

"Have you the little chest — to put the alive — in?:"

Riddles, Secrets, Spells

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

University of Washington

2015

Committee:

Richard Kenney

Linda Bierds

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

English, Creative Writing

© Copyright 2015

Alison Stagner

Abstract

Focusing on the minor genre of the riddle, this project analyzes potential intersections between magic, metaphor, and the poetic impulse. Emily Dickinson and Brigit Pegeen Kelly's works are drawn upon, as are various threads from folklore, Western philosophy, and anthropology.

The Book of Imaginary Beings, a compendium of fantastical animals, is Jorge Luis Borges' investigation of how the seemingly limitless and bizarre contents of human imagination can overlap, quite randomly, across continents, eras. In beginning my study of the riddle, I turn again and again to what he says about the dragon's appearance, east and west: "We are ignorant of the meaning of the dragon as we are ignorant of the meaning of the universe, but there is something in the dragon's image that appeals to the human imagination. It is [...] a necessary monster" (16-17). Riddle, as a minor genre, surfaces across latitudes and languages; it seems to be, like Borges' dragon, a necessary monster in our literary imaginations. I wonder if, by applying pressure to this genre, I can't learn a little about the enigmatic ways a poem operates on the psyche.

By presenting mental puzzles to be solved, riddles unify the pictorial and the conceptual; and given their role in the slow shift from oral to literary culture, they are intimately bound up in the entire process of reducing language to visible form, the transition from what is musical and rhythmic to what is vivified and abstract. During childhood, the musicality of riddling speech ("What's black and white and red all over?") allows us to mimic the sequence of language acquisition and development as we move from playing with sound to playing with sense. Is children's instinctual love for this experimentation why the riddle became commonplace throughout cultures, as John McDowell argues (ix-x)?

Beyond sound and sense, perhaps even more intimate relationships are to be found between poetry and the riddle's pervasiveness. Daniel Tiffany claims that lyricism first

emerged in the English language as the "enigmatic voice" of the objects personified in the "Ic Eom" [I am] riddles, in which all manner of weapons, tools, birds, and heavenly bodies depict themselves in de-familiarized – and human – ways (73). Scott Brewster notes both the lyric poem and the riddle possess "an intensity, economy, and concentration of description" (31). What is more, all poetry has roots in lexical ambiguity, or what is less-favorably referred to as *obscurity*—this secretiveness and inexplicability is what a riddle (knowingly, mischievously) condenses. And finally, with the riddle's act of metaphor-making, cousin to the empirical mechanism of the Germanic kenning, demonstrates a concern for the proper naming of things, echoing the magical incantation—a further clue for how language *makes things happen*.

Because of this triangulation of *riddle-secret-spell*, the ambition of this piece could not be considered a true genre survey. It is neither wedded specifically to the "literary riddle," nor so concerned with preserving the illusion of neat literary categories. Instead, the following fragments and questions attempt to navigate several locales, dipping into the secret and the incantatory, as it ponders the riddle's final demand, "Saga hwæt ic hatte?" [Say what am I called?], a question that has fashioned so many of us into readers and writers.

§

Before the river grows impassable, some definitions. The *OED* defines a riddle first as "a question or statement intentionally worded in a dark or puzzling matter, and propounded in order that it may be guessed or answered, especially as a form of pastime; an enigma; a dark saying," and secondly, as "something which puzzles or perplexes; a difficult or insoluble problem; a mystery." Looking up enigma, then, we get: "A short composition in prose or verse, in which something is described by intentionally obscure metaphors, in order to afford an exercise for the ingenuity of the reader or hearer in guessing what is meant." What a paradox

—riddling is not only an agreeable way to while away the time, but also a "dark saying" that might enchant, haunt, threaten.

§

[Is creating beauty a way we deal with the dangerous?]

§

I'll return to Borges for a moment—there's something else to be said about his fascination with mythological beasts. Mythologies across cultures often have hybrid monsters personifying or posing riddles; most frequently, these fall into the rarest category – the neck riddle – wherein the solution becomes life or death. The most notorious instance of a neck riddle in combination with a hybrid monster is that of the Sphinx, who dates back to 2600 BCE. In her classic Grecian form, she has the head of a woman, the body of a lion, and the wings of a bird—Nietzsche calls her "double-natured" due to her combination of animal and human natures (48). Oedipus faces the Sphinx at the entrance of Thebes, where she demands the answer to this riddle (while threatening evisceration): "Which creature has one voice and yet becomes four-footed and two-footed and three-footed?" Antigone, in a lament, recalls: "he unriddled the riddling song / of the singing Sphinx and slew her dead" (ll. 1503-5, Wyckoff).

