Mudge's statement revealed to be contradictor, because I don't agree that Emily Dickinson intended to publish her poems and proclaim her vocation as a poet.

within the family to seek privacy *from* the family" (Fuss 54). Emily Dickinson was benefited by the renovation of such convenience in the house.

In studying Dickinson's preference of solitude, Fuss' aspect was different from that of Mudge's. Though agreeing with Mudge that the house was in a sense a certain confinement and suffocation from which Dickinson wanted to escape, Fuss proposed that the Homestead was not as a terrifying prison which failed to help Dickinson construct a "healthy identity" (Mudge 99). Rather, Dickinson made use of the enclosed structure of the house and took it as a fountain for composition. In the end of her study, Fuss re-examined Dickinson's bedroom and argued that it was "actually the room with the best light, the best ventilation, and the best views" (56) in the house rather than a suffocating coffin.[6] Dickinson, as Fuss suggested, was not "a helpless agoraphobic, [who was] trapped in a room in her father's house" (55) but a poet who chose to withdraw from the outside world and carried out her profession.

Fuss' study focused on the tight bond between the house and the poet. With handful of poems analyzed to explicate Dickinson's connection to her home, Fuss examined each domestic place, such as kitchen, door, drawing- room, and the poet's room which separately reflected Dickinson's use of body function in her poems, such as sight and sound. The enclosed interior of the domestic space was thus became an inward connection to Dickinson's private interior. In Dickinson's "upside-down, inside-out world, direction is radically dislocated and space itself unhinged. The inside subsumes the outside, transforming the exterior into a mirror image of the domestic interior" (Fuss, 65). Thus, the enclosed interiority, in this sense, became "an infinitely expanding interiority" (26) that broke the rigidity between the interior and

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[6] Most critics imagined Emily Dickinson's most private space—the bedroom—was a "melancholy, even terrifying, sanctuary" place where she felt "herself prematurely fitted to a coffin [that] imprisoned [her] on the inside" (Fuss 55).

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the exterior.

Both Mudge and Fuss emphasized on the poet's inseparable link with her home and house. The scholars found it necessary to separate the house from the home, highlighting the significance of the structure of the house, and they respectively studied the house from different approaches. It is true that the poet shows her mature knowledge of domestic space in the works concerning the theme of home, and the mental link between her inner realm and the home seems unavoidable. If Dickinson would never be separated with the home, regardless of how much she desired to escape from it, the study of Dickinsonian home would not be likely to overlook the examination on the structure. Though Fuss mentioned her insight of "infinitely expanding interiority" (26) that freed Dickinson from the enclosed space of the room, she closed her discussion with an examination on death as a resolution which is seen as the "last home" (L 10) by the poet herself.

Apart from the examination on the architectural effect of home, I want to focus on the figurative effect of home that Dickinson receives and transforms it to a source of her own making of home. Not omitting the strong link between the poet and her home, I focus on the act of reclusion that enables the inner realm power. That is, focusing on what is inside and what forms the inside can provide the poet with that inner power to construct a home of her own. With the power and the force within, it is possible for the poet to dwell in the midst of that most private interior—a home within. She probed into her inner realm and discovered its containing quality and expandability. The figurative home that the poet constructs is not separating the house from the home; instead, it is a home that contains, shelters, and provides possibility. By exploring the intense inner power within her, the poet makes use of the confining interiority, and extends out to draw a figurative picture of home.

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1.3 Methodology

Different from former scholars' discussions on Emily Dickinson's home, the study does not rely on theoretical examination. Focusing on poetical analysis in each chapter, I want to examine Dickinson's works which reveal her domestic concept and see how each poem is and can be related. Staying close to the poems, I also refer to the poet's letter that provides biographical background and expresses her idea of home. Other than examinations on previous studies on the Dickinsonian home, I use *the Emily Dickinson Lexicon*, which is dedicated by a group of scholars with the main project leader Cynthia L Hallen. The Emily Dickinson Lexicon was officially established in 2007, supported by Brigham Young University. The goal of the Lexicon is to "acquaint readers with biographical, historical, cultural, and linguistic aspects of Dickinson's work. It will be a complement to reference works available now in Dickinson studies. Entries in the Lexicon will document the richness of Dickinson's language for general and professional readers" (EDL). Moreover, the establisher intends to provide the potentiality of words for the analysis of the poems of Emily Dickinson:

> The guiding principle of the lexicon is description rather than prescription. The lexicon team strives to reveal rather than suppress the semantic potential of Dickinson's words and idioms. Team members work towards clear, complete, and accurate entries without deliberately favoring or excluding any particular interpretation or critical stance. The EDL is designed to be a complement to primary texts and secondary sources now available in Dickinson scholarship. We rely on Dickinson's own usage in the context of the poems as the primary authority for defining her words. (EDL)

Reference of the word definitions from the Emily Dickinson Lexicon will be shown as the abbreviation "EDL" after the explanation of the word. The frequent usage and

reference from the Lexicon demonstrates a highly close examination of the text itself. Different from theological examination on Dickinson's poem and the poet herself, the study stays focused on close reading and textual analysis which provides original and intimate responses to each piece of poetic work of Emily Dickinson.

1.4 Chapter Organization

The poems are the main support for the examination on Emily Dickinson's figurative home. Quotations from Dickinson's poetry follows Ralph.W. Franklin's reading edition of *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1999). In all references to the poems, I cite the poem numbers following an abbreviation "Fr" which stands for Franklin. After the introduction in chapter one, in chapter two, I start with four poems which relatively explicate the failing of the poet's real home, and how she transfers the reclusion as a resource to her richness of inner life. In "Houses - so the Wise Men tell me - " (Fr 139), the poet expresses her doubt of the unknown owner of the house , which causes her hesitation of going back to such home. Being unfamiliar with the house owner, the poet ultimately expresses a sense of unwillingness which makes her "trudge" on the way back home. In "You love me - you are sure - " (Fr 218), there is a painstaking process of realizing a broken relationship. Though the poem manifests the pain after an expectation, it indeed shows how home fails to serve as a comforting place for the poet whenever she needs warmth. Later in the chapter, I focus on the poet's reclusion, which enables her to face the innermost private presence of herself. Realizing there is a deep presence inside her, the poet probes into her inner realm, and discovers the power that lies inside her. Poems that support my idea in this part are "The Soul selects her own Society" (Fr 409) and "One need not be a Chamber - to be Haunted - " (Fr 407).

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In chapter three, I explore how Dickinson probes into her inner realm, which consists of heart, soul, and mind, and discuss how she makes an inner realm a home with a possibility of dwelling. The inner realm, though intangible, has a power to contain and a nature of extensibility. Poems in this chapter will respectively illustrate how the poet sees the expanding nature of her inner realm. In "I thought that Nature was enough" (Fr 1269), the poet expresses her surprise of the capacity of human nature. And in "Our own Possessions though our own" (Fr 1267), the poet links the nature of capacity with possibility which enables an expansion from inside to outside. Poem that explicates the extensibility of heart is "The Life we have is very great" (Fr 1178). It illustrates the power of a heart's extension, which can even be greater than Life. And, "There is a solitude of space" (Fr 1696) depicts the depth of soul, which is regarded by the poet as the most profound site of the inner realm. The last poem in the chapter depicts the extensibility of mind. In "The Brain is wider than the Sky" (Fr 598), the poet expresses the strong flexibility of human mind and the measurement of its capacity.

In chapter four I select four poems to illustrate Dickinson's home-making and how she draws the circumference of a figurative home. The loss of a center in life indeed grants the poet with possibility, which is as a threshold to construct her figurative home. Without the rigidity of a solid core of rules, the center can be built with flexibility. The poems explicating such idea are "I dwell in Possibility" (Fr 466) and "The way Hope builds his House" (Fr 1512). The possibilities that happen in the poet's life lie in the encountering moments. The third poem "I started Early - Took my Dog - " (Fr 656) illustrates the power of encountering moment which can be turned as a source for accumulating experiences and richness in life. As the soul, which is the core of life, is empowered with accumulations, it is able to support the figurative home. To conclude with the idea of home-making, the poem "The Props assist the

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House" (Fr 729) explicates the process of building a house. The poem is organized first with outer structure of a house, and then deals with the inner core of the house. Each poem conveys a sense of home-making that answers to the poet's question of "what a home is" (L 342b).

Emily Dickinson's figurative home is an inwardly and outwardly expanding home. It is kept secretly and carefully in privacy, and performs a high selectivity that will not be exposed easily. The home is a home within itself. Like the poems that Emily Dickinson did not intend to make known to the public, which was according to her will, she did not aim to build a home that explicitly revealed itself. By probing into her inner realm, Dickinson discovers a great possibility inside. And by the encountering moments in her life, she is able to reach out from the enclosed interior, and touches the distant exterior. Her life is not one that is confined, but is granted with possibility to communicate to the world and to those whom she loves. Though being enclosed, Emily Dickinson's inner realm has much profundity as well as secrets that cannot be ignored.

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Chapter Two

Emily Dickinson's Domestic Perception

2.1 Chapter Focus

There was a perplexing emotional link between Emily Dickinson and her home. In her reclusive life which has maintained for nearly thirty years (from 1850s to the year she passed away, 1886), Dickinson remained mostly indoors, relied heavily on the house. She avoided face-to-face meeting with people, and demanded for a total privacy. In one sense, Dickinson's home served as a secured place which provided her with dwelling space. In another sense, home was often described by the poet as a restraining prison which she expressed a desire to escape from. The perplexity of Dickinson's emotional connection with her home lied in such contradictory responses that the poet showed in her works. Home was where she "ran to" when being "frightened" (Fr 218). At the same time, home also failed to comfort her in this frightening moment because she "found the windows dark" (Fr 218). There was a sense that Dickinson felt estranged from home, and she was living like an independent individual in her house. Home materially and figuratively influenced Dickinson to form a conception of the interior space. She turned her face away from the external world, and faced inward. In the firm construction of the house, Dickinson dwelled in this private space, and learned to face the innermost realm of the interior—herself.

The significance of Emily Dickinson's reclusion has long been explored by numerous scholars. It is a way of living that shapes her perception of domestic space. In the mid-1850s, Emily Dickinson silently and slowly withdrew herself from the society, rejecting invitations of and avoiding participation in social activities. In the beginning the refusal was a decision made under a reluctant condition; however, it later became the poet's style of living in the rest of her life. The reclusion began under

two circumstances. One was Dickinson's refusal to join the religious heat and the socialization of the local church. Another was the mother's chronicle illness and Dickinson's increasing domestic responsibility. Under the shadow of the mother's illness, Dickinson played the role of an obligated daughter to share the domestic duty with her sister because of the mother's heavy reliance. As the mother's health continued to decline, Dickinson's domestic responsibilities weighed more heavily upon her and she required herself to remain at home. In a letter written in 1858, Dickinson kindly refused an invitation, saying that she could not make a visit to the friend because she could not leave "home, or mother" (L 191). The poet continued to explain: "I do not go out at all, lest father will come and miss me, or miss some little act, which I might forget, should I run away—Mother is much as usual. I Know not what to hope of her" (L 191). Forty years later, Lavinia Dickinson, the younger sister in the family, stated that because their mother was chronically ill, one of the daughters had to remain always with her. Emily Dickinson took up the role, and "found the life with her books and nature so congenial, continued to live it" (Habegger 342). She enjoyed the life which was withdrawing from the outside world, thus the reclusion was internalized as a life style. Though living mostly indoor, strangely, Emily Dickinson was trying to give her own definition of "what the home [was]" (L 342b) in her entire life as if she did not know her home at all. Home could be a protective shelter that provided for her reclusion and living; home could also be a space that restricted her and oppressed her. What is a home to Emily Dickinson, and how Dickinson responds to such a home will be illustrated in this chapter.

Home, stood as a strong shelter for Emily Dickinson, molded her comprehension of the interiority and the exteriority. Staying at home always, the enclosed space became the most intimate space that Dickinson encountered with. To explore Dickinson's understanding of the interior, there are three words needed to be

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examined: “interior,” “home,” and “house.” According to the Emily Dickinson Lexicon, the word “interior” is figuratively defined as “internal, mental, spiritual, inward.” The definitions are not different from that of the general meanings of the word. However, in the webplay suggestion by the Lexicon,[7]the scholars connect the word with that of “apartment, house, [and] within.” Thus, in Dickinsonian study of interiority, the enclosed life style is connected closely to her domestic living. The words which are highlighted in the dissertation are “home” and “house.” The definitions from the Emily Dickinson Lexicon of the two words are interrelated. The first explanation for the word “home” is “house, habitation, dwelling place, place of residence.” And for the word “house,” the Lexicon’s first group of explication for the word is “home, dwelling, building, habitation for humanity.” Both words are linked with the definitions as “haven and nest.” And the difference lies in that “house” can be related with “death, tomb, residence of the soul, and church,” while “home” is explicated as “one’s personal abode” and “mortal existence.” Since both words can be studied as “home,” the analysis of the poems in the dissertation can be given wider suggestions. Both words can be suggested as the dwelling that provides shelter, the definitions of home and house can be freed of limitation in meanings.

Indulging herself in this enclosed domestic space, Dickinson learns of staying most of the time with the profoundest site of her self. She does not confront the outside world, but chooses to explore the innermost privacy within her. Her soul stood solitarily but independently, erect but lonesome. The first half of the chapter will

[7] The use of Webplay is introduced in the Lexicon’s Introduction page: “Webplay collocations appear in parentheses after the EDL etymology. Using an electronic WordCruncher concordance program, we have systematically documented lexical ties between sets of words in Dickinson’s poems and corresponding entries in Webster’s 1844 dictionary.” Takes the word “adore” as an example, Dickinson uses the words worship, Glory, and adore in Poem Fr 717, and Webster uses similar terms in his definitions of adore.”

examine the moments when home disappoints an eager heart that needs comfort. Four poems will be examined in the chapter. First two poems explicate a sense of distance that home presents, illustrating how the poet finds home disappointing in different situations. Poems that are examined are "Houses - so the Wise Men tell me - " (Fr 139) and "You love me - you are sure - " (Fr 218). In "Houses - so the Wise Men tell me - " (Fr 139), the poet states an ideal home that provides comfort and protection. However, not knowing who the owner of the house is, the poet expresses her hesitation and doubt to such ideal home. In "You love me - you are sure -" (Fr 218), different from the general analysis, the examination of the poem focuses on the disappointing and painstaking moment that the poet experiences when finding an empty home. The second half of the chapter will examine two poems that illustrate the enclosed interiority. In "The Soul selects her own Society" (Fr 409), the poet describes a state of an enclosed soul that is not easily accessible. In "One need not be a Chamber - to be Haunted - " (Fr 407), the poet describes an experience of encountering the most private site of her self, stating an unforgettable moment of such confrontation. Both poems illustrate the enclosing status of the poet's life, and how these poems reflect Dickinson's perception of an enclosed home.

