

## About This Volume

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Robert C. Evans

This volume, like all the others in the Critical Insights series, is divided into several distinct sections. It begins with an introductory essay, moves to four “Critical Contexts” essays, and then proceeds to a deliberately diverse collection of “Critical Readings.” Altogether, the book is designed to offer an overview of the volume topic from various points of view, using a range of methodologies and perspectives, and covering a variety of authors, texts, genres, and historical periods. The book then concludes with a helpful collection of scholarly resources.

The introductory essay, by Reema Faris, not only covers many main issues of recent feminist theory but also explores the work of several different authors, over a broad historical period, writing in diverse genres, including novels, essays, and fables. Faris draws on many of the standard ideas and terminology of modern feminist criticism even while suggesting, at the end of her article, that “no matter which way we group human beings, justice will only be attained if society values each individual, no matter their differences, and ensures the recognition of each person’s humanity in this chaotic, strife-strewn world with an eye to a victimless future.”

Faris’s introductory piece is followed by the four “Critical Contexts” essays. These offer, respectively, a historical approach, an overview of feminist theory, a particular “critical lens,” and then, finally, an essay involving comparison and contrast. The historical essay is by the noted Shakespeare scholar Frederick Kiefer, who uses varied historical perspectives (involving textual history, stage history, musical history, the history of costuming, and so on) to discuss the ways Ophelia, in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, should be understood during her final appearance in the play. Next, Joyce Ahn offers an overview of several different discussions of recent feminist

theoretical and critical approaches. Her essay is followed by one in which Robert Evans employs the method of “close reading” to examine a number of poems by Thomas Campion—poems in which the male author impersonates the voices of various female speakers. Finally, the last of the “Critical Contexts” essays is by Nanette Rasband Hilton, who compares and contrasts the kinds of rhetoric endorsed and practiced by Margaret Fuller and Ida B. Wells.

The first of the “Critical Readings” is by Nicolas Tredell, who explores Emily Dickinson’s “constructions of gender identity” and focuses particularly “on her identifications with male subject positions, especially in relation to boys and soldiers, and on her representation of passionate fulfillment.” Next, Kellie Holzer, in an essay on Grant Allen’s novel *The Type-writer Girl*, discusses how the “feminist narrator instrumentalizes racial discourses in her pursuit of liberal selfhood and gendered emancipation.” Sarah Fredericks, in an essay on Edith Wharton’s *The Age of Innocence*, discusses the significant number of different names by which two of the main female characters are known, as well as how their various names suggest their varied positions in their society. In an essay on the poet Amy Lowell, Julie Goodspeed-Chadwick discusses that writer’s verse about World War I, and then Robert Evans offers a similar essay on the war verse of Lowell’s contemporary, Mary Carolyn Davies, who was well known in her own day but has been almost completely forgotten today. In a second essay, Nicolas Tredell explores the issue of singleness in *Quartet*, an early novel by Jean Rhys.

In the first of a series of essays dealing with films and with filmed works of literature, Zachariah Pippin looks at the femme fatale figure in American noir films and argues that while “*Double Indemnity*’s Phyllis Dietrichson, portrayed by Barbara Stanwyck, was not the first femme fatale to appear in a film, she is the example with the greatest bearing on the way we view the archetype through contemporary eyes.” Next, Alexzina Taylor Wilks surveys reviews of the film version of Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved*, exploring not only how the film itself was received but also how commentary on the film is relevant to the novel itself. A similar approach is taken, by Jordan Bailey, to the film version of Amy Tan’s novel *The Joy*

*Luck Club*. Both novels—and both of the relevant films—emphasize diverse kinds of women and show the importance of strong female figures, especially mothers, particularly in minority communities. Finally, a similar essay by Robert Evans surveys critical reactions to Margaret Atwood’s *Penelopiad*, both in its initial form as a novella and then in its later form as a play. Evans ends by paying particular attention to the play and to its significant differences from the novella, since neither of these latter topics has been very fully explored.