Due to its ferocity and intelligence, the sphinx often appears side-by-side with the griffin on gravestones and sarcophagi, guardians of the dead. The griffin—a symbol of enigmatica and divine knowledge—emerges all over antiquity, in Babylonia, Persia, Assyria, and Palestine; he enters Greek culture as a rendering with the wings and head of an eagle, the body and tail of a lion. The *OED* offers both "gryph" and "griph" as the etymology of Griffin; "griph" is "a puzzling question; a riddle," and "gryph" is "a fabulous four-footed bird."

Aside from sphinxes and griffins, hybrid riddling creatures populate the labyrinth of

human folklore—the Irish get the *púca*, a shape-shifter adopts animal and human forms at will and asks passing travelers riddles on the road; Sanskrit stories have the *vetala*, a vampiric, skeletal creature that lives on cremation grounds and enchants its capturers with a tale ending in a question; Slavic-speakers know the *vodyanoy*, a water-spirit that appears as an old man sheathed in black fish scales, who often traps unsuspecting locals into riddling battles and is similar to both the *nokken* of Germanic mythology and the Scottish blue men of the Minch, who conjure storms and force captains to solve their riddles in order to save ships.

It may be only coincidence that *some* hybrid creatures tell riddles, unlike their many counterparts (the centaur, the faun, and the mermaid, to name a few). Another possibility beyond mere correlation—part-human, part-animal monsters might appear so frequently alongside riddles because of our perceived split between intuitive animal drives and the sophisticated cognitive capabilities we've developed over the course of our evolution. At the center of a riddle lies an unexpected metaphor, and like a riddle, the image of a hybrid combines seemingly incongruous parts into a whole. Riddles pitch instinct against reason—our immediate response to a riddle is rarely the right one.

Perhaps, however, the presence of the human-not-human in our riddle-contests has the additional value of sharpening our sense of dread into a palpable edge; what most of the oral literature has in common is this: riddling hybrids accompany risk of destruction—shipwrecks, possessions, drowning, devouring, soul-stealing, and other kinds of high-stakes mischief. Somehow, it is simply more dissonant for a riddle-teller to have hybridity, rather than be strictly human or strictly beast—the Sphinx, the griffin, and the rest are *das Unheimliche*, alien and familiar all at once.

As extensively as riddles might occur, they vary in significance, sometimes appearing

as Mother Goose nursery rhymes or bawdy innuendos, sometimes as threats to livelihoods, communities, but always as an intellectual game of wits, and always as verification that the deliverer must own some secret knowledge. The appearance of menace, though, is what hooks me into the riddle most, because I wonder — what is the source of this dread that ancient cultures had towards the genre? Why has this sense seemingly dropped out of our understanding in modern English? And if I *can* trace it, has it altered?

§

770

I lived on Dread —
 To Those who know
 The Stimulus there is
 In Danger — Other impetus
 Is numb — and Vitalless —

As 'twere a Spur — upon the Soul —
 A Fear will urge it where
 To go without the Sceptre's aid
 Were Challenging Despair.

Who first called Emily Dickinson "the poet of dread"? I wonder if they were referring to her reclusiveness and celibacy, facts of her life that are often cast, for dramatic effect, as bitter impediments to her happiness. I hope, instead, this title refers to the kind of impassioned greeting of dread she makes apparent in 770. "The stimulus" she writes of hardly seems to imply a choice between resisting or resigning oneself to dread — because the dread that one *lives on*, feeds on, is not the dread of a particular thing, like the fear of sex, childbirth, or public spaces, but an *attitude* that is aware of the uncanny situation of being in the world, in a time and a language, and still brushing up against nothingness — *das Unheimliche* again. Under the influence of dread, the world becomes de-familiarized, mutable; Dickinson insists that no "other impetus," no other experience, can produce the energy necessary to pivot into

the "stimulus there is / In danger," which is the energy of questioning and wondering at the way things are.