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2.2 The Failing Home

Though in the poems the poet defines the terms "house" and "home" with only slight difference, in Dickinson's personal life the difference between the house and the home seems to be greater. As what is illustrated in the introduction, the Homestead that Dickinson moved back in her adolescent years did not mentally satisfy her. Indeed, she was reluctant to move back to the Homestead, because the house on Pleasant Street brought her more pleasant memories and she spent her energetic youth there. She felt like belonging to that house but not of the Homestead. When Dickinson

went on her once and only away-from-home trip to study in Mount Holyoke Seminary in 1847, the house stood as a comfort and warmth for the homesick girl. She longed to go back home, when she was confronting a huge struggle over the seminary's strict religious principles and teachings. Once mentioning her love to this home in a letter to a friend, Dickinson wrote: "I'm afraid I'm growing *selfish* in my dear home, but I do love it so, and when some pleasant friend invites me to pass a week with her, I look at my father and mother and Vinnie, and all my friends, and so no—no, can't leave them, what if they die when I'm gone" (L 86). It was in this house that Dickinson defined her home as "a holy thing" (L 59).

The significance of the moving back lies in the girl's remark of a definition of home. According to Alfred Habegger, "The move brought confusion or collapse to [Emily Dickinson] and Mother" (Habegger 341). As Dickinson reported in her letter, she was "lost in the melee" and was "out with lanterns, looking for" (L 182) herself. The memory wasn't a pleasant one. Seeing a proverb "home is where the heart is" shown in a hackney on moving day, Dickinson made a sardonic correction: "I think it is where the *house* is, and the adjacent buildings" (L 182). Though the correction might be a result after a tiring travel, it provides hints of how Dickinson is having in mind with the definition of "home." Home with warm memories seemed to replace home that provided shelter. The house on Pleasant Street took the role of a symbol of home, providing perhaps a little bit of the definition of home; the Homestead was a shelter that provided a place for the poet to recede from the outside world. The design of the Homestead did bring influence on how the poet perceived interior space. During the chaotic time to acclimate herself to the new home, Dickinson had an inner struggle over living in the house that appeared remote to her. She quietly formed an estrangement to home. She often recalled the old days with her close friends in adolescent years (which she spent the years in the house on Pleasant Street). The

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result of such nostalgia and her resistance to the Homestead caused her not able to "erase the earlier inscape" of a stable home that she once had (Mudge 80). "Her search for a true home is unsatisfied, even through the act of composition. She begins the poem speaking of her home; she ends it fleeing from the house" (Mudge 82). Emily Dickinson's preference to stay inside the house became stronger after her mother's increasing illness. "As was always the case during Mrs. Dickinson's illnesses, the poet's domestic responsibilities had become much heavier . . . The odd parallel between Mother's not leaving her chair and Emily's not going out leaves us wondering how much the daughter truly wished to 'run away'" (Habegger 342). She was reluctant to move to her new home; at the same time, she would not leave the house.

The house that does not provide her with comfort and link result in a remoteness and distance. Just as the poem "Houses - so the Wise Men tell me - " shows, the poet was hesitating about going back to this home:

> "Houses" - so the Wise Men tell me -
> "Mansions"! Mansions must be warm!
> Mansions cannot let the tears in,
> Mansions must exclude the storm!
>
> "Many Mansions," by "his Father,"
> I don't know him; snugly built -
> Could the Children find the way there -
> Some, would even trudge tonight!
>
> (Fr 139)

The first stanza begins with the poet's reception of her knowledge of "houses" from a group of the wise men. The houses, as the poet continues to describe, is a place of comfort and warmth. The "mansions" must not let "the tears in." Moreover, the house

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that the poet heard of has a strong protection that it must "exclude the storms." The usage of two exclamations in the second and the fourth line of the poem highlights the tone of a confirmation. The house, as the poet describes, is with certain qualities. It has warmth, comfort, and protection. The description of the house reveals a high expectation of the dwelling place in the mouth of the wise men.

However, in the next stanza, the tone of the poet shifts from firmness to reservation. The numerous houses owned by "his Father" appear to be distant and remote to the poet, because the poet doesn't "know him." Thus, even though the poet continues to describe the houses as "snugly built," the hesitation remains. The poet raises question in the end of the poem, addressing her doubt. She wonders if "the children" can "find the way there." The children, being limited with grammatical rule of definite article "the," belong to someone. Then, does the poet doubt the children's finding way back to this house which belongs to the father? Moreover, "some" of the children even will start to "trudge tonight."

The poem reveals the poet's reserving attitude to this house that belongs to an owner who appears to be distant and unfamiliar. Though the poem can be analyzed from a religious perspective, explicating "the Father" as God, it also shows Dickinson's tough attitude towards things that she doubts. From a religious perspective, the Heavenly home shows Dickinson's doubt towards such ideal and warm home. Studying from the word itself, which is explicated in the Lexicon as "abode, domicile, and shelter," the poem shows another reserving attitude. The poet simply does not totally believe an easy way to this warm home. She is afraid that the children are not able to find the way home. Moreover, even if some do find the way, they meet difficulties along the way when returning. There is a hesitation, which an ideal home is not easily approached and be dwelled.

Another poem that expresses an even more severe disappointment is "You love

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me - you are sure - ” (Fr 218). Unlike majority studies that examine the poem as a complex friendship between the poet and her sister-in-law Susan Gilbert Dickinson, the poem examined here also suggests how an empty dwelling can disappoint and bring heart-breaking experience:

> You love me - you are sure -
> I shall not fear mistake -
> I shall not cheated wake -
> Some grinning morn -
> To find the Sunrise left -
> And Orchards - unbereft -
> And Dollie - gone!
>
> I need not start - you’re sure -
> That night will never be -
> When frightened - home to Thee I run -
> To find the windows dark -
> And no more Dollie - mark -
> Quite none?
>
> Be sure you’re sure - you know -
> I'll bear it better now -
> If you’ll just tell me so -
> Than when - a little dull Balm grown -
> Over this pain of mine -
> You sting - again!
> (Fr 218)

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The famous poem is known as one of the Dollie poems that Emily Dickinson writes to her sister-in-law Susan Gilbert Dickinson. In the beginning of the poem, the poet expresses a statement of doubt. She wants to make sure if the addressee truly “love[s]” her. Though uttering doubt, the poet continues to address to herself that she must not fear any mistake or misunderstanding of the fact she is to find out: if there is love. The

word "love" is specifically explicated by the Lexicon. Other than some general definitions of love, the word here especially implies to "care for, entertain a great affection for, regard with esteem." Different from that of the affection that is related to heterosexual and homosexual love, the word highlights the care with high esteem. The love is not how the love that used to be defined. Other than the implication of Susan Gilbert's nickname which is given by the poet, the word "Dollie" is suggested by the Lexicon as "comfort" and "company of another." Thus, to examine the poem from different aspect, the poem reveals a sense of comfort that the poet is asking for.

Continuing to express her fear and uncertainty, the poem expresses a sense of wound. The tone is full of disappointment and pain. Discovering in "a grinning morn" and finding the "Sunrise left," the poet indicates that the "Orchards" are being "unbereft." The contradictory description of the morning expresses an opposite feeling, leaving the morning not a smiling one but more a chilly one. The plant "Orchards" here not only indicates that of "apple tree," but is explained as "cultivated land" (EDL). Finding the sunrise gone, the poet describes this "cultivated land" as being abandoned. The word "unbereft" is explicated in the Lexicon as "sorrowing, grief struck, and empty." Even more severely, the poet discovers that "Dollie," which means "comfort and company of another" here is "gone." The heart breaking moment in the poem becomes more intense in the next stanza.

Discovering her comfort and the company are gone, the poet continues to say, that she "need[s] not start." The word "start" is defined by the Lexicon as "come into motion, startle, [or] to begin a trip or journey to a certain destination." The tone of "you're sure" becomes firm and stately. The narrator then recalls a painful former experience, that when being "frightened," she runs from home to "Thee." Home here does not serve as a comfort; instead, when the poet confronts fear, she chooses to run to another. However, the destination that the poet wants to reach disappoints her as

well. She finds "the windows dark, And no more Dollie." While seeing the vacant house with no light and no comfort, the poet wonders if there is truly nothing. The question mark in the end of the stanza expresses a painstaking confirmation. The bitterness in the end of the line expresses the pain of being abandoned.

Realizing the situation of being bereft, the poet ends the poem with a distancing tone. The statement in the beginning of the stanza expresses a sense of warning: "Be sure you're sure." The trust between the poet and the addressee is broken now. The pain is caused, and the distrust is formed. The wound that this addressee causes is so great that the comfort can only last for a short moment. In the ending lines, the poet expresses the disgust of such pain. When the little comfort is growing to cover the pain, the poet says, "You sting again!" The poet does not reveal who or what this "You" stands for; however, it represents the old wound which is caused by the broken relationship still exists. Though the painstaking broken relationship between the poet and the addressee is significant in the analysis, the failing of a home cannot be ignored. When feeling upset, the poet does not rely on her own home, but she decides to run to another place for comfort. Though her destination fails her as well, it is ironic enough to see how home fails to comfort the poet. The preposition "to" not only suggests a directional function, it is also suggested by the Lexicon as "with the purpose of" and "arriving at." It is not hard to imagine how big the expectation the poet has in mind to "run to" another place for comfort. And thus the pain of disappointment and abandonment is so great that the wound is difficult to recover.

Both poems shows how home fails to serve as a comfort and a protection to the poet. Although in the first poem the poet does express the splendid and protective home, the unknown owner of the home makes the poet trudge and doubt such ideal home. In the second case the poet does not directly express a failure of a home; however, it is introduced in an implicit way. The pain is there, but home cannot

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provide comfort; the resident dwells in the home, painfully feeling bereft and abandoned. Perhaps just like the home in reality, Dickinson dwells in her home, struggling with her inner turmoil, and feeling forsaken.

2.3 The Enclosed Home

The preference of avoiding meeting people face-to-face was formed in Emily Dickinson's youth. Some historical researches even show that the withdrawal from the society probably happened earlier before the family moved back to the Homestead. The poet's early anxiety of meeting people started when the family was still living in the house on Pleasant Street, which was often flooded with people. Due to the father's hospitality, the house was used as an open environment. And recorded in Lavinia Dickinson's diary, the sisters were often asked to greet the father's guests, and they seemed to be troubled by such requirement.[8] Once addressing to her brother Austin Dickinson in a letter, Emily Dickinson expressed her disgust and fear of "welcoming" people:

> Soon after tea, last night, a violent ring at the bell—Vinnie obeys the summons—Mr. Harrington, Brainerd, would like to see me at the door. I come walking in from the kitchen, frightened almost to death, and receive the command from father, "not to stand at the door" —terrified beyond measure, I advance to come in. . . Another ring at the door—enter W [Cowper] Dickinson—soon followed by Mr. Thurston! I again crept into the sitting room, more dead

[8] As Fuss's background study of Emily Dickinson's house on Pleasant Street shows, Emily Dickinson did live a social life in her youth. The house was often visited by numerous visitors. "As a moderator of local town meetings, a twice-elected Massachusetts state senator, and a representative to the Thirty-third United States Congress, Edward Dickinson attracted to his home a steady stream of visitors, among them, newspaper editors, bishops, preachers, judges, lawyers, politicians, academics, writers, generals, and senators" (Fuss 53).

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than alive, and endeavored to make conversation. Father looked round

triumphantly. (L 79)

The sisters constantly had a feeling that the house was being invaded because of the sudden visits, which appeared to be annoying and bothering, especially to Emily Dickinson. The tension of confronting people thus became another reason to prompt the poet to retreat to her private space. After the family moved back to the Homestead, Dickinson's refusal of social participation became stronger. While the outside world was ongoing with changes and development, Dickinson was engaging in her self-immersing composition world. And she did not intend to make her voice be heard.

Yet, Dickinson did not reject the society, neither the contemporary culture. Indeed, it was culture that empowered her to grow stronger in making her own decision. Roger Lundin, the author of *Emily Dickinson and the Art of Belief* states, "cultural forces also worked upon Dickinson to keep her from joining the church. One of the most powerful was the conception of the self that she had already begun to cultivate in adolescence" (54). She would if she found the answer that could convince her witty mind. She was encouraged by contemporary culture trend[9] to think and to create. Emily Dickinson took the idea and used her own imaginative interpretation on thinking about God, which later formed as a supporting idea to cultivate her own thoughts. Moreover, the nation at the time urged the people to take on their right of

[9] In 1850, another voice which was diverse to the religious teaching was Ik Marvel's (Donald G. Mitchell) novelty of imaginative idea. Marvel's Reveries of a Bachelor encouraged young men and women in mid-nineteenth century to spend time on "day dream and reveries" which help them develop independent interpretations of "thinking about God, truth, and the self" (Lundin 59). Reverie cultivated imaginative minds, which served as an outlet for Dickinson's young contemporaries and their enthusiasm for literature.

liberty and exercise such right of choosing and making their own decision.[10] Under the influence of numerous flourishing ideas, it was not surprising that Emily Dickinson could choose to be one of those "lingering bad ones" (L 36). Religious stimulation was one factor that prompted Dickinson to withdrawal more completely into her own world, and she merely enjoyed living in such seclusion. Not participating the rush of the religious wave in the family, Dickinson "concealed her distress from her family" (Lundin 71), and quietly rebelled against it. The silent and solitary situation enlarged the poet's realization of her isolation, which gradually led her to the discovery of her "poetic calling" (Lundin 65). "However homeless she felt at home, Emily nonetheless found within her family's home a shelter of inestimable value, as she set out to map the uncharted territories of consciousness" (Lundin 74). She became a good example which "inner realities outweighed the whole of the outside world," and "by forsaking the social world and its allotted roles" the poet finally released the intensity of "the infinite possibilities of the inner life" (74).

In a famous poem "The Soul selects her own Society" (Fr 409), the poet expresses a retreating soul who rejects the outside world. In the poem, the soul who has the strong will to "select her society" reflects that of Dickinson's solitary soul:

> The Soul selects her own Society -
> Then - shuts the Door -
> To her divine Majority
> Present no more -

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[10] Lundin applied the poet W. H. Auden's saying to explicate the contemporary collective conviction that "for the principle that liberty is prior to virtue, i.e. liberty cannot be distinguished from license, for freedom of choice is neither good nor bad but the human prerequisite without which virtue and vice have no meaning. Virtue is, of course, preferable to vice, but to choose vice is preferable to having virtue chosen for one." Thus, as Lundin proposed, when Emily Dickinson was wrestling with "decisions about faith, marriage, and life in public, Dickinson was hammering out an understanding of the self that was unique to her but also reflected crucial changes in American culture" (55).