This book, then, provides deliberately diverse approaches to deliberately diverse authors, texts, genres, and topics. Its coverage is broadly historical, reflects a range of different ways of using feminism, and explores, in addition to gender, issues of race, class, and ethnicity, as well as the kind of artistry that makes any literary work worth reading in the first place. The book closes with a selection of resources, including a bibliography, a list of additional readings, and an index.

CRITICAL  
CONTEXTS

Unlike her sisters in Shakespeare's comedies, Ophelia fails to match the expectations of many contemporary theatergoers. More passive than bold, she belongs to a world that, for young women today, might as well be on another planet. Admittedly, she gently cautions her brother for warning about the wiles of men as he departs for Paris. But when her father tells her to accept neither letters nor gifts from Hamlet, she acquiesces without complaint. She fails to affirm her dignity when challenged by Polonius and fails to rebuff the sexual insinuations of the prince. This modest young woman appears to lack the resources that would allow her to fend off the disapproval of others and gratuitous insults by the man she loves. When Hamlet tells her, "I never loved you," she replies plaintively, "You made me believe you did" (Q1 E1r). Her descent into madness magnifies her vulnerability. Audiences have been known to register dismay, if not shock, when Ophelia, following the death of her father, enters singing to herself and distributing flowers to the court. No wonder the actress cast as Ophelia has usually been attired in white, an emblem of innocence. By this costume she conjures an otherworldly aura, appropriate for someone about to depart this life.

The character's theatrical history raises two interrelated questions: Is the traditional costume selected by directors and costumers justified? And how did the first actor to play Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* actually look in the mad scene? The second quarto of the play (1604–05), the so-called "good quarto" and thus the basis of most modern editions, tells us virtually nothing about the character's appearance. A stage direction reads simply, "*Enter Ophelia*"; a moment later "*shee sings*" (Q2 K4r). The First Folio (1623) adds a single word: "*Enter Ophelia distracted*" (TLN 2766). This direction, along with the dialogue and song, permits a rough

gauge of her demeanor. Neither Q2 nor F, however, tells us what playgoers actually saw upon her entrance. The first quarto of 1603, whose existence was not rediscovered until 1823, had been more expansive: “*Enter Ofelia playing on a Lute, and her haire downe singing*” (Q1 G4v).<sup>1</sup>

### **Q1, Q2, and F**

The first quarto (Q1) stage direction (SD) is intriguing, but can it be trusted? Since the Victorian era editors have been skeptical, many reluctant to incorporate the SD because it belongs to an apparently defective text, one lacking lines and scenes contained in Q2 and F (the first folio). Also, the speeches of Q1 are sometimes garbled, the versification uneven, words missing; the quarto, moreover, is only about half the length of the two later versions of *Hamlet*. Representative of Victorian practice is *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare* (1880?), edited by Charles Knight, who gives this SD in act 4, scene 5: “*Re-enter HORATIO with OPHELIA,*” which does not correspond precisely with the SDs in either Q2 or F.<sup>2</sup> And why does Knight reject the Q1 direction? Because the 1603 edition “may have been piratical, and we think it was so” (87).<sup>3</sup> Knight assumes that someone transcribed words spoken during performance, fashioned a defective and unauthorized copy of the script, and sold it to a publisher.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, he will not “foist” material from Q1 into his F copy-text. Alfred W. Pollard added to the disapproval of Q1, calling most early Shakespearean quartos “bad,” the product of memorial reconstruction—the recreation of scripts by unscrupulous actors, drawing upon their faulty recollections of productions in which they had acted. The results were botched but sufficient for sale to theatrical companies eager to mount unauthorized productions or to printers (for “pirated” editions). For decades this hypothesis seemed plausible and attracted influential supporters, most notably G. I. Duthie and Alfred Hart. For more than fifty years the dismissal of Shakespearean early quartos by Pollard and the New Bibliographers colored the thinking of editors.