So far, I've used *dread*, not *fear*, with a specific definition in mind. As an undergraduate, before ever reading Dickinson, I encountered the writings of medieval anchoresses. That the force of their religious passion was shot through with intense suffering struck me as arresting, and as an important puzzle to work out, as these were the first English books by women. One of these mystics was Julian of Norwich, who assorted dread in four ways. Succinctly as possible, they are: fear of injury, fear of death, fear of doubt, and the final, and best according to Julian, the fear "born of reverence," which we might understand as the most archaic definition of dread, *to regard with awe*. Julian says we approach with dread "that which we love most, or that which loves us most" (118-9). While the subjects I approach within my own writing circumvent those first three fears, I find what *emerges* from this process, when I'm successful, is this last kind.

A poem always moves in tandem with the absurdity of its own existence—is it a trivial project? A hopeless one? Plain idiocy? Could a poem ever reach the completion it searches for? At the same time, a poem attempts correspondence, a rendezvous between language, audience, self; and more than that, it can go beyond the intended conversation, an experiment that gets recreated in a reader's mind, transformed every time it is encountered. To be successful, a poem begins by dreading itself—how it makes itself vulnerable by articulating what it loves and what it could possibly become, possibilities it cannot know.

In a later fragment, Dickinson wrote of poetic impulse: "We must travel abreast with Nature if we want to know her, but where shall be obtained the Horse—A something overtakes the mind—we do not hear it coming." To gain experience in the world, especially as

a record-keeper of experience, Dickinson allows herself to be overwhelmed with forces beyond her control, making her something of a mystic, an oracle, or a riddle-teller, imbued with an understanding of limited access.

§

1601

Immured the whole of Life
 Within a magic Prison
 We reprimand the Happiness
 That too competes with Heaven.

Limited access. The paradox is that life is a prison—we are limited in knowledge, in freedom, and our capacity for attaining our desires; one thinks of the increasingly smaller circles Dickinson faced as a reclusive woman attempting to establish literary correspondence. In her poetics, she sought out what she called "circumference," the limits of what poetry (and human knowledge itself) can ascertain (Gribbin 1). Although related to the transcendental circle, the sublime infinitude in which the individual occurs, circumference challenges Emerson's imagery by gesturing to boundaries that give the circle its shape. Dickinson concerns herself with not only the perimeters between symbolic and linguistic order, but also the space within a circle where life and death are experienced, and beyond which awe and poetic discourse cannot penetrate.

Poetry, bound by symbolic and linguistic order, elicits awe that isn't *quite* Emerson's sublime, but is in awe of the "magic" of this prison, an ecstasy in living that has to be enough. And, if I'm allowed to make the circle smaller, for writers, the imprecision of language that has to be enough—we have to be content with how language unfurls itself at a glacial speed, and yet, with constant ambivalence and simultaneity.

As a caveat, then, the "readings" of poems presented throughout are not arguments for

what a poet has *intended*, but instead, they display a working-through of my own poetics. Even the answers I provide myself are sure to burn out because, sooner or later, better articulated questions arise.

§

Percival comes. If I pretend he is not here
 He grows larger in the barn, filling all the shadows,
 And then I cannot go in to feed the cows

And I hear those who give milk crying for milk
 And I see their hearts, like children's palms,
 Opening and closing in the garden. Even in winter

I keep the garden. And Percival, who never looks
 At flowers, taps his fingers on the water
 That has broken on buckets in the barn.

I hear that tapping. Even as I heard him coming,
 Last night through my sleep, through the snow,
 His heavy black coat dropping like wings.

A persona poem is a mechanism through which a poet attempts to create a version of the self, capable of confronting a question; the invention of persona allows the writer to undo a knot in her thinking she can't undo in her own voice. Brigit Pegeen Kelly, in her second book, *Song*, gives us the voice of a gardener, who acutely feels the menace of a strange, Faulknerian farmhand, Percival. What appalls this speaker most is the way Percival, wearing a "heavy black coat" resembling that of Death's, turns from signs of flourishing, "never look[ing] at flowers," as the speaker herself is pledged to life, "even in winter". Here, persona acts as a way to test the boundary (or as Dickinson might say, the circumference) of what knowledge a poem can acquire about death. "Percival" might be a struggle to render the moment of death before it happens, as a way to shrink death—it will not be ignored because, as the speaker says, "If I pretend he is not here / he grows larger [...] filling all the shadows."

It has to be contemplated.