Unmoved - she notes the Chariots - pausing -
At her low Gate -
Unmoved - an Emperor be kneeling
Upon her Mat -

I've known her - from an ample nation -
Choose One -
Then - close the Valves of her attention -
Like Stone -
(Fr 409)

In the beginning of the poem, the poet makes a strong statement about the soul who has a firm choice: to select her own society. The word "society" denotes a community, nation, and a broad grouping of people having common traditions, institutions, and collective activities and interests.[11] However, other than general definitions, "society" is explicated in the Lexicon as "shared existence, interaction, friendship, and expanse" (EDL). This self-ruling soul selectively makes her interaction with the outside world and even decides whether to share her existence, then, with a fast gesture, the soul "shuts the Door" to the majority. Without hesitation, the highly selective soul is determined to reject the "divine Majority." The Majority, with the implication of the mainstream in a certain community or a larger group of union, is described by the poet as "divine." Strangely, the poet does not capitalize "divine," but emphasizes "Majority" with a conflicting indication. The word "divine" denotes deity, God, or a god, suggesting that something or someone divine can be distinctively absolute. The soul firmly rejects the dominant majority with a gesture of enclosure, and "Present[s]"

[11] In referring to the definitions of the words, I apply *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, which has history over one hundred and fifty years, in print and "now online, Merriam-Webster has been America's leading and most-trusted provider of language information" (Merriam Webster).
"society." *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster, 2011. Web. 8 May 2011.

no more. The word “Present,” which can be taken as a verb and an adjective, both indicate a condition of existence, exposure, and accessible. The soul closes the door, and dwells in her own space, and not appearing and even count as “existing.”

After the firm attitude of the gesture of “selecting,” the soul stays “unmoved” in her dwelling place. Though staying inside, the soul pays attention to what is happening outside this enclosed world. She notices there is a “Chariot” stopping by her door, making a visit. Along with the shut door, the Gate, which is described as “low,” implicates an oxymoron. The door which is closed by the “unmoved” soul shuts off the access. Though the Gate is “low,” seeming to grant an accessible entrance, is indeed firmly closed. The two adjectives “unmoved” and “low” thus contrast to each other. Even an “Emperor be kneeling upon her Mat,” the soul would not open the door. The repetitive usage of the word “unmoved” suggests the firmness of rejection that the soul presents to the outside world. Physically speaking, the Gate is low; however, the undertone within the introduction of the adjective “low” is pregnant with pride. The visitors can stop by the soul’s residence, but the entrance is not opened.

The closing stanza suggests the soul’s uniqueness. However, the subjective “I” in the beginning of the line appears to be problematical. The previous two stanzas show a highly autonomous soul who selects her own society, rejecting the majority. The insertion of the “I” seems to interrupt the narration by shifting from a third person narrative to a first person narrative.[12] The pausing with dashes inserted in the first

[12] In *Emily Dickinson: Monarch of Perception*, Domhnall Mitchell notes the problematic interruption of the subjective “I.” Mitchell focuses on the variorum versions of the poem (including the edited versions of the poem and the handwritten versions) to argues the relationship between the poet and the speaker, and the “poem’s appearance and its contents” (238). Here Mitchell sees the appearance of the “I” as mirroring “nearly exactly traits that exist in the author” (238), which suggests the “I” is Dickinson herself. The participation of the “I” voices another authority, and the “I” can switch the total

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line of the stanza suggests two indications. The soul, who is known by the "I," is "from an ample nation."[13] The passage, if read reversely as "Choose One/ from an ample nation," makes firm the poet's strong will in decision. However, if the passage is read with the given order, the origin or the identity of the soul is still unknown. The soul, withdrawing herself from the nation and "selects her own society," stands out her individuality among the well-populated nation. She only accepts one. The word "Choose" is differently suggested by the Lexicon as "accept, receive, desire." Limiting her choice of "accepting one," the soul closes the door again, and shuts her attention. Among all the explications for the word "Valves," the meaning of "one-way outlet" (EDL) shows the soul's enclosing nature. The door, which can only be accessible with one way, reflects the dweller's fastidiously selective personality. The poet ends the poem with a metaphor, describing once again that the soul's state is hard as "stone." The poem reflects the poet's highly selective way of life as well. Dickinson's exclusive soul sees the outside world, but chooses to stay inside and enclosed, rejecting the openness to expose herself. She is the one who withdraws from the outside world, living with solitude.

The solitude grows more intense, and there is such feeling of estrangement to the world and to her self.[14] Dickinson sees her self as a stranger living in the world, with

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perspective of discussing the poem. Different from Mitchell, I see the interruption of the "I" as a strengthening of the poet's strong will. It is "I" who ultimately chooses the retreating soul as a dwelling space, and at the same time the selective and independent soul reflects the poet's self-reliant life.

[13] The word "nation" is not capitalized in the poem.

[14] I separate "her" and "self" in order to explicate the intimate strangeness of the self which is highlighted in the chapter. The chapter's usage of the separation of "her" and "self" is only to show the difference between the speaker and her awareness of "the self." Emily Dickinson's usage of the self with capital "S" is also noticed by Mary Cappello, the author of the essay "Dickinson's Facing Or Turning Away." Cappello in the essay states that "unlike the work of contemporary lyric poets, the aim of Dickinson's art wasn't self-expression, but an exploration of self with a capital S – the production of a Self through art but also an inquiry into its conditions of possibility" (580).

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the world being strange to her as well as she once mentions in a letter: "All *we* are *strange* —dear—The world is not acquainted with us, because we are not acquainted with her" (L 203). Alfred Habegger, a prominent Dickinson biographer who provides scrupulous details of Emily Dickinson's life, proposes that "no matter whom she addresses, Dickinson spoke of herself as living in exile, prison, destitution, [and] wilderness" (488). The estrangement both to outside and inside her enclosed world enables her to deal with the interior realm. Realizing there is an irreconcilable self inside her, Dickinson is prepared to confront that stranger who lives within: "We meet no Stranger but Ourself" (L 348). She is willful to stand alone among the religious wave, not being washed by the force coming unto her. However, when she encounters the perplexing coexistence inside her inner realm, the anxiety and fear is what has to overcome. The more she attempts to run away from the forcefulness coming inside, the more she discovers her smallness and frailty in the face of the intimate stranger.

In a poem "One need not be a Chamber - to be Haunted -" (Fr 407), the poet expresses the experience of being frightened by the vivid existence of self, in one's own chamber. In this most private space of one's own, the poet encounters the deepest existence that dwells inside her:

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> One need not be a Chamber - to be Haunted -
> One need not be a House -
> The Brain has Corridors - surpassing
> Material Place -
>
> Far safer, of a Midnight Meeting
> External Ghost
> Than its interior Confronting -
> That Cooler Host.
>
> Far safer, through an Abbey gallop,
> The Stones a'chase -

Than Unarmed, one's a'self encounter -
In lonesome Place -

Ourself behind ourself, concealed -
Should startle most -
Assassin hid in our Apartment
Be Horror's least.

The Body - borrows a Revolver -
He bolts the Door -
O'erlooking a superior spectre -
Or More -
(Fr 407)

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In the beginning of the poem, the poet states her idea of a haunted experience. It happens in a Chamber or a House. Differently, the experience of being frightened here happens in another space. The haunted experience happens in an enclosed and private space of one's mind, which is being highlighted by the poet. Such horrific experience happens in "the Brain" that has "corridors." The description of the brain reflects Emily Dickinson's well-use of her knowledge of domestic space. The passages in the brain connect each room, showing the spatiality of the human mind. Such intangible house even "surpasses" that of material ones. Then, the poet points out the time when the horror experience takes place. Moreover, this horrific feature that frightens the poet is even more severe than "External Ghost." Encountering in midnight, the poet expresses this inner confrontation of one's self, which is a "cooler Host." The word "cooler" is differently suggested by the Lexicon as "more detached and more passionless." The line here reflects Dickinson's estrangement to herself, that this self appears to be "more detached" and more indifferent.

Then, the poet compares such horrific experience of encountering one's self to two other experiences: meeting with an external ghost in midnight and being chased

by “Stones” in a haunted sanctuary. The stones, being explicated by the Lexicon as representations for “grave, crypt, and mausoleum,” highlight the terror that the poet intends to express. The second comparison of the encountering experience shows an even higher level of horror, because the fright cannot even be compared with encountering “one’s self in Lonesome Place.” The word “lonesome” suggests the “having feelings of solitude and being “secluded from society” (EDL). In such privately enclosed space inside one’s own, the peot describes the most intense horror she could ever experience. What’s more, the frightening experience is highlighted when the poet is “unarmed” to meet the self. The word “a’self,” being used by Dickinson, is explicated as “true identity, own soul, and inner being” (EDL). Confronting the very being that dwells inside her makes her chill. A “concealing” soul that hides behind “Ourself” is what appears to be more terrible than a true “assassin hid in our apartment.”

The poet does not reveal how the horror experience will end. It is “the Body” that “borrows a Revolver,” completely shuts down the door. But the gesture of holding a handgun paused, and the poet shifts to describe “the Body’s” next gesture. It overlooks a “superior spectre,” which indicates that the Body chooses to ignore the presence of a greater horror. The word “spectre” is explicated by the Lexicon as “terror, object of dread, thought, prospect that perturbs the mind.” Overlooking this higher existence of horror, the Body shuts the door and stays totally closed. The experience of meeting the most terrific feature is the one that cannot be escaped. Since one’s soul lives inside, it is not possible to run away from the presence of this intimate stranger. The poem reflects Dickinson’s conception of that inner being of the soul, and shows how the poet describes and sees this intangible spirituality. Would Dickinson ever be frightened in her own house, and that the poem reflects how an enclosed house can appear to be so terrifying? The solitude, though appears to be

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frightening sometimes, indeed inspired Dickinson to develop a unique observation. As the poet's sensitive perception to her surrounding ripens, she turns the observations into an exquisite art of poetry:

> 'The fret of temporal servitudes did not exist for her. There was an exquisite self-containment about her from her very relinquishment of all part in outward event.'[15] This assessment catches the independence of spirit that distinguished the poet from grim Austin and harried Vinnie. (Habegger 603)

Dickinson's independent spirit was contained well in her enclosed home, which provided a secure space where she could withdraw from public to enter a realm of her own.[16] What attracted the poet to contain herself so well could be the power of thoughts that has long fascinated her. She would cost all her life to grasp the thoughts that came to her, and learned to confront with the impact these thoughts brought. She spent most of her time pondering in front of her small writing table overlooking views from her window. The habit of meditation was recalled by the poet's sister: "[Emily] had to think—she was the only one of us who had that to do."[17] The Dickinson family prized privacy much, and they "lived like friendly and absolute monarchs, each in his own domain" (Fuss 55). Under the family impact and the atmosphere the

[15] The quotation is from Bianchi, Susan Gilbert Dickinson's daughter. She recalls the memory of her aunt Emily Dickinson of the poet's late fifties.

[16] The Dickinson biographer Alfred Habegger examines Dickinson's Homestead from the poet's relative: "This dark hallway, known in the family as the Northwest passage, was a nondescript space between the public front rooms and those where food was stored and prepared. Because it had five doorways, one of which opened to an unlit staircase, it offered multiple possibilities for "access or escape," as Martha Bianchi cannily put it" (539). Habegger's passage shows that Dickinson is making good use of her house's structure.

[17] Diana Fuss argued that Emily Dickinson's reclusiveness from outer world and independence at home did not seem unnatural. Rather, the author agreed with Lavinia Dickinson's description of her sister's withdrawing from social life as a "logical outcome" since Emily Dickinson was the only member in the family who "had to think," and was her "main job" (55).

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Dickinson family created in their house, it was not surprising that Emily Dickinson preferred to stay at home, "select her own society" and "shut the door" (Fr 409).

Thus, owing to the family's nature, Dickinson cultivated a strong individuality, which presents an independent soul as well as a sensitive character. Her relationship with the family members was simultaneously intimate as well as distant, strongly-bond and separately-independent. Thus, she developed a complex bond with her home. The strong individuality allowed her to deal with her emotion and inner matters on her own. Home shaped Emily Dickinson, and at the same time, the poet was constructing a home that shaped itself as well.[18] On constructing the essence of home, the dweller played the role of establishing her notion of what a home was. For Dickinson, she constructed it with the awareness of consciousness. She once mentioned in a letter that "consciousness is the only home of which we *now* know" (L 591), suggesting that the awareness of consciousness and the existence of thoughts appeared to be reliable to her, for she "knew" it. Living in seclusion, she made a deep discovery to the private chamber of her inner being, and explored this inner realm with strong curiosity. She meditated there in her enclosed space. And all the gatherings from the inner power later constructed an enclosed interiority where the poet would be able to dwell in a figurative home within. She stayed enclosed, and stayed with her self. Taking the advantage of the sheltering home to shape her figurative home, Emily Dickinson crossed over the rigid boundary of concrete walls to make a home of her own.

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[18] Edward Casey in his book *Getting Back Into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* explicates that "all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home" (175). Without the dweller, the structure of the house is merely a construction. With the dweller living inside, the structure can be cultivated the homeness of a home. Thus, the relationship between the house and the dweller is interrelated.

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Chapter Three

The Inner Realm

3.1 Chapter Focus

Emily Dickinson lived in a house that well sheltered her, and there she demanded a personal privacy and enjoyed a reclusive solitude. In Dickinson's nearly thirty years of reclusion, she avoided a face-to-face meeting with people, withdrawing from the outside world. In the days which she kept others away from her private world, she turned the turmoil to the source and power of creating.[1] Living as an independent monarch of her private room, Dickinson spent most of her time cultivating thoughts and ideas. As a poet who seriously treasured every thought and idea, Dickinson developed a unique comprehension of the inner realm, which consists of heart, soul, and mind. As an active thinker, Dickinson appeared to be intolerable to those who did not treasure thoughts. She once wondered: "How do most people live without any thoughts. There are many people in the world (you must have noticed them in the street). How do they live. How do they get strength to put on their clothes in the morning" (L 342a).[2] Dickinson emphasized the significance of thought that she maximized as "strength" to start a day. Moreover, thought that came from strong self-consciousness was what made of Dickinson's independency and strong individuality. In a letter she expressed a confidence of the strong consciousness that

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[1] During 1855 to 1858, the Dickinson family experienced several incidents that casted shadows of pressure on the family members, including Emily Dickinson. The family, according to Alfred Habegger's description, was facing with "[m]other's perplexing illness, Loring's failure, Norcross versus Norcross, the Panic, the A&B fiasco" (347). The turmoil happening (which was one of the factor) in the family caused Emily Dickinson's withdrawal, which led to a consequence: "for Emily, a final and decisive acceptance of a vocation" (347).

[2] The quotation was from T.W. Higginson, who was the co-editor of Dickinson's first two collections of poems. The passages were a dictation of the interview between the poet and Higginson.

can even stand as one's home: "Consciousness is the only home of which we *now* know" (L 591). The early exploration of consciousness strengthened Dickinson's perception of her own soul as a being, a certain existence which dwelled and located in her heart and mind. Moreover, the consciousness, being the presentation of one's being and inner condition, was seen as a place that could be dwelled in. Like her dwelling in a private and total exclusive space of her real room, Dickinson made a discovery to the deepest chamber of her inner realm, and explored this interior realm with strong curiosity.