The climate of opinion began to shift in the 1980s, thanks to the work of Steven Urkowitz, Michael Warren, Gary Taylor, John

Jowett, Paul Werstine, and others. Hostility to the early quartos was tempered as scholars came to believe that the two extant texts of *King Lear* (Q and F) represent alternative versions of the play, each with its own claims, and that discrepancies between the early and the later version may be explained by positing Shakespeare's revision of his own work. This realization, in turn, led to a broader appreciation of other early quartos. In 1996 Laurie Maguire, while not abandoning the term "bad quarto," introduced the less judgmental locution "suspect" quarto to designate early versions that seem less satisfactory than the later "good quartos."<sup>5</sup> Today the so-called "bad quartos" in general and Q1 of *Hamlet* in particular have largely, though by no means entirely, escaped their former ignominy. New editions of those quartos are being published by both Oxford (Shakespearean Originals) and Cambridge (Early Quartos series).<sup>6</sup>

While this revolution in textual studies was gaining momentum, some editors continued to look askance on what used to be called "bad quartos" and, therefore, to omit the stage directions they contain. Harold Jenkins, for instance, in 1982 rejected the description of the mad Ophelia in Q1 *Hamlet*. His Arden 2 edition, adopting Q2 as his copy-text, singled out her musical instrument as especially wrongheaded: "the lute, uncalled for in the text and incongruous with the ballad snatches Ophelia spontaneously breaks into, looks like an actors' embellishment," though he conceded that the Q1 SD "no doubt records some contemporary staging" (348). Five years later G. R. Hibbard, editing *Hamlet* for the single-play Oxford series and using F as his copy-text, concurred with Jenkins's rejection of Q1, calling the SD "completely illegitimate and unreliable" (69). Paradoxically, he reproduced the direction about Ophelia apparently because it made sense to him: "This full and explicit direction in Q1 probably reflects the manner in which the part was played when a boy who could play on the lute [. . .] was available. Jenkins's objection that the lute is incongruous with Ophelia's songs is, in fact, an argument for her using it, since only a mad woman would think of doing so" (Hibbard 298). Shakespeareans have continued to wrestle with the challenge of respecting their copy-texts (either Q2

or F) while, at the same time, furnishing information that may assist (student) readers to understand what playgoers once saw onstage.

Brackets have proved an indispensable tool in fostering a compromise. Thus G. B. Evans in his 1974 *Riverside Shakespeare* (and again in the second edition of 1997), using Q2 as his copy-text, argues that “Q1 is without any real textual authority, but its stage directions and very occasionally its readings are valuable in supplementing, corroborating, or correcting Q2 and F1” (1186). And so Evans makes room for the Q1 SD, conflating it with the word added in F, and presenting the information within square brackets: “Enter OPHELIA [*distracted, with her hair down, playing on a lute*]” (4.5.20.SD). Similarly, in the groundbreaking *Complete Works* for Oxford (1986), Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, adopting the Folio as their copy-text, handle the problem by including within half brackets the words “*her hair down, with a lute.*” Wells and Taylor comment: “The lute is unlikely to have been added in a provincial tour, or by a reporter, and so presumably reflects normal theatrical practice” (*Textual Companion* 408). The second edition of the Oxford *Complete Works* (2005) introduces a new interpretive word (“mad”) without placing it within brackets and attaches the Q1 SD: “Enter Ophelia mad, [*her hair down, with a lute*].” *The Modern Critical Edition of The New Oxford Shakespeare* (2016), edited by Taylor, Jowett, Bourus, and Egan, departs from the Wells-Taylor Oxford edition by adopting Q2 as the copy-text; it, therefore, dispenses with the word *distracted* (from F), and it omits the Q1 SD in favor of “Enter Ophelia [*mad*].” The word *mad*, of course, appears in none of the SDs in the three earliest editions of *Hamlet*.<sup>7</sup>