The intangible inner realm, though invisible, made itself vivid through the power that stimulates the poet's daily life. She treasured the vividness of thoughts, and expressed wonder for those that she could not grasp: "Is it oblivion or absorption when things pass from our minds?" (L 342b) The question, though appeared simple, showed Dickinson's treasure of thought, that she showed a curiosity of the existence of thoughts. Things that passed from the poet's mind were taken seriously that she addressed to her friend such question in the letter. Where would these thoughts go? Would they be absorbed by the mind, or would they be forgotten instantly? And would they ever come back? Such questions can be found in Dickinson's letters in which she often discussed with and required response from her close friends. Later, as Dickinson gradually realized her poetic gift, she poured her liveliness all into poetry. She learned to "stay with herself" (L 418), and recorded the feelings the touches of the ideas that come to her. There was a wild world in her mind, and the poet urged herself to learn to take hold of these jumping thoughts. Sometimes they were so vivid that she could not ignore the presence of these ideas and flowing thoughts in her brain. When the thoughts came, she clearly knew them, felt them, and lived with them.

The letters Dickinson wrote to her intimate friends showed how she constantly

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examined her thoughts and ideas, and was eager to share the thoughts within words. The letters before 1862 were mostly about Dickinson's daily life and trifles among family members, which functioned as a way to keep warm of relationships and connection. After 1862, Dickinson started to share more insights about life and her thoughts, and sometimes attached her poems within the letter to her receivers. Poems became a tool for her to explicate her ideas, whether to organize her thoughts or to express strong feelings in an implicit way.

The inner realm of Emily Dickinson consisted of her heart, soul, and mind. The interior of the poet is often taken as resources and themes in her poems. The word "realm," defined by Emily Dickinson Lexicon, is suggested as "home and usual residence" (EDL). Moreover, in the eye of the poet, the inner realm exists with a structure, which reflects Emily Dickinson's knowledge of domestic space. It is not difficult to find out, in a list of Dickinson's poems, she designed and described her inner realm by presenting architectural structure. Previous scholars who probed into Dickinson's interrelation between the interior and the mental were Jean Mudge and Diana Fuss. Mudge explored Dickinson's concept of the interior by analyzing her poems, and she concluded that Dickinson's heart remained stout despite that she was being confined in her father's house. She gradually found pleasure living reclusively. Fuss extended Mudge's exploration of Dickinson's love of privacy to the study of her relation with domestic space. Fuss proposed that Dickinson was living out her enclosed life actually as "an infinitely expanding interiority" (26) which enabled her to stay in the enclosed space (which was her bedroom) that provided her with "opportunities for intellectual growth" (59). That is, by the power of writing, the poet at home indeed expands the enclosed interior to the outside world. Being contained in physical form of body, the inner realm is limited as that of Dickinson's body was contained in her house. Fuss proposed that the finite interior (the soul which is

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confined in the body), though being confined, can infinitely expand from the inside, breaking the boundary between the internal and the external.[3] Both scholars probed into this infinite expanding nature of Dickinson's interior, and they came to agree that the inner realm of Dickinson's mentality could not be formed without Dickinson's strong bound with her house. The structure of the house shaped Dickinson's spatial concept, which was reflected on her poems.[4]

Between the discussions of Fuss and Mudge, "the capacity of the mind" (Mudge 164) is what I aim to further extend and explore. This chapter will examine the containing quality of the inner realm, which supports Dickinson's dwelling in her inner realm, and ultimately exists as the making of a home. With a nature of such extensible flexibility and containing quality, the capacity of the inner realm makes Dickinson's figurative home built with possibility. Different from Mudge who led her discussion of Dickinson's relation with domesticity to psychoanalysis and Fuss who emphasized the strong influence of domestic space on Dickinson's mentality, I focus on the extensible quality of Dickinson's inner realm, and see how the poet sees it as capable as a figurative home.

The poems analyzed in this chapter separately examine the inner realm of heart, soul, and mind. To begin with the discussion on the containing quality and the extensibility of the inner realm is "I thought that Nature was enough" (Fr 1269) which shows the poet's concept of human nature capacity. For Dickinson, the physical

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[3] According to Diana Fuss, Emily Dickinson's spatial concept seems to challenge the norm of notion. "While the classical pairs of interior/exterior and privacy/publicity typically converge in historical investigations of the domestic interior, Dickinson's work is important for the way in which it realigns and rethinks these philosophical tropes. For Dickinson, interiors are public places; exteriors are private retreats" (25). Fuss introduced Dickinson's concept of domestic space with the practical illustration of the house structure of Dickinson's.

[4] Diana Fuss pointed out different insight from that of Mudge's. She not only explored "the interior of Dickinson's poems, but [also] the poetry of Dickinson's interiors" (38).

container of human body is not enough. The intangible inner realm which she cannot touch or see appears to be better container for abstract things. The factor that makes the inner realm a better container lies in the potentiality of possibility. In another poem "Our own Possessions though our own" (Fr 1267), the poet reminds her readers to remember the quantity of possibility. Furthermore, poems that explicate the extensibility of heart is "The Life we have is very great" (Fr 1178), which indicates the strength of extension of a human heart. The poem that depicts the depth of soul is "There is a solitude of space" (Fr 1696). The soul, which is revealed in the end of the poem, displays the poet's idea of a profundity of the inner realm. The last poem that depicts the extensibility of mind is "The Brain is wider than the Sky" (Fr 598).

3.2 The Containing Quality of the Inner Realm

The unique perspective of the inner realm developed by Emily Dickinson is strongly connected with her notion of domestic space. Emily Dickinson treasures the vigor of thought, and regards the thought as resources of power for constructing the richness of life. Her inner realm, along with her house, is examined together poetically and materially. Heart, soul, and mind together contain the feelings and emotions, life experiences and all other abstract ideas. The theme concerning the inner realm is often taken by Dickinson for poetic composing. Poems concerning the theme of space are often linked with that of domestic space. The inner realm is structured by the poet as a space that can be entered, closed, and can even process a visual activity (through the presentation of poems). Moreover, the inner realm is presented with the measurement of depth and the quality of expansion. It seems that in the eye of the poet, this inner realm of heart, soul, and mind is formed as a place, which is another space within human body. Indeed, the poet is annoyed by the fact that the invisible mentality is contained in the physical body: "I am constantly more astonished that the

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Body contains the Spirit -" (L 643). If it is a fact that one should already know that body contains spirit, it seems the poet does not think in this way, and she is "constantly astonished" by such fact. Then, what will appear to be more natural to her?

As an organized structure, every organ in a body is endowed with a function. The physical fact of the body is certain. But the notion that the inner realm has structure is formed by the poet who often raises questions concerning her inner realm, and who often tries to gather some answers to this question. With her stout heart and vigorous mind, Dickinson often questions herself about those improbable things in life. As she once said, "It is strange that the most intangible thing is the most adhesive" (L 515). The more it is beyond comprehension, the more it is attracting to the philosophy-possessed poet who has to think, in a great amount of time. Learning of the limitation of human life, Dickinson captures every thought and idea that ever appears in her mind. Once addressing in a letter to a friend with many questions, the poet does not seem to be embarrassed: "Are you willing to tell me? If I ask too much, you could please refuse—Shortness to live has made me bold" (L 352). She realizes the finitude of lifetime, which makes her "bold" to figure out the riddle of life. In probing the secret of life, the poet discovers something great of human nature, which is of its potentiality of containing quality:

> I thought that nature was enough
> Till Human nature came
> But that the other did absorb
> As Parallax a Flame -
>
> Of Human nature just aware
> There added the Divine
> Brief struggle for capacity

The power to contain
Is always as the contents
But give a Giant room
And you will lodge a Giant
And not a smaller man
(Fr 1269)

The poem is illustrated in a comparative tone which shows the interrelation between nature, human nature, and the Divine. In the beginning, the poet declares a statement that describes her discovery. The contentment of knowing that the nature is enough becomes insufficient comparing to human nature. Though we do not know how nature can be enough for the poet (by what sense does it sustain human being), the statement serves as a hint for next object of category: human nature. It seems that once nature is being compared to the quality of human nature, it is no longer sufficient or satisfactory. There must be something in human nature that astonishes the poet, for she affirms nature as "no longer" satisfactory. Was it the contents that human nature has? The question is not solved since the poet quickly shifts her attention to "the other." The transition word "But" brings out another category, which "did absorb as Parallax a Flame." Another object for comparison is raised, and it absorbs. The word "absorb" is defined by the Lexicon as "preoccupies and totally involves." The word "parallax" is defined as "apparent displacement" in the Lexicon. When human nature came, it came to "preoccupy" as something of apparent displacement. And while human nature is "aware," "the Divine" is added, manifesting itself as the third immensity for comparison. The Divine here "struggle[s] for capacity," suggesting the addition of the Divine has difficulty. The word "capacity" in the Lexicon is defined as "size, dominion, and sphere of influence." The poet under such explication indicates that the Divine struggles for further influence in the space which is shared with nature and human nature. However, the struggle to earn a dominion is only "Brief." The poet

soon makes another comment about the essence of containing capability: “The power to contain is always as the contents,” which is to say, the intensity of the power depends on how it contains the contents. The power of containment is the same as its own compositions. Thus, the poet reaches her conclusion of the discussion on capacity: “But give a Giant room, and you will lodge a Giant and not a smaller man.” The discussion does not lead to a certain result; however, the poet’s conclusion shows a pattern of thought: the greater to contain, the greater to become.

Though the containing ability appears to be without limit, it is indeed restricted. If the capacity of the contents depends on its power to contain, then, the capacity is limited by how much power there is in the containing space. Another statement of the given room is oblique and questionable as well. If the room is given, perhaps, by the owner who provides the room, it should be limited by the providence. Thus, in spite of the fact that the giant room is to lodge a huge content, it is restricted by the authoritative power that provides the room. Does the poet know the limitation of the power to contain and the given room? Presumably she knows the fact of such pre-dominion of restricting nature in nature, human nature, and the Divine, she seems unaffected by it. The second transitional word “But” displays the poet’s confidence in the giant room. There is a limitation. The word “giant” is defined not only as huge, but is suggested by the Lexicon as “force and strength.” By asserting the transitional word, the poet expresses her confidence in such a huge room, that there will be a “strength” to lodge a giant and “not a smaller man.” The confidence here reflects what the poet mentions in the letter to her friend, that “Shortness to live has made me bold” (L 352). Knowing the restriction in human life only makes the poet gather strength to live the most out of life. The good news is, as long as the space is given huge, there will not be smaller capacity. Though the physical form of human body is limited and small which will one day decay, the inside of human body can be given a “giant room.”

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The poem shows Dickinson's attitude to the limitation of life, and how she responds to it. The inner realm, though requiring to be lodged in human body, shows possibility of capacity. The profundity of human nature is what the poet longs to explore.

Keeping the restriction of human life and the providence of given space, the poet turns the limitation to a reminder for further possibility. The form is confining; but the content can reach to greater capacity because there is possibility inside. In a short poem which consists only four lines, the poet shares her philosophical wisdom and profound thoughts:

> Our own Possessions though our own
> 'Tis well to hoard anew
> Remembering the dimensions
> Of Possibility
>
> (Fr 1267)

The reserving tone of "our possession," in the eye of the poet, can be "hoard anew." The property of men, though being kept with fixed form, can be stored with a new form. The word "hoard" in the Lexicon is suggested as a definition other than general explanation. It can stand as "treasure in heart" when it is taken as a figurative meaning. Moreover, the word "anew" is seen differently in the Lexicon as well. It can be defined as "in a new form." Thus, the definition from the Lexicon provides further analysis of the line, suggesting that the possession can be "treasure in heart with a new form" regardless of the possession's fixity in storage. The positive tone of making a statement on storing possession in a new form comes from the poet's belief on possibility. Ending the poem with a reminder, the poet says, "remembering the dimensions of possibility." The word "dimension" is separately defined by the Lexicon as "whole space" other than magnitude, measurement, and quantity. The

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word indicates the poet's idea about possibility, which is great and magnified. Here the poet is suggesting that, when the possession is stored afresh in heart, the magnitude of possibility can be great. The pattern of thought echoes with the previous poem that "the power to contain is always as the contents" (Fr 1269). Though keeping the owned possession which might always be the same, one can restore the possession with a new form in heart. The gesture of refreshing and restoring continues, because there is such possibility with great dimension.

The containing quality of the inner realm is a source of power with possibility. Dickinson knows the force that possibility can create, and sees the intangible as strength for limited life. To contain, as the body that contains the soul, or as the house that covers its residences, is a gesture that comprises much potentiality. Emily Dickinson probes into life's profundity, and she discovers a great fountain lying in the deep locale of her inner realm. The inner realm is not accessible, that is to say, it is enclosed within by the owner with a total privacy. As Dickinson once says, "I do not care for the body, I love the timid soul, the blushing, shrinking soul; it hides, for it is afraid" (L 39). Being afraid, the soul hided away from being exposed. The gesture of "hiding" suggests a retreating direction from somewhere, and Dickinson chooses to retreat from outside world to a most private space: her room. She kept distance from people, and even with her acquaintances. The core of her heart and soul was not to be captured and rumbled; the depth and the immensity of the inner realm were deep and hiding. She did not like to be tamed, but preferred to keep her "love of danger" and sailed on the sea of the imperceptible. It was perhaps she was "often foundering at Sea," but often found herself "ostensibly on Land" (Fr 1187). She knew the limit of life, just as she was tightly bound to her house. Like living in the house, the soul is contained in an "obtrusive body" (L 39). However, the strength of the inner realm cannot be imprisoned, and it is the source of the vigor of life.

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With the house's providence of a shelter, Dickinson kept herself away from the crowd.[5] The enclosure of the space appeared to be more natural to her, and with its containing ability, the interior caught her attention. To "lodge a giant room," suggesting a huge ingredient can be contained inside the room. Moreover, the poet is indicating that something great processes only in the inside. The poem shows the pattern of Dickinson's logic and philosophy of keeping significance inside instead of displaying to the outside. As Habegger suggested, the gesture of keeping-in was just like Dickinson's "forty fascicles and ten unthreaded 'sets' which she created from 1858 through 1865" (353). Dickinson secretly collected them in adulthood, and the great work "eventually held some eight hundred poems" (353). It was "until her death, no one realized how carefully she had recorded her poems or how many there were" (353). The work of poems or "the manuscript books" were a "private hoard" that only the poet herself knew "what the massive project meant to her" (353). She was working all the way on her own, and intended to keep all the "giants" to herself. If it weren't Lavinia Dickinson, the younger sister of Emily Dickinson, who later changed her mind not to follow Emily Dickinson's testament to burn the fascicles, we would not see how much the poet was pouring herself into poetry. Lavinia Dickinson did "as requested" to burn her sister's "lifetime accumulation of letters, an act she later regretted" (Habegger 628). "But the huge and surprising cache of poems in small sewn bundles seemed too precious to burn" (Habegger 628), and after few years, the poems of Emily Dickinson were published.

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[5] As Fuss suggested, Emily Dickinson was "aware of her spatial surroundings" (23). Living most of her life in the house, Dickinson was not a recluse who did not know of the outside world. However, she "[preferred] to remain largely unseen within the interior chambers of the family homestead, [and] inhabited space in uncommon ways" (23).

3.3 The Extensibility of the Inner Realm

The inner realm not only has containing quality but also has expandability. It allows the inner realm to reach out to the external realm, and makes more possibility. The life is “deep and swift” (L 1031); however, Dickinson has another category of greater existence in mind. The inner realm that has long fascinated her and the strange intimacy that consists of her heart, soul, and mind is what the poet is fascinated to explore. In addition to the theme that is related domestic space, it is not difficult to discover a lot more themes concerning heart, soul, and mind. Among the themes that depict various mental conditions of the inner realm, the expandability of the inner realm is what catches the attention. The expandability enables the inner realm to extend to the outside world, which opens for a possibility to make happen Dickinson’s home-making. When the internal reaches out to the external, the enclosed interior no longer is confined with fixity. The crossing out from the enclosed inner realm breaks the rigid boundary of physical confinement, which allows the encounter to happen. The inner realm of heart, soul, and mind is not ranked with order or priority. The focus will only be on the expandable quality of the three.

In a poem “The Life we have is very great,” the poet expresses her fascination about the expandability of the heart. The poem shows the expandability of a human heart, and again expresses the possibility within such expandability. The heart, though invisible, is full of power of force:

> The Life we have is very great.
> The Life that we shall see
> Surpasses it, we know, because
> It is Infinity.
> But when all Space has been beheld
> And all Dominion shown

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The smallest Human Heart's extent
Reduces it to none.
(Fr 1178)

In the beginning of the poem, the poet starts with a hierarchical statement about two lives: the life we are leading "now" and the life that "we shall see." The life we have now is described by the poet as "great." However, the life that shall be seen "Surpasses it." The two "its" here indicate to different lives. The first "it" which is introduced after the verb "surpasses," refers to the "life we have now." The second "it," which is placed after subordinating conjunction "Because," refers to "Infinity." The hierarchy between two lives seems to be reasonable; however, there is an undertone behind the lines. The word "Infinity," which is defined as a state with no beginning and no ending, has a condition of endlessness and changelessness. Since Infinity is an existence without definite bound, the term has the extent and the quality of continuance and endlessness. "Infinity" in this sense, displays a certain ambiguous status that begins from nowhere and ends in nowhere. Seemingly limitless and boundless, the life of Infinity surpasses the life we have currently. However, the word "surpass" denotes another meaning in the Lexicon with contrasting implication. Other than the general definitions such as "excel, exceed in value or importance, and weightier," the Lexicon offers an opposite definition. The word "surpass" denotes "be worse," "lower something's value," and "make something less important" (EDL). The definitions thus here indicate that the poet probably has something different in mind. The life of Infinity, is not so attractive and glamorous as it is. Life without changing and ending is indeed headless and boundless. Having no beginning and having no termination, the life of Infinity can end up leading to nowhere. With the undertone hidden behind the previous statement, the poet proceeds to reveal her arrangement of the hierarchy.

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Whether the life we shall see is greater or “less valued” (EDL) than the life we have now, the poet seems to be unsatisfied with the statement that “we know.” She proposes her argument with the transitional word, introducing her own opinion. When “all Space has been” seen and “all Dominion [be] shown,” the moment presents the power of perception. Space, a term that has the quality of time and distance, is perceived by human comprehension. Similarly, Dominion, which is only valid when being owned, presents a power and an authority. The quality of the two terms seems to be great and infinite; however, there is limitation in them. The power of Space and Dominion is only released when they are owned. The philosophical argument comes to an end when the poet states her idea of the power of the human heart. She praises the “extent” of a human heart, despite of the fact that the heart is the “smallest.” Infinity is something that beyond comprehension, and it is of “known and unknown” (EDL). The suggestive explanations the Lexicon provides, indicates that the poet, probably after a deep contemplation on life, has arrived to her conclusion. When all the “known and unknown were being considered” and “all Dominion shown,” it is “reduce[d]” by the extent of the Human Heart. To make a better parallel with that of Infinity, Space, and Dominion, the poet intentionally emphasizes the Human Heart by presenting the two words “human” and “heart” with capitalization. That is to say, the fleshly and the smallest human heart can even reduce the greatness of Infinity, Space, and Dominion. The unknown of Infinity and Space is not what captures the poet’s mind, because she does not praise the greatness of the two. The word “extent” has explications such as “space, capacity, period of time” (EDL), indicating that the heart is seen by the poet as endowed with quality of capacity. The third “it” can indicate to “The Life that we shall see,” “Space” and “Dominion.” The terms are presented in “all” as singular nouns. The poem expresses how Dickinson forms her idea of the potentiality of human heart and makes a bold conclusion that a heart’s extent has a

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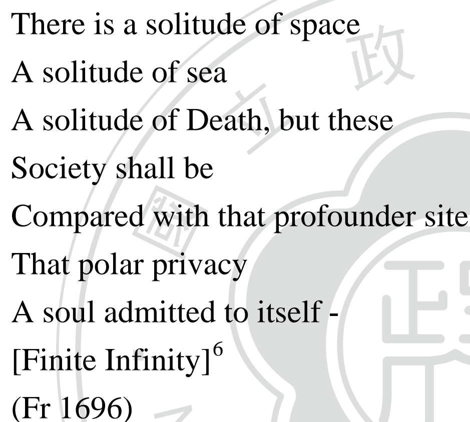
force which enlarges the inner realm with potentiality and possibility.

Soul, which is another significant composition of the inner realm, is often emphasized in Dickinson's mentality poems as well. As Dickinson says, she "loves the timid soul" (L39) which hides away from the public, and she prefers to keep the most privacy. The deep site of the hiding soul makes itself a most hidden place of the inner realm. In a poem concerning the measurement of solitude, the poet expresses the immensity and the profundity of the hidden soul:



> There is a solitude of space
> A solitude of sea
> A solitude of Death, but these
> Society shall be
> Compared with that profounder site
> That polar privacy
> A soul admitted to itself -
> [Finite Infinity][6]
> (Fr 1696)

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The poem begins with an introductory sentence: there is a solitude of space. The word "solitude" is defined in the Lexicon as "distance" other than general definition such as loneliness. The introductory sentence then leads to two other objects of ideas which also indicate immensity: sea and Death. Three objects that the poet takes to link with this solitude aim to explicate the idea of greatness. Among the three immensities, space and Death are abstract ideas which are beyond measurement. If space and Death can be put with measurement of distance, the poet indicates, such distance would be so huge that to proximately survey the extent is impossible. Comparing to space and

[6] Franklin' version of the poem diverges from that of Johnson's. He deleted the last line "Finite Infinity," but the reason and the choice of such decision is not explained in his note. Neither scholars mention Franklin's diversified version of the poem.

Death, two abstract ideas which are invisible, sea is a natural landscape which can be seen and explored. However, the immensity of sea is still being explored, which is still immeasurable.

The great distance of "space," "sea," and "Death," under the introduction of the poet, is making a sense of greatness that is beyond measurement. But, with a transitional word inserted soon after three huge comparing objects, the poet introduces another object which is even greater. This object, not revealing its details yet, is put into comparison by the poet with a demand. The "society shall be compared with" a "profounder site" deep down in somewhere. The profounder site is located at "polar privacy," indicating the depth of such location. The word "polar" is defined in the Lexicon as "solitary and remote," which is different from general definition of "opposite and polar region." Moreover, the word "privacy," other than general definitions such as "seclusion and secrecy," is defined differently in the Lexicon as "isolation and solitude." Something that is hidden deep in this solitary site is even remoter than that of space, sea, and Death. "A soul admitted to itself," finally confessing and revealing itself.

This private soul, which is located in a "profounder" position, is deeper than the immensity of the largest geographical domain of sea and the most intense uncertainty of Death. Moreover, it is being compared with the immeasurable concept of space. By describing the profound site of the soul, the poet again illustrates her idea of the containing quality of the inner realm. The soul, being kept in deep solitary site, indicates the depth of the inner realm. The last line of the poem is not adopted by the Franklin version, but is shown in the Johnson's version. The last line, which indicates a contradictory concept of the soul, shows Dickinson's strong philosophical logic. As the poet was formerly astonished to know that the body contains the soul, the last line well describes the idea of this "finite infinity." The soul, which is locating in a solitary

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site in restricted physical form of the body, "admit[s] to itself." The strong isolation of this private soul is thus highlighted by Dickinson. The poem explicates Dickinson's love of the secrecy, and also shows a solitary soul that is being hidden in an isolated site. Life is like a secret, that Dickinson herself would exclaim if she unveiled the secret of the life: "Had we the first intimation of the Definition of Life, the calmest of us would be Lunatics!" (L 492) The intimacy that Dickinson was searching for was something that would astonish her. The great secret of life that is attracting the poet to figure out can actually turns her to be "Lunatics." Secret, life, and soul, under Dickinson's logic of thought, share the same quality: intimacy and remoteness seem to be one of the two sides. It is compatible as well as contradictory.

The containing quality of the inner realm is also shown when human beings process their thinking in mind. In the last poem "The Brain is wider than the Sky" (Fr 598) I aim to explore the containing quality of the last composition of the inner realm, which is the mind, to explicates Dickinson' s spatial perception:

The Brain - is wider than the Sky -
For - put them side by side -
The one the other will contain
With ease - and You - beside -

The Brain is deeper than the sea -
For - hold them - Blue to Blue -
The one the other will absorb -
As Sponges - Buckets - do -

The Brain is just the weight of God -
For - Heft them - Pound for Pound -
And they will differ - if they do -
As Syllable from Sound -

(Fr 598)

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The poem is presented with a symmetrical organization, and the subject in the poem is manifesting: the Brain. In the first stanza, the poet compares the Brain with “the Sky.” Different from that of general definition of the Brain as “intelligence and understanding,” the Lexicon specifically highlights the definitions of the word in this poem as “consciousness, center of thought, and seat of the soul.” The definition of the Brain by the Lexicon indicates what the poet has in mind is not merely an understanding and intelligence of human mind, but a more mental perspective for her choice of word. Thus, the comparison starts from a mental perspective to examine this human mind. The comparison includes two dimensions that explicate the extensibility of mind: the Brain has extreme width and depth.

As the poem starts, the Brain, which stands as “consciousness, center of thought, and seat of the soul” is “wider than the Sky.” Additionally, the Lexicon explicates the word “wider” differently as “comprehensive, absorbent, all encompassing,” showing a huge extensibility and containing quality of human mind. This center of thought in human mind even has more comprehension and absorption than that of the Sky. Since the Sky is a sphere that does not have specific range and measurement, the poet is putting the mind’s encompassing quality to limitless. Then, the poet makes an illustration for her idea of such limitless brain. Problematically, the single subject in the beginning of the poem turns to the plural, for the poet “puts them side by side.” If the Brain is explicated by the Lexicon as “center of thought” and “seat of the soul,” the plural form of the subjects here became meaningless. Would the poet probably think of many thoughts in the Brain, that she makes an intentional mistake? These limitless thoughts, when putting side by side, display the extensibility and containing quality of the inner realm. The word “contain” has strong explication for its containing quality. It is defined in the Lexicon as “enclose, have capacity for,” which suggests that the Brain not only loads but also hides. The Brain “encloses” these side-

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by-side thoughts and all the other things being contained inside, and keeps them "with ease." What is the poet having in mind with an addressee "You" being put in the end of the stanza? Would the person being kept well in the memory of the Brain?

In the next stanza the poet compares the Brain with "the sea" with another dimension, the depth. The consciousness and thought in the mind is "deeper than the sea," showing that the mind not only has containing ability, but also has the depth just like that of the soul. By putting these thoughts of the mind "Blue to Blue," they will "absorb" one another. The absorbing quality of the mind is like "Sponges," gathering all the things inside. Moreover, the amount of loading is as "bucket," which indicates a large amount of water and overflowing. The two stanzas are being arranged with symmetry and is coordinating. However, with slight difference of punctuation such as the dash which is firstly introduced after "the Brain" in the first stanza, the poet expresses a difference in tone. Like talking in a wild exclamation of the width of the Brain, the poet inserts a dash before she makes the comparison. The dash, functions as a pause, is expressed as the wonder and amazement to the extensibility of the Brain. In comparison, the statement in the second stanza appears to be more calm and direct, showing a more steady tone of the poet.

After two comparisons are made, the poet moves on to the third stanza. In the ending paragraph of the poem, the poet states an equation instead of a comparison. Here in the third stanza, the poet sees the Brain as "just the weight of God." The problematic statement once again raises question: what would be God's weight then? If one lifts the thoughts in the mind "Pound for Pound," these thoughts will "differ – if they do." And the poet ends the line with a metaphor for her statement: "As Syllable from Sound." The metaphor indicates another idea of the thoughts. These thoughts are all different. Though they can be put side by side, and is able to absorb and contain each other, each thought weighs differently. Just like the weight of God cannot truly

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be measured, the weight of thoughts cannot be measured either. Each thought weighs differently and has different meaning just like that of the syllables. Thoughts come out separately from mind, which is just like the syllables coming out from sound. The line shows Dickinson's emphasis of human mind, which can be equally significant with God. The poem shows Dickinson's clever comparison to manifest her idea of the extensibility of mind. And by the poem she expresses her confidence in human mind, which is as important as that of God.

What is precious about the inner realm is its containing quality and extensibility. With the width and depth inside, the internal can gather all the possibilities. The significant human nature with a possibility inside can extend to the external with power and force. When a tiny human heart extends, it can even reduce the great life and space to none. When the mind thinks, it can think of any possibility. When the inner realm contains, it contains great power. Once the inner realm extends from inside, it turns the enclosed interiority to an expanded exteriority. Life is so great that the secrets and riddles of life is what Dickinson aims to explore. She is a thinker and a poet. To choose to stay at home, Dickinson makes a choice that is not helpless but optimistic. Just as the poet once says, "[t]he power to fly is sweet, though one defer[s] the flying, as Liberty is Joy, though never used" (L 498). The liberty is always at hand, but for her, there is always liberty for composing and thinking, and if the owner of such liberty would want to fly away from the rigidity of life, she is already freed from the confinement. Like the deferred joy, she never uses such liberty to escape from the rigidity that in a sense confines her. She stays and takes hold what she has, the strong inner realm that no one can easily access to, and deals with that enclosed interiority. Dickinson learns of accumulating intense experiences in that enclosed space of inner realm, and when the time comes, she "launches" herself with the experiences she has accumulated in life, like a Vesuvius at home.

Staying at home is Dickinson's way of learning life. It is a philosophical lesson of dealing with the innermost realm inside her. The confinement of a domestic life is not a dead-end situation forcing her to helplessly stay at home but a possibility for her to experience a fixed life in a different way. As she once said, "To know of your homes is comforting. I trust they are both peace. Home is the riddle of the wise – the booty of the dove" (L 737). As a keen thinker, staying at home solving that "riddle of the wise" does not seem so pessimistic. Though home is also a defining question for Emily Dickinson, it stands as treasure as "booty" for the dove which is resting safely in its nest. As Dickinson slowly discovers the power of the heart, soul, and mind, she gathers more strength inside. When the richness and the strength of the inner realm come all together, they force out to extend to the external, crossing the rigid boundary between the inside and the outside. Emily Dickinson's interior spatiality is not a total enclosed and confined one, but a lively extending and reaching out one. She uses her unique domestic spatiality to draw a picture of home that enables her to dwell in. She rests in the inner realm, and treasures opportunities to reach out and speak to the world.