Twenty years before publication of *The New Oxford Shakespeare*, Stephen Greenblatt proposed the most helpful SD for readers seeking to understand all that is known about Ophelia’s original appearance. In his 1997 Norton *Hamlet*, “based on” the Wells-Taylor edition, he provided the entire SD as it appears in Q1, added the word “distracted” from F, and omitted brackets altogether: “Enter OPHELIA *distracted, playing on a lute, and her hair down, singing.*”<sup>8</sup> Despite Greenblatt’s elegant conflation, some of the play’s finest editors have been reluctant to credit the SD that

appears in Q1. A. R. Braunmuller in his revised Pelican Shakespeare (2001) observes that “because of Q1’s clear connection with the stage, modern acting and reading texts often include stage directions derived from or influenced by it” (xlviii). But his edition does not reproduce the Q1 SD describing Ophelia. Instead, Braunmuller, opting for Q2 as his copy-text, has “*Enter Ophelia [distracted].*” David Bevington, in his *Complete Works* of 2004, gives the same SD but, in a concession, supplies the Q1 SD at the bottom of the page alongside various glosses. Similarly, Russ McDonald and Lena Cowen Orlin, in their 2015 Bedford Shakespeare, “based on the New Cambridge Edition,” also offer the Q1 SD at the bottom of the page, calling it “the famous direction” (1007). Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine, editing the play for the Folger Shakespeare Library in 2012, describe Ophelia’s entry as “*Enter Ophelia distracted*”; these words appear within pointed parentheses, which designate “words in this edition that are printed only in the Folio version but not in the Second Quarto” (lii). Although the Mowat-Werstine edition places explanatory notes on pages facing the text, the Q1 SD is not recorded there; and neither the Longer Notes nor the Textual Notes mention the SD. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor in their revised Arden 3 edition of 2016, which consists of “an edited and annotated text” of Q2 (xxii), give this simple SD: “*Enter OPHELIA*” (4.5.16); the explanatory notes beneath the text do not mention the Q1 SD, but the textual variants at the very bottom of the page provide it, though in type so tiny that a magnifying glass is required to read it. The 2017 Arden Performance Edition, based on the Arden 3 edition (of Q2) and edited by Abigail Rokison-Woodall, omits the word “distracted” (from F). Although the Q1 SD is excluded from the text, it appears on the facing page along with glosses of unfamiliar words and textual variants. Because of its placement on a separate page and because it is printed in a much smaller font, the SD is easily missed by readers. The editor explains disapprovingly that Q1 “was written down from memory by an actor, or copied down in the theatre by a pirate” (xxxvii), and so the SD cannot be trusted. This position is virtually identical to the opinion of Knight, in his *Pictorial Edition of Shakspeare*, a hundred and fifty years ago.

# CRITICAL READINGS

## **“Old fashioned – naughty – everything –”: Uncreating Male and Female in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson**

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Nicolas Tredell

“[M]ale and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27). Emily Dickinson’s poetry works to uncreate that rigid gender distinction enshrined in the Old Testament, and to destabilize other distinctions. It is here that her boldness and radicalism, in the sense of going to the root of things, lies. She sets out to challenge, not God, but patriarchal constructions of deity and doctrine. She is a feminist poet but not in the sense that she speaks out in her poetry for women’s rights as they were understood in her time or that she focuses on what is offered as female experience in a triumphant and/or traumatic mode. It is not that she is incapable of the triumph/trauma mode—see, for example, the vivid poem that starts “Rearrange a ‘Wife’s’ affection! / When they dislocate my Brain! / Amputate my freckled Bosom!” (1737; 704–05; this and all subsequent Dickinson references give the poem number and then page number(s) in the Faber 1987 edition). But for the most part she adopts the approach axiomatically expressed in one of her best-known poems: “Tell all the Truth but tell it slant – / Success in Circuit lies” (1129; 506–07). Her poetry seeks, circuitously but successfully, to unsettle preconceptions and prejudices that contribute to the constriction of women.