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Chapter Four

The Circumference of Home

4.1 Chapter Focus

The influence of the domestic structure which directs Emily Dickinson's cognition of her inner realm is presented by the poet's works. Emily Dickinson's concept of domestic space so far in the dissertation encircles each other. From the outer structure of a real house of Dickinson, to the inner reflection of housing structure, this chapter aims to focus on the circumference of home drawn by the poet. Home can be a shelter where she hides away from meeting the public; home can also be a restraint that she longs to escape from. Home, according to the poet's cunning correction of a proverb, is "where the house is" (Habegger 341), and home is also "so far from home" (L 441) that the poet felt herself distanced from home. Emily Dickinson's home is supporting as well as disappointing, and its influence on Dickinson cannot be overlooked. In previous chapter I examined Dickinson's conception of inner space, and explored the extensible quality of such internal realm. Many of the poems which are described with spatial arrangement reflect Dickinson's domestic insight. Like a builder, the poet constructs a place that best describes a realm with no intangible access. Her poetic works, like an access to the poet's thoughts, explain how her conception of inner realm becomes concrete and comprehensible. She probes into the intangibleness of inner realm, discovers a possibility of it, and eventually makes it a home. The home-making process of Dickinson's is an ongoing accumulation of what is called "circumference." To accumulate the experiences in life is to enable the happening of circumference. It is an expansion as well as an extension of a force that goes inwardly and outwardly with the growing of accumulation of experiences. In the last section of Emily Dickinson's home, I would like to probe into

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the circumference of a figurative home which is drawn by the poet and discuss the making of home that the poet finds the space of inner realm a possibility to dwell in.

Before we go straightly into the exploration of connections between Dickinson's figurative home and her home-making, the word "circumference" should be examined and defined. The word "circumference" is generally known as definitions such as the perimeter of a circle and the external boundary or surface of a figure or an object. However, in Dickinsonian study, the word "circumference" is differently defined according to the Emily Dickinson Lexicon. The Lexicon sorts the poet's word-use in her poems, and makes a category of definitions which can mainly be divided into two layers of meanings—general meaning and figurative meaning. The Lexicon displays the explanation with the numbering of English letters. From definition A. to F., the explanations are of general meanings such as "circuit, the earth's periphery, boundary, edge of the sky, atmosphere which surrounds the earth" (EDL). The general meanings all bound to a sense of limited line and circuit, and an area which is circled and determined. From definition G. to M., the explanation extends to figurative meaning such as "experience, finitude, reality, exact dimensions of life, spherical container, line connecting a single being to an experience in a certain place, expanded perception of life, secret realm, hidden core, inner vision, center of being" (EDL). From general meanings to figurative meaning introduced in the Lexicon, the word "circumference" displays numerous suggestions. The word can suggest circular line that forms a circle, and it can also mean the expanded perception of life. The Lexicon shows Dickinson's particular use of the word which varies from extent to another extent, and is later used as a metaphor for Emily Dickinson's inner life.[1]

[1] William R. Sherwood, the author of *Circumference and Circumstance: Stages in the Mind and Art of Emily Dickinson*, explores the word "circumference" with the examination of Dickinson's significant moments in life when she met the deep abyss of inner crisis and the love affairs she underwent.

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In this chapter several definitions of "circumference" explicates Emily Dickinson's making of home, that she draws the circumference of her figurative home by the accumulations of life experiences. When expandable inner realm extends, it reaches out to encounter with the outer objects that terminally consists of the essence of life. Gathering the moments of encounter, the figurative home is drawn with the ongoing life experiences. At the moment, the lack of a center due to the unstableness of Dickinson's home is built since the circumference is itself "center of being" (EDL).[2] The lack of a center contrasts to that of Mudge's idea of Dickinson's search for an ideal home in order to build a complete self. I propose that the lack of a center for home indeed opens up a possible way for Emily Dickinson to make a home out of herself.

In this chapter I select four poems to illustrate Dickinson's home-making and how she draws the circumference of a figurative home. The poems not only display the poet's comprehension of the intangible, but also show how she explains her understanding with vivid description. The analysis of poems starts with the illustration of a lost center of the figurative home in which the center is a vacancy with possible entrance. If Dickinson's failing home in real life causes the unstableness which The loss of a solid central point of a home ultimately opens a possibility for the poet to draw a picture of home. The poems explicating such idea are "I dwell in Possibility" (Fr 466) and "The way Hope builds his House" (Fr 1512). The third poem "I started

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Sherwood approaches Dickinson's inner realm with her love poems, poems about death, eternity, and struggling relationships. By examining Dickinson's personal life and her poetry during her turmoil moments, Sherwood explores Dickinson's different phases in life and her accumulating of life experiences so as to understand the life of Emily Dickinson.

[2] Mudge's argues Dickinson's "need to discover a locus, or center . . . and [a] search for position or status" (76) is indeed a mental condition of lacking a core status. The unstableness of her self-identity, according to Mudge, is deeply influenced by the resistance and the distancing of the family's newly settled home (the Homestead).

Early - Took my Dog -" (Fr 656) illustrates the power of encounter which serves as a source for accumulating experiences in life. As the soul, which is the core of life, is empowered with accumulations, and is able to support the figurative home. To conclude with the idea of home-making, the poem "The Props assist the House" (Fr 729) explicates the process of building a house. The poem is organized first with outer structure of a house, and then deals with the inner core of the house, turning the analysis from the literal to the metaphorical. Each poem conveys a sense of home-making that answers to the poet's question of "what a home is" (L 342b).

4.2 Emily Dickinson's Figurative Home

Being uncertain of what a home could be, Emily Dickinson once inquired a friend in a letter for an answer: "Could you tell me what home is?" (L 342b) The ideal home could no longer serve as a satisfying answer to the poet; rather, she yearned for an answer that could define what a home could be. When she was a young lady, the proverb that "home is where the heart is" (Habegger 341) could not satisfy the heart of this young adult, and she corrected the phrase to "home is where the house is" (Habegger 341). The warmth of her childhood memory in the house on Pleasant Street at this moment seemed irreplaceable. And for years she did not see the Homestead as her home, instead, she saw it as her father's house.[3] Her comprehension of home was quietly changed as time proceeded. The house that was full of her happy memory in

[3] Alfred Habegger raises his observation on Emily Dickinson's complex feeling about the Homestead. Soon after the family moved back to the Homestead in 1855, Dickinson's mother became seriously ill, and the poet herself experienced panic and fear. It was not directly linked that the house caused such great breakdowns on two women; however, Emily Dickinson's unwillingness of this old house was observed and proved. "Not only did the two Emilys [Emily Dickinson's mother and Emily Dickinson herself] take little pleasure at returning to what the younger one rightly termed 'our father's house,' but the older one's oddly timed collapse caused the poet to take fright at herself, gearing her own 'machinery [would] get slightly out of gear' and that someone might have to 'stop the wheel'" (341).

youth did not seem so strong and vivid any more comparing to the tight bond between her family and her. If the logic of "home is where the house is" is still strongly convincing, the house itself can well satisfy the poet. However, it does not seem that the house itself encompasses the essence of home. It is the dweller who lives in the house defines a home.[4] If she did not take this new house as her home, was she going to define another house where she could call it home? After all she was not living in mere imagination and immersed herself in picturing her figurative home. She literally dwelled in the house of her father, but her heart and mind could not be comforted. Though we are not examining Dickinson's home from a patriarchal perspective, it is necessary to take a look at the paternal influence on the poet.

Though the father-daughter relation is remote, the daughter did feel lost and astonished when Edward Dickinson died in 1874. "Home is so far from Home, since my Father died" (L 441). The patriarchal influence did exist and leave its influence to Dickinson. If she could totally withdraw from her home and build of her own, she would not feel lost because of the loss of a patriarchal owner of the house since she was the builder of her own home. The tight family bond influenced Dickinson's sense of public space. However, the patriarchal influence was not on the building of the house itself, but on the way the daughter perceived publicity and privacy. Edward Dickinson was a man who emphasized the importance of family privacy, to an extent that when he passed away, he did not intend to write a will because of his concern that

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[4] My idea of the difference between a house and a home comes from Edward Casey's *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World.* The book explores the philosophical connection between men and place, and home is the very first *place* that men meet with. The essence of home comes from the cultivation of its dwellers who make a home meaningful. As Casey explicates, "the most intense interior cultivation—in both senses of interior—is found in the home" (175). If we want to start building any structure, home is the most intense structure that forces us to learn of an interior. "Without such intimate cultivation, a house or apartment or hut remains a bare habitation, a built place in which inhabitation has not yet occurred and home has not arisen" (175).

the family privacy would be disturbed. "A will would have involved an inventory and a distribution supervised by a probate judge in accordance with state law, all of which would trespass on the privacy of the Dickinson compound" (Habegger 563). After the father died, Emily Dickinson lived a total private life almost of her father's, in memory of him. "She could not stop thinking about 'Father's lonely Life and his lonelier Death,' or 'resist the grief to expect' him" (Habegger 566). Keep thinking of her father who "devoted to the public good and terminating in loneliness" (Habegger 568), Dickinson rejected the public and led a lonely life herself as well.

In this lonely life, there was probably a new concept of home being thought of, a new picture which was drawn with imagination, and an idea of how frail this ideal home could be. A home Dickinson pictured in mind and searched for was dreamlike, in a letter she once mentioned, "[t]he picture of the pretty Home is very warm and vivid, and we half 'touch' it too, unless softly forbidden—not with mortal Fingers, but those more tidy, mental ones, which never leave a blot—" (L 925). The picture of a fair home, though only exists in her mind, is "very warm and vivid." The tone of describing the pretty home is cautious, as if the poet carefully approaches the home. And she intends to "half touch" the home with those mental fingers instead of the flesh ones for fear that the pretty home will be blotted. The ideal home appears to be so perfect that the owner will not want to stain the image of it. Although the dream-like image of the ideal home is "warm" and brings certain comfort to Dickinson, she does not seem to long for the perfect home. As in another letter, Dickinson once cunningly mentioned an imperfect choice over an orderly house: "'House' is being 'cleaned.' I prefer pestilence. That is more classic and less fell" (L 318). In fact, Emily Dickinson's figurative home appears to be imperfect. The awkward phrase shows the poet's naughty personality, with which she prefers venturesome to unchanged. "Pestilence" is what Dickinson prefers instead of being

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cleaned. The house of pestilence is, as Dickinson awkwardly puts it, "more classic and less fell." Is she hinting that a house being cleaned would be more dangerous, since the word "fell" suggests dangerous and terrifying? The house which is "less fell" because of its pestilence is probably suggesting that an imperfect house will be less possible to hurt and disappoint. Using the term of a disease and a noun that suggests something harmful, Dickinson shows a choice of an imperfect home with flaws, which in her logic is less possible to hurt and dissatisfy.

If home is full of "pestilence," it breaks the rigidity of order and discipline. The letter suggests Dickinson's personal idea, and echoes with Dickinson's "love of danger" (L 39) in previous chapter. Comparing herself to the others, Dickinson addressed to her friend that she would prefer a life of danger to a life of security. Moreover, she expressed herself as living a life which was beyond the norm: "I am pleasantly located in the deep sea, but love will row you out if her hands are strong, and don't wait till I land, for I'm going ashore on the other side—" (L 209). Her choice over a steady life was the one in a "deep sea" where she would dwell with pleasure. Stating her knowing of such difference with other people, the poet hinted that she was going to land ashore "on the other side," which was an opposite direction to that of others. She lived in a constraint of solitude in her entire life, but her soul was not confined.

A home which the poet prefers to is the one that is imperfect. With the quality of such imperfection, Emily Dickinson's figurative home is indeed with a possibility of construction. If the house in her real life can only provide her with a mere shelter, in a figurative picture she can build one of her own. The possibility does not give a complete definition, nor does it confine. Dickinson's choice of dwelling is something figurative and suggestive. The home with possibility opens up for more opportunities. In the poem "I dwell in Possibility," Dickinson endows the house of possibility with a

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concrete structure, fulfilling its essence with capacity:

> I dwell in Possibility -
> A fairer House than Prose -
> More numerous of Windows -
> Superior - for Doors -
>
> Of Chambers as the Cedars -
> Impregnable of eye -
> And for an everlasting Roof
> The Gambrels of the Sky -
>
> Of Visitors - the fairest -
> For Occupation - This -
> The spreading wide my narrow Hands
> To gather Paradise -
> (Fr 466)

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Different from previous analysis which examines the poem from poetical aspect as praise to poetry, I focus on the spatial structure of the house of "possibility." The possibility that the speaker dwells in is superior to the house of prose. The description starts with the important elements of a house, which are the windows and the doors. The house of possibility has "numerous windows," which suggests that the house provides plenty of access for visions and better light. Moreover, the doors of the house are "grander in quality" and are "more magnificent" (EDL). The house of possibility becomes superior, perhaps because of "Doors." However, other than the general definition of the word "for," the Lexicon specifically explicates this prepositional word as "concerning and related to" (EDL). Thus, when mentioning about the doors, the poet expresses in firmness that the doors of the house are superior. The emphasis of the superiority of the door results from its specific definition of "possibility and opportunity" (EDL). The doors of the house open for more

opportunities, only when the owner of the house grants with permission. Another explanation for "door" expresses a hint for which the poet is probably looking in a house. The door can be a "protection" (EDL) to a house. The door can be tightly closed so as to protect the inner realm and the inhabitant of the house, or it can be opened to welcome the external world. To have a door opened means that both inner and outer space are released, and allows an outer force to come in, such as the encounter.

Comparing the chambers to the cedars, the poet is suggesting that the amount of the rooms can be countless and huge as thick trees in a dense forest, "as the cedar." By describing a huge amount of the rooms in the house, the poet is again enlarging the possibility in the essence of this figurative house. It is a place full of exploration. From a figurative perspective, the word "cedar" is also linked with "a stout heart" and "a steadfast spirit" (EDL). Would the poet suggest that in the house of possibility lives a spirit with stoutness and firmness? The explanation for the word introducing the next line is that the house has "impregnable eye." The eye, representing the sight, is here being described as firm and unbreakable. To put it to another extent, when the word "impregnable" is explained as "life force" (EDL), it further indicates that the house can be full of vigor and strength. Thus, the house so far in the description of the poet is full of possibility, protection, and firmness. After describing windows, door, and chambers, the poet continues to describe the roof of the house. The roof not only covers the house as a protecting part of the house, but also has an "everlasting" coverage, providing a permanent shelter to its dweller. The firmness of the house is strengthened as the roof is introduced, and the vision and dreams hidden in the house cannot be disturbed and stolen since there is such a strong protection. The roof of the house is "everlasting" as the Lexicon puts it, thus its protection to the house endures. Once again, the poet is emphasizing the guarding function of the house, showing her

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praise to a secured structure. In the ending stanza, the poet speaks of the "visitors" to the house. The visitor, not only known as a temporal guest, but is defined as "dweller, resident, and occupant" according to the Lexicon. The poet's highly compliment to the house extends from its structure to its dweller, responding to the subject of "I" in the first stanza. The ones who dwell in the house of possibility are praised by the poet that they are "the fairest." In such a figurative house, opportunities come and find plenty of spaces in it. In the end of the poem, the speaker reveals a welcoming attitude and a tone of hope which makes the speaker "spread wide narrow hands." Although the hands are "narrow," the speaker spreads "wide," attempting to "gather paradise." The poet ends the poem in a tone that signals positivity and hope.