As a poet, Dickinson always works on the edge of things: pushing language, within seemingly conventional verse forms, into unusual syntactical and semantic shapes; engaging with arduous philosophical concepts and conundra; coming up close and personal, but often playfully even at her most serious, to the bourne of that undiscovered country from which no one returns and many prefer not to contemplate; always aspiring to the eschatological, toward a preoccupation with last things, those end-of-life enormities

traditionally identified as heaven, hell, death, and judgement, but retaining a profound poetic and linguistic poise and a capacity for wit even in encounters with such extremities. This essay considers the use of the lyric “I” in her poetry and its gender implications and explores her constructions of gender identity. It focuses especially on her identifications with male subject positions, particularly in relation to boys and soldiers, and on her representation of passionate fulfillment.

### Dickinson and “I”

Dickinson playfully assumes an anti-rationalist persona in her witty poem “‘Arcturus’ is his other name,” (70; 36–37). The speaker of the poem prefers a traditional nomenclature to a scientific one: “Star” rather than “Arcturus,” “worm” rather than “Centipede,” and “Heaven” rather than “*Zenith*” (italics in original). The speaker also favors direct action upon the natural world to a scientific approach. Thus “I slew a worm the other day” is counterposed with the “Savant,” the person of learning who says “Resurgam [‘I shall rise again’]” in an ironic allusion to the Christian hope of resurrection when referring to the centipede’s capacity to show signs of life by continuing to wriggle after it is bisected. “I pull a flower from the woods” is contrasted with a “monster with a glass” who “[c]omputes the stamens in a breath.” “I took the Butterfly / Aforetime in my hat” is juxtaposed with the lepidopterist’s vitrine where the winged insect “sits erect in ‘Cabinets’ – / The Clover bells forgot.”

While it may be possible that the “Savant” in this poem is male, or at least representative of an intellectual attitude primarily associated at this time with men, the central contrast in these stanzas is not between a male and female way of looking at the natural world but between a romantic and rationalist one. The speaker’s attitude is similar to that in William Wordsworth’s poem “The Tables Turned” (1798), which affirms that “the lore which Nature brings” is “[s]weet,” and contrasts it with “[o]ur meddling intellect” that “[m]isshapes the beauteous forms of things: – / We murder to dissect” (106). That last Wordsworth line has become an axiomatic attack on a scientific approach that seems fatal and fissiparous. But the

penultimate stanza of this Dickinson poem also makes explicit a contrast, implied in its previous stanzas, between the old and the new. The speaker speculates on what “Heaven” might now be like and wonders whether the “Children” there might “laugh” and “stare” at someone so out-of-date. Even at this late stage in the poem, though, the speaker is ungendered. The last stanza does, however, assign a gender identity, though not an adult one; it is, rather, that of a mischievous, even slightly flirtatious child contemplating an encounter with the biggest Daddy of them all:

I hope the Father in the skies  
Will lift his little girl –  
Old fashioned – naughty – everything –  
Over the stile of “Pearl.” (70; 37)

Characteristically, the poem combines playfulness with an aspiration to transcendence.

The speaker of the poem uses the lyric first person and is finally identified as female, but we should not assume that its “I” is necessarily “the poet herself.” On one level, this is a point that applies to any poem with a first-person speaker: The “I” that a lyric poem uses is never simply continuous with the “I” who writes the poem. But there are lyric poems that we can reasonably take as direct utterances attributable to the poet and drawing on the poet’s experience. We have, for instance, Wordsworth’s “I wandered lonely as a cloud” (152); or Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “conversation poems,” such as “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison,” which begins: “Well, they are gone, and here must I remain, / This lime-tree bower my prison! I have lost / Beauties and feelings” (153). Here, without assuming an automatic continuity between poem and person, we may nonetheless provisionally identify the “I” with Coleridge himself. In Emily Dickinson’s poetry, however, any links between the utterances and experiences of the lyric “I” in her poems and her personal experience are indirect and not of primary importance for those concerned with her poetry rather than her biography.

On the other hand, Dickinson’s first-person poems are not usually ones in which she assumes personae that are definitely distinct from

that of the poet, in the manner of, say, Robert Browning's *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842), where the first-person speaker is a fictional character, as in "My Last Duchess," which starts "That's my last Duchess painted on the wall, / Looking as if she were alive. I call / That piece a wonder, now" (349). Rather, Dickinson's first-person poems are best described, drawing on the language of post-structuralist criticism, as offering a range of subject positions that the lyric "I" temporarily inhabits for the duration of each poem. The lyric "I" is neither definitely Dickinson nor, usually, a distinct created persona. It is a provisional subjectivity that we cannot anchor in a definite personality—which is not at all to deny the distinctiveness of Dickinson's poetry or its existential origin. Neither can we always anchor Dickinson's poems in a definite gender. At times—as in the poem we have just been discussing—the speaker of the poem is identified as female, though in this case only in the last stanza. At other times, the gender is unspecified, and the speaker could be male or female—as in "Wild Nights – Wild Nights!", which we shall discuss later in this essay.

If "Arcturus' is his other name" posits "the Father in the skies" as a benign Big Daddy elevating "his little girl" over a spiritual frontier into a higher zone, a different view of the celestial Patriarch emerges in another poem, "I never felt at Home – Below" (413; 197). This poem is not specifically gendered, even if the adjective it uses in its second line to describe the "Skies," "Handsome," has, conventionally, masculine rather than feminine connotations and thus might imply a female speaker looking up, with a mixture of awe and, in this case, mockery, to a vision of the celestial domain. The speaker is an outsider, who does not feel "at Home – Below," on Earth, but who does anticipate not feeling at home in the "Skies," in Heaven, either and who says flatly: "I don't like Paradise." (The half-rhyme in the stanza of "Skies" and "[. . .]dise" [pronounced "dice"] is a typical Dickinson touch, breaking away from the predictable chime in a way that provokes thoughts about the meanings of two words that look as if they might be about to concur in a full rhyme but do not quite do so.) This outsider is not identified as male or female, although their defiant unconventionality may call to mind

Jane Eyre, the eponymous protagonist of Charlotte Brontë's 1847 novel, which Dickinson admired. The speaker then runs through a series of reasons for disliking Paradise: it would be like an eternal Sunday in the boring rather than leisured sense; it would be like a school lesson without a break; it would be lonely on a weekday afternoon when you might, in the mortal world, be with friends. One respite from its downsides, however, could be the temporary absence of "the Father in the Skies," here referred to more directly:

If God could make a visit –  
Or ever took a Nap –  
So not to see us – but they say  
Himself – a Telescope  
Perennial beholds us –  
Myself would run away  
From Him – and Holy Ghost – and All –  
But there's the "Judgment Day!" (413; 197)

Here God, clearly gendered as male ("Himself" / "Him"), is an oppressive voyeur who never takes His eyes off you. He is seen, with a certain mockery, as a "Telescope," a metaphor whose phallic connotations (hardness, extendibility) need not be laboured. This is a patriarchal panoptic God whom the speaker of the poem wants to escape but who knows that He has both the last look and the last word, the power of pronouncing judgment. In this poem, Heaven is a place where the naughty little girl must eventually submit to the Master.

The poem "All overgrown by cunning moss" envisages the entry of a woman writer into this patriarchal sphere (148; 70). It imagines her grave as a "little cage," a strong image of confinement, in a "quiet" churchyard, suggesting a place of obscurity, like the country churchyard invoked in Thomas Gray's classic eighteenth-century "Elegy" (1751). She has led a life of trauma: "Gathered from many wanderings – / Gethsemane can tell / Thro' what transporting anguish / She reached the Asphodel!" The "Asphodel" is a reference to ancient Greek mythology: in Book 11 and 24 of Homer's *Odyssey*, the "fields of asphodel" are the dwelling-place of the souls of the