The poem illustrates how Dickinson applies architectural structure to describing and illustrating her idea of an abstract idea—possibility. Describing herself as a dweller who lives in the house of possibility, the poet also reveals her sophisticated knowledge of building a home. The structure of the house is built with numerous windows, magnificent doors, countless rooms, and an everlasting roof. However, the examination does not only focus on the construction of such a house, but more on the reflection that how the poet organizes her domestic concept. The poem shows how she functions cognition of space in her mind, linking the concrete with the abstract, and presents the idea with house structure. Under this sense, the poet becomes a builder of the figurative home, who performs her imagination with description, and turns the idea into a drawn picture. Different from Jean Mudge's examination on the poem as a constructing process of poem, my analysis highlights each function of a single space in the house which reflects Emily Dickinson's domestic space. As Dickinson is often drawn to conflicting ideas that are contradictory, putting a structure onto abstract idea, or seeing the improbable as a home seems natural to her. As she once mentions, "I wonder we ever leave the Improbable—it is so fair a Home, and

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perhaps we don't—What is half so improbable" (L 645). The improbable is beyond understanding, and the poet regards it as a "fair home." The idea is to enlarge the limited human life with the unlimited abstraction which probably opens a way for Dickinson. If the improbable is so fair a home that she lives in it and is sheltered by it, she says, she will not leave it. Things that leave room for her wondrous mind are attracting to her, and she opens her narrow hands and welcomes all the possibilities in life.

Another poem that illustrates Emily Dickinson's reflection of space but presents with an abstract idea is "The way Hope builds his house." Different from the previous poem, the subject in the poem is not a first person narrative. The poet speaks with a third person narrative who is observing the house of this personified owner:

> The way Hope builds his house
> It is not with a sill -
> Nor Rafter - has that Edifice
> But only Pinnacle -
>
> Abode in as supreme
> This superficies
> As if it were of Ledges smit
> Or mortised with the Laws -
> (Fr 1512)

Hope is described as a builder of the house in the poem, and the poet illustrates how Hope constructs this vivid home. Strangely enough, Hope does not construct the house from a basic step; it does not have a foundation. Moreover, the "rafter" of Hope's house does not have "Edifice," which implies that the support of the roof does not have a structure. The house only has "Pinnacle," which can be seen from a distance since it is a vertical portion of a building rising upward.

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The poet furthers her illustration of the idea of Hope, which is a house of the supreme. The Lexicon provides two suggestions for the word “abode.” It can serve as a noun as well as a verb, leaving the study with open possibility. When the word is taken as a noun, it is explicated as “house and dwelling place” (EDL). When it is read as a verb with past tense, it can be defined as “live, remain, and stay” (EDL). I take the word “abode” as a verb. Hope builds his house, and when this builder finally dwells in its house, it “superficies.” The word “superficies” is generally known as surface and proportion; however, it is suggested by the Lexicon scholars as a verb. The word stands for “lengthens and surfaces.” When the Hope lives in his house, the building is enlarged and lengthens because of the significance of Hope. However, the poet doubts the true existence of the house, using the word “superficies” to imply her idea. The word, as generally known, means surfaces; however, it can also be suggested as “lengthens” (EDL). The surface of house of Hope is, as the poet describes, “as if it were of Ledges smit.” The description shows the poet’s doubt and hesitation. The house, which is in a high position and shows only a pinnacle, is probably not real. The word “Ledges” is defined in the Lexicon as “raised place” and “projecting edge,” which is different from that of its general meaning of shelf. Moreover, as the word “smit” is explained as “deprived” and “strike off” in the Lexicon, the explanations appear to be confusing. They show a tricky implication the poet has in mind. The house of Hope, if it were of a projected production, suggests this structure of the house of hope is not real. But at the same time, since the house can be projected from a distance, the house must be an entity that can be reflected upon. In the end, the poet indicates the edge of the house of hope is being projected as well, as if it is being “smit.” The house of Hope, though appearing to be “supreme,” is only a reflected shape from a distance. The only way to make the house of Hope stand firmer is to make it “mortised with the Laws.”

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The two parts of the poem convey different understanding of the poet's concept of an unreal house. The first stanza describes the house of Hope as not based on a ground, which is far-reached at distance with its appearance of "Pinnacle." The second stanza illustrates the position and the essence of Hope, explicating the idea through comparison. When the first stanza is described with a structure of a house, it is comprehensible and approachable. The structure of the house of Hope can illustrate the unreachable and distant notion of Hope, which also reflects Emily Dickinson's comprehension of how a structure explains an abstract idea. In comparison, the second stanza is more implicit and suggestive. Both the subject and the pronoun in the second stanza do not refer explicitly, thus the tone ends in a vague comprehension of what the poet is trying to say. However, the poem expresses the way Hope works and stands as an abstract idea. At first, Hope appears only its sharpest point of a pinnacle, standing in a distance. Since Hope is not based on the ground, people who *hope* need to leave the grounded base and lift their visions to another level of faith. The poem displays how the poet conveys her idea of this abstract idea, using the structure of a house to illustrate her logic. Hope can be vague, just like the house of Hope is so far-to-reach- and ungraspable. However, Hope can still be "fastened with the Laws," as the poet says in the end of the poem. Seeming to leave room for further explanation, the poet does not say what laws Hope is being fastened with. According to *Emily Dickinson Lexicon*, the "laws" is "principle governed by nature, order, or rule" (EDL). Hope cannot work against itself, it is still confined by its laws. Though constructing itself not from the base, Hope can still be seen. Whether the poet is expressing a frustration of this distant hope or not, she shows a way of explicating an abstract idea through a construction of the house, which reaches to a more concrete understanding of the abstraction.

The two poems illustrate how Emily Dickinson explains abstract idea through

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her knowledge of domestic space, by means of both metaphor and comparison. From the analysis of the poems, I discover the similarity of the working pattern of Dickinson's spatial concept. Though staying mostly in her bedroom, she seems to have no hindrance to perceive the space of the house and the construction of it. For Dickinson, an ideal home in heart and mind is like a bubble that the fingers must not poke. It can be a source of comfort, and at the same time it can be vacant and empty. The circumference of such home is drawn by the accumulation of possibility when the poet "spread[s] wide [her] narrow hands to gather paradise" (Fr 466). To unveil the secret of life, the poet composes riddles after riddles to perform her making of home.

4.3 Emily Dickinson's Making of Home

As Jean Mudge discussed in her analysis of Dickinson's poems, she explored Dickinson's construction of a figurative notion of home, that the poet's intention, "as she says in ending her carpentry poem, is to 'build Temples,' the architecture of *her* house, the house of poetry" (Mudge 92). From Mudge's view, Dickinson works as a builder of her house, which is constructed by poetry. The house she built during her lifetime was never publicized. She intended to build the house of poetry in secrecy, making the house hidden. It seemed contradictory though, because Dickinson required her sister Lavinia Dickinson to burn all the poems and letters left behind; she wanted to destroy what she built in her entire life. Different from Mudge's idea that Dickinson builds a house of poetry, which Dickinson later wanted to burn down, I study it as a construction of a house of experience. The notion of making of home comes from the poet's realization of the expandability of her inner realm. When the intangible inner realm extends, it reaches out to make the encounters happen. In making a home, through the vigor of her life experiences, Dickinson constructs a realm of home which is located within her. As previously discussed, the influence of

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Dickinson's home comes as an agreement of a product of mutual interrelations between Dickinson's own conception of a home and the house itself. The architecture of a house defines and shapes the characteristics of its inhabitant; at the same time, the inhabitant forms the cognition of what a home is. The process of home-making is an ongoing accumulation of what we called *circumference*. Gathering the experiences in life is a certain expansion and extension of force that go inwardly and outwardly with the accumulation of the experiences. It is how Dickinson starts the making of home, which allows her to expand, making circumference drawn, while staying at the same spot. The experiences in life all together form the essence of circumference, and the strength within the process creates the extensibility. Thus, the making of home concentrates on the inner vigorousness and development. The strong intention to express herself through the power of words cannot even satisfy the poet, that she once feels herself "not expressed strongly enough" (L 342a). Her mind is vigorous and active, it is like a new place every single day, and the poet often feels her "mind is such a new place, last night feels obsolete" (L 354).

One of the definition from the Lexicon describes the circumference as "expanded perception of life," "experience," and "center of being" (EDL). The word's explanation coincide with that of "encounter" in the Lexicon, which explicates the word *encounter* as "to meet" (EDL). To "meet," in the Lexicon is defined as "experience" (EDL), which echoes with the word encounter. By the significant moments in life, Dickinson takes the encounter as experiences that can enlarge the inner realm. The significant moments in Dickinson's life do not make themselves important only in her mind and memory. It is a process of encounter. To encounter means to cross the boundary. To cross the boundary means to determine the encompassing line of the boundary, join the circuit of the flight, and along the circular journey of the flight one makes the encounter possible to happen. And since

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"circumference" is a center of being itself, the lack of core status is not a trouble any longer. While accumulating the experiences, Dickinson gathers the moments and transforms them to power. Dickinson knows that one must learn of the mystery of life before striving for an answer for the mystery. Heart is where carries the loading; it takes, and it extends. When a heart extends, the encounter can be made possible, and the circumference can be formed.

The preciousness of the encounter lies in the difference it makes after the encountering moment. In Dickinson's famous poem "I started Early—Took my Dog," the poet describes the transformation after the encounter. The poem, which is often approached with the exploration of a love theme and an examination of erotic desire, is re-examined here to explore the encountering moment:

> I started Early - Took my Dog -
> And visited the Sea -
> The Mermaids in the Basement
> Came out to look at me -
>
> And Frigates - in the Upper Floor
> Extended Hempen Hands -
> Presuming Me to be a Mouse -
> Aground - upon the Sands -
>
> But no Man moved Me - till the Tide
> Went past my simple Shoe -
> And past my Apron - and my Belt
> And past my Bodice - too -
>
> And made as He would eat me up -
> As wholly as a Dew
> Upon a Dandelion's Sleeve -
> And then - I started - too -

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And He - He followed - close behind -
I felt His Silver Heel
Upon my Ankle - Then my Shoes
Would overflow with Pearl -

Until We met the Solid Town -
No One He seemed to know
And bowing - with a Mighty look -
At me - The Sea withdrew -
(Fr 656)

The opening of the poem suggests that the story happens in a vague time, for we only know the speaker "started early." She took a companion with her, and visited the sea. The description of the sea scene then shifts from realistic to imaginative. The sea is described as a well-constructed building which has a basement and an upper floor, showing that the poet intends to build up a space with a housing structure. The encounter begins with imaginative residents from the sea. "[T]he mermaids," came out to "look at" the speaker. It was a direct confrontation. The act of "looking at" does not ordinarily happen within strangers, suggesting that the encounter is with an intention. The mysterious creatures from the sea "came out" to greet the speaker when the speaker took the visit.

The encountering position shifts from basement to the upper floor of the sea. The "frigate," a boat functions as transporting vehicles on the ocean, can also be explained as "means of exploration" and "source of adventure" (EDL). The encounter is a confrontation between the speaker and the sea, an exploring and adventurous one. The extent of the encounter here with the frigate is an even more direct interaction—the frigate "extended" hands to reach the speaker. The interaction is a demanding one, since the speaker here is to be commanded to be a "mouse," a small animal that is often seen as a gate-crasher in the house. Expressing the confusion of such

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encountering moment, the speaker states her situation of being stranded: "aground – upon the sands." The encounter here seems to pause for a while, after such direct interaction with the creatures of the ocean. "Aground," which means being marooned at the shore upon "sands," and considered as "wilderness" in the Lexicon, suggests the direct confrontation with the sea leads the speaker not to a certainty but more to an unexpected meeting. She remains still in such wilderness, till the arrival of the "tide."

The coming of the tide brings the encounter to a more intense degree. The direction of the interaction is also an upward one, with the order from "shoe," "apron," "belt," "bodice." Shoe in the definition of the Lexicon is linked to "route," "path" and "track." When the encounter is made happen, it first starts from the route of the participant. With openness that so surprisingly welcomes the coming of the tide, the speaker even releases her protective outer wearing, the "apron." Not remaining protective and armed to this outer force of the tide, the speaker welcomes the tide without controls and restraints. She gives up her "belt" to let the tide come pass on it. The belt is a "covenant setting apart from others," and if the speaker let go of the belt, she was suggesting that the encounter was a frenzied one.[5] She finally lets the tide come at her chest, where is the locale of the heart. The motion of the coming up of the tide is a fast and continuous one. The conjunction "and" suggests a fast-coming tone of the taking over.

The extent of the encounter tends to be fiercer, that for a moment the speaker even thinks she is to be eaten up by the tide, "as wholly as dew on a dandelion." Though the encounter seems to be a confrontation between an overwhelming force of

[5] Some scholars analyze the poem from erotic aspect, suggesting that Dickinson is implying her strong desire of sex and the welcoming for her lover. The imaginative encounter can be a sexual desire for someone in the poet's mind. Others see the poem as a confrontation with an authoritative power that overwhelms the speaker. Apart from the erotic and the suggested analysis, I focus on the essence of the encountering moment of the speaker and the sea.

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the sea and the smallness of the speaker, here I suggest the encounter is not a total overwhelming one; instead, it is an encounter helpful to the affirmation of the self of the speaker. She stays calm in the encountering with the tide, as if a quiet storyteller who is recollecting her memory and organizing it to share with her listeners. The encounter being helpful to the speaker for an accumulation of experience in life lies in the word "started" in the end of the stanza.

The interrelation between the speaker and the tide shifts from "the speaker to the sea," "the sea (the tide) to the speaker" back to "the speaker to the sea." After being washed and touched by the sea, she remains who she was. Now, the speaker "started." The word suggests that to start is to "begin a trip or journey to a certain destination" (EDL). Now the speaker is the one who holds the decision for her direction. And this time, the sea "followed." Stepping backward to somewhere unknown, the speaker intends to move from into the sea to away from the sea. The sea comes behind the speaker, upon her "ankle," implying "body walking, person stepping" (EDL). The sea can touch the shoes of the speaker; however, this time she does not let the sea take hold of her independency. It is a precious moment. The path of the speaker now would "overflow with pearl," which is figuratively explained as "joyous moment," "precious time of happiness in mortality," and "rare opportunity to love and be loved" (EDL).

The encountering moment transforms the speaker's perception of individuality.[6]

[6] The boldness of the welcome indeed reflects what Freud explicated as "depersonalization" (Kristeva 188): "the Uncanny requires just the same the impetus of a new encounter with an unexpected outside element: arousing images of death, automatons, doubles, or the female sex." What is more closely related to Dickinson is that, Freud continues, "uncanniness occurs when the boundaries between imagination and reality are erased," and thus the self experiences a conflict between the two and arouse that strange familiarity but vague to describe. "The clash with the other, the identification of the self with that good or bad other that transgresses the fragile boundaries of the uncertain self, would thus be at the source of an uncanny strangeness whose excessive features, as represented in literature, cannot hide its permanent presence in "normal" psychical dynamics" (188-9).

By the end of the visit, the subject shifts from singular "I" to plural "we." The encounter which is accumulated into the speaker's life experiences of visiting the immensity of a natural realm, though coming to an end, leaves its impact to transform the speaker's perception of the relationship. The change from the singular to the plural suggests that the positions of the speaker and the sea are shifted. The overwhelming sea, standing as the master at the beginning of the speaker's visit, changes as a participant to the trip. The speaker and this newly joined participant finally meet with the "solid town." The confrontation ends here because of out–of–place of the sea. The sea realizes its outsider position where "no one he seemed to know," and withdraws back into his realm. Within the stepping back of the sea is its "mighty look" at the speaker. The visit is not the end. The encounter will continue. The key moment of the positions between two participants in the encounter lies in the sea's "bowing" to the speaker. The word has an eluding suggestion of the meaning of "welcome" and "invite." Thus, the encounter should not end at the turning back to the solid town, but is an ongoing process for anyone who would search for the precious moment of the encounter to take up the trip to visit "the sea."

For Dickinson, the encounter is limitless. It should not be confined to an essential or concrete form; rather, the encounter happens with a heart's invitation to imagination, or with a heart's awaiting for an unexpected visit. Neither gives in nor gives out, the subjective in Dickinson's poems encounters with different forms of forces, and withdraws back with the experience of encounter. For the poet, the encounter and the withdrawal, the leaving and the staying, or the welcome and the rejection mutually exist. The encounter makes the circumference of the essence of home grow and be accumulated. Once she crosses the boundary, and to discover the different realm of life, there she gathers all the precious discoveries that form of the circumference. As Edward Casey explicates that, "Everywhere we turn when we build

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and dwell—and we always turn with and upon our lived bodies—we find ourselves turning in the places we have elicited or encountered by our own actions and motions" (181). The directions of turning and going are not determined. And every place one goes, one constructs and lives. The circumference of home is drawn within the encounter of leaving and turning, which consists of Dickinson's experiences of life.

The encounters enrich Dickinson's heart, soul, and mind, and the abundance of the inner realm produces power for the poet to draw the circumference of home. When the center of being, which is within the circumference, is strong enough, it is able to support the figurative home. The poem "The Props assist the House" reflects such supporting power of the soul, affirming that the inner realm is supportive to stand as a center of being. The poet describes the process of building a house, and when finishing, the support of the house withdraws from the construction, showing strength of the soul:

> 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 -
> (Fr 729)

The poem begins with a constructing process of a house, which is supported and built by the assistance of "the props." The word "props" is defined as temporary support

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and framework which holds a structure up until it is stable enough to stand on its own. Unlike every real house that needs supporting structure, the house that the poet describes is a figurative one, since its props is temporary and will withdraw when the house is done. Continuing to praise the independency of the house, the poet describes the house as it stands "adequate" and "erect." The adjectives are explained in the Lexicon as "capable," "confident," and "strong enough to stand" (EDL). Moreover, the word "erect" is "upright and bold." Without the supporting structure of the house, as the poet puts it, the house confidently sustains itself. It is able, and it is bold enough to stand firm to present itself. The bold quality of the house coincides with that of Dickinson's own, which is expressed in a letter to the poet's friend: "I have dare to do strange things – bold things, and have asked no advice from any – I have heeded beautiful tempters, yet do not think I am wrong" (L 35). The house, with adequate and erect boldness, is like the poet herself being dare to be strange (strange that the house can support itself without any props), which makes her life different and in a sense confident. But a question sill lurks between the lines of the poem: how does the house support itself without the entire frame?

When the house is done with construction, not only do the props withdraw from the house, the house itself also "cease[s] to recollect." The word "recollect" indicates the definitions such as to remember and to perceive. Moreover, the word is linked to explanations such as "become aware of" and "realize the existence of" (EDL). The support of the house withdraws and the house stops remembering "Auger and the Carpenter." The word "Auger," originally means carpentry tools, is extended by the Lexicon as "a career of soothsayer" (EDL). If the house stops remembering auger, the poet is indicating that the house casts away the materials and tools during the construction. Moreover, as the suggestive explication extends, the built house here stops becoming aware of its future. Nor does this figurative house "realize the

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existence of" the carpenter. It ceases to become aware of the existence of the past, nor does it continue to realize the existence of the future.

Is the poet suggesting that once the figurative house is done, it stops looking forward to the future and ceases remembering the past? If logic is as the poet says, "such a retrospect has the perfected life," the house is contradictorily looking back at its perfected life, and at the same time ceasing recollecting the past that once being helpful to it. The word "retrospect" means looking back on things past and a past or a background for a life or events. Under such definition, there is something in the past or in the process of construction that this built place wants to forget. Or, it is just that the materials which are used in the constructing process have accomplished their mission. Since the purpose of the construction is fulfilled, and the "plank" and "nail" is no more in use, the materials become "a past." The house is built now, and the support "drop[s]." And the answer to the question reveals at the end of the poem. When all the materials that built the house withdraw, the poet says, "a soul" affirms itself. The word "affirm" is defined in the Lexicon as "maintain" (EDL), which is different from the general definition such as declare and confirm. The soul, which is the core of the house, maintains itself. The problematic pronoun "it" in the last line suggests the connection between the house and the soul. If the pronoun stands for the house, then, under this sense, the house is indeed the soul itself. Thus, the house that supports itself is indeed the soul that maintains itself. Thus, the soul, standing erect and confidently, supports and sustains itself as a constructed "house."

The pattern that the soul supports itself echoes with Dickinson's living her strong individuality in her house. In a letter to a friend with whom Dickinson constantly exchanged letters, she expressed her withdrawing condition in the house: "You notice my dwelling alone – To an Emigrant, Country is idle except it be his own" (L 330). She goes to no one but herself, to an extent that the poet was indicating her "dwelling

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alone.” Just like the soul that is affirmed in the end of the poem, the house maintains itself with boldness and confidence. It would not matter if such a house is supported by regular assistance of plank and nail, because the soul can well support itself, living internally.

Reflecting a mature comprehension of how domestic space functions, Emily Dickinson composes poems that apply both internal and external space of the house to depict a figurative home. Not confiding the definition of what a home should be, Dickinson is indeed leaving much space for such figurative home to be drawn. The figurative home, by the poet’s description, can be full of possibility. It can also be as ungraspable as the house of Hope, and as confident as the soul maintains its own house. Home with possibility has numerous rooms and spaces for one to dwell; however, the dweller still spread wide “her narrow hands” to gather paradise. Emily Dickinson’s figurative home is an internal space that is built by all her life’s essences. Home with hope is a place full of strength but at the same time full of risk. Since the house of hope is not constructed from a basic ground, it only shows the projected edge and the point of its top. The home is seen, but it cannot be reached. And, the figurative home of the soul supports itself, neither looking back nor looking forward. Just like the poet has learned the imperceptibleness of the secret of life, her figurative home continues to transform by the encounters, ongoing building process, and then withdraw when home is done. Emily Dickinson lived in her house in her entire life, and developed the inside so as to expand to outside. She remained there, in her interiority, and waited for all that beauty of life traveling to her. Her soul remained hidden but was at the same time exposed. Living in her enclosed space, she peeked from the rigidity of the unchanged, and wrote messages to the world which she dared to look at but dared not to be seen. The making of home is an ongoing process that keeps distilling from the exquisiteness of the poet’s life. In the interiority, Dickinson

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learned of staying with the deep existence of her inner realm; as to the exteriority, she learned of reaching out with tiny hands, living in possibility, and gathered paradise of her own. And, “within consciousness and in the process of exploring circumference, she could literally and figuratively be at home” (Mudge 170). After she lights up the world as a poet, “her poetry will remain,” and “circumference as vision (expansion) and circumference as creation (enclosure) [will] merge in this House of Art” (Mudge 170).

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Emily Dickinson, a poet at home, discovers the possibility that lies in her inner realm. To be seen as a woman in nineteenth century, her high dependency on domestic space does not reveal to be abnormal. However, as a poet, her reclusive life together with her distinct poetic style form an outstanding work of art which will not be regarded as normal.[1] The avoidance of meeting people face-to-face and the total privacy of her enclosed life leave people with space for exploration. What is precious about the reclusion is the tiny little accumulations which the poet gathers in her quiet life. She presents these precious as well as painful moments in life with the form of poetry that she can probably call it home. However, the poet is not determined to dwell in such poetic home that she constructs, since in the end she wants them to be destroyed. She could construct a home of poetry and dwelled in it, but why would she construct such a poetic home with so much effort and in the end didn't want to keep it?[2] As Alfred Habegger once questions as well, "[n]o doubt this was largely owing to her continued aversion to all forms of public exposure. But why do none of her letters comment on her achievement? Is the silence to be explained as humility, carelessness,

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[1] Habegger examines the documentary resources of Dickinson's village life during 1870-1878, recording some of the relevance from people who ever saw the poet in the period, one of whom is the daughter of Elizabeth Holland, age fourteen: "Over sixty years, later, Annie Holland Howe remembered her hostess as being 'very unusual'" (Habegger, 539).

[2] According to the poet's sister Lavinia Dickinson, the poems were originally required to be destroyed. When Lavinia Dickinson saw "the huge and surprising cache of poems in small sewn bundles," it seemed "too precious to burn" (Habegger 622), and she decided to save the poems. Later, the sister published the poems. As Habegger commented, it was "[n]owhere in her writings did she admit that the limits imposed on her did any serious or fundamental damage. Instead, mustering all the Dickinson determination in her effort to make 'No' the wildest word in the language, she devoted her incomparable resources to a kind of virgin closed-door mastery" (622).

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some kind of disillusionment? Didn't she know how good she was?" (604) The gesture of not keeping all the poems but determining to burn them down shows that the poet probably does not see poetry as her terminal home. Rather, it is the inner realm that she has probed into in her entire life that she considers as a home. As Dickinson once mentions, "consciousness is the only home of which we *now* know" (L 591), the inner realm which is within her is the home she determines to dwell in. Because she knows it, she is certain about it.

The inner realm which has containing quality and extensibility, supports Dickinson's figurative home. Just as Dickinson's soul that stands erect and supports itself, her figurative home is supported by the intangible power from within. In this way, Dickinson breaks the confinement in her life, extends out to draw a circumference of home with an infinite expanding power. The profundity inside her inner realm is full of possibility. But even with such possibility at hand, the poet sill "spread[s] wide [her] narrow Hands" to "gather Paradise" (Fr 466). Dickinson is certainly not a woman who passively receives confinement and takes them in. She is a rule-breaker, who will not bow her head in front of the deep sea.[3] Form will one day decay, but thought can remain.

Home may be failing in real life, but one that is constructed and nourished inside can be rich and limitless. Though she cannot leave and be totally detached from her home, she can be the monarch who reigns in her little world. Though the spirit is

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3 As Habegger points out, Dickinson takes her poetic vocation as a significant function that accompanies her lifelong struggle. "The other thing she added to the story, the word 'poet,' shows how well she understood that her lyric vocation was a function of her essential lifelong struggle. Yielding to the nature of things no more than she had 'given up' to the Savior during the revivals of her youth, she asserted her own powers of 'pagan' ecstasy and sublime thought. She had been a fundamental rule-breaker, and now, in her last defiant paradox, she declared that that was what had made her 'correct'" (Habegger 621).

contained in the body, and must live, Dickinson's spirit is one that will not surrender and will not be submitted to outside force. Expressing her deepest secret with boldness, the poet in a way reaches out to the external and crosses the rigid boundary.

Knowing her self is the source of power. Dickinson has triumphantly learned to stay with the profoundest site of her self in this enclosed domestic space. She does not confront the outside world, but chooses to explore the innermost privacy within. The soul, though being lonesome, is independent and erect. Moreover, knowing the intimate stranger that dwells in her, the poet develops a strong sensitivity that is able to process a dialogue with the self. The self-to-self talk and the self-examination are what keep Dickinson sober when she meets the deepest presence of the inner realm. Confronting the intimate as well as the strange self, Dickinson has learned of dealing with the fear and anxiety in the face of her own presence. Thus, dwelling in the sober conscious that the poet calls home, there is no outer force can intrude in the private and enclosed space of her interior.

The figurative home within is certainly not an ideal home. Just like the imperfection of life, the figurative home that the poet dwells in has its flaws. However, Dickinson never wants to own an ideal home that can be easily blotted by any touch. Instead, she "prefer[s] pestilence that is more classic" (L 318). The imperfection brings possibility, and this is how the poet can construct her figurative home. As long as the poet is aware of that life she lives with, just like she is so aware of her thoughts, life can be an expansion to the poet. "Every day life feels mightier, and what we have the power to be, more stupendous" (L 298). The continuous power within the ongoing of life can be greater each other day. The power comes from experiences in life. Though not living a social life, Dickinson has her own encountering moments which form precious experiences. The figurative encountering experiences are the important poetic resources. With all the external and internal conflicts in life, Dickinson's

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enclosed world is ongoing with different transformations. The circumference of home is constructed with the precious moments of the encountering and those of internalization of thoughts. "More characteristically, she continued to write about extreme states: mental anguish, despair, the self as bomb or volcano, the fear that one may be coming apart. No other American writer of her time explored with equal sensitivity and mastery the experience of fragmentation" (Habegger 477). The pain and the ecstasy together form the reality of Dickinson's mind. She remains withdrawal, making her home within. The enclosed interior of Dickinson indeed is endowed with more abundance which comes from her richness of thoughts.

Thus, gathering all her thoughts in mind, Dickinson constructs a unique perception of her domestic space that contains the intensity of her thoughts. With the independence, the poet learns of building her philosophy of life:

> This intimate alienation persuaded the poet 'that space & time are things of the body & have little or nothing to do with our Selves. My Country is Truth. Vinnie lives much of the time in the State of Regret. I like Truth—it is a free Democracy'. The passage catches the paradox of the poet's familial basis: a dependency that sets free. (Habegger 316)

Her Self surpasses space and time. The pure soul that lies in the core essence of her poems continues to speak out Dickinson's "Truth." She reaches out from the enclosed, and breaks the rigidity of the norm. The conflicts and the paradoxes in Dickinson's life provide her more strength to confront the unknown. She has the strength that will not yield to the confinement.

In the journey of life, Emily Dickinson has accomplished the art of her work which will continue to voice out. Her figurative home, which is drawn by the accumulations of experiences in life, will also continue to draw on. This home, though not a perfect one, is a home with possibility. Like the openness of Dickinson's poems,

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she does not define nor confine the meanings behind her lines. She does not define what a home should be, but leaves with possibilities. With the possibility, the figurative home can be re-formed and re-built. Just as Dickinson's soul "surpasses space and time," her home within can be drawn continually.

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