The enigma of this poem is not so much the dread that Percival inspires in his approach, particularly if we elect to read Kelly as transfixing death in a personification; but instead, the enigma is "that tapping" of Percival's fingers on the ice, the sound that signals his presence. The tapping itself is an unanswered question—impossible, maybe, to hear without recalling Poe's raven, tapping at the door of the speaker's study, entering the poem to simply watch Poe's speaker suffer, and to speak to increase that suffering. In "The Raven," the speaker cannot leave his study because the bird transfixes him, pins him there. Its gaze transforms the speaker into a kind of myth—the raven is the reader watching the poem unfold, and because the reader will not leave the poem, our speech holds the narrator in place. Percival, similarly, distorts the reality of the narrative. Kelly's farm rests in its own private world, and nothing unfolds in that world except a sense of dread—the cows cannot be fed, the flowers cannot grow, even the water in the barn is stopped, frozen. Nothing happens but Percival's arrival, both dreamed and real, suspended by the reader's dreading gaze.

§

In the southeastern highlands of modern-day Indonesia, on the island Sumba, lives a people called the Weyewa. The Weyewa have long possessed a religious and cultural identity autonomous from the rest of the country—Sumba is an infertile island lying far from the reach of the spice trade that brought Hindu, Muslim, and later, Dutch influences into most of the country. Until recently, the Weyewa retained the same slash-and-burn agricultural process they had for centuries, and—relevant to our purposes—a poetic ceremony has been intrinsic to this technique.

The patrilineages that structure the hilltop villages on Sumba divide Weyewa society

into units; each unit centers around a *raja*, or a "big man," who, in return for loyalty and goods, guards the sanctity of the tradition and ensures the community's safety. These powerful lineages, symbolized by the spirits of deceased ancestors, still remain the focus of religious practice. Descendants offer ritual sacrifices of animals and rice, along with promises made in the form of ritual poetic speech. Whenever the Weyewa encounter a problem in the community - a crop failure, a drought, a child's death - the trouble is considered a consequence of the failure to properly perform the ceremony, a breakage in the pact formed with ancestral spirits. A new ceremony must take place in order to make the promise anew: the *raja*, a specialist performer, has to find the single "word" that will restore this promise—a kind of sympathetic magic, where causal relations between actions and events fall beyond reason.

Typically, the ceremony begins with the speaker humbling himself before the ancestors and inviting them to take part:

I am like a jar with tiny lips
I am like a bottle with a small mouth

Take this rice!
Right there by you (Kuipers 10)

The poetry-ritual proceeds in couplets, composed on the spot, viewed by the Weyewa as isolated sacred objects of ancient (ancestral) authority. As it progresses, the couplets grow increasingly linguistically and poetically patterned, and yet the relations between the couplets and the context of the ceremony become fragmented and riddle-like, a process anthropologists call *entextualization*:

Therefore the tip is matched
Therefore the trunk is paralleled

These deeds of the Mother

These deeds of the Father

The entire ritual becomes a process of riddle-weaving. For uninitiated listeners, the linkages from couplet to couplet form unexpected, enigmatic conjunctions that might seem deliberately obscure, and in fact, are necessarily obscure; the ritual process depends upon the special mental agility of the speaker, on his ability to be tapped into the spiritual realm and transmit power and authority in his translation. As with a literary riddle, the Weyewa ritual is a mental exercise that answers itself with a single word. And, as Oedipus was threatened in his encounter with the Sphinx, the consequences of failing here are also dire. If the speaker does not compose the couplets correctly, or if he cannot find the right word by the end of the ritual, the troubles will worsen. A more tangible example of the link between poetry and the sensation of dread than most contemporary societies could offer.

For members of the Anglo-Latin tradition, riddles eventually dropped from the collective memory of the *word-borde*, of great importance to social gatherings, and into the scrawled margins of illuminated manuscripts. On Sumba, it is possible to witness a similar socio-linguistic shift, albeit much more compressed. The Weyewa's system of production altered dramatically with the construction of a hydroelectric dam at a sacred spring in the 1970s. This spring made continuous irrigation available over greater areas. Religious leaders found themselves ill-prepared to deal with the acceleration of rice production. Because of the high yields in the past few decades, farmers have been abandoning the infrequent ritual schedule of planting and harvesting. Land is increasingly assigned to individuals, not lineages. New farmers feel more reluctant to invest in costly feasts honoring ancestors, and the government has portrayed this ritual practices as backwards and anti-nationalist. Eventually, public poetry recitations of any kind were outlawed on Sumba—suppressing poetic

expression is now a means to suppress tradition at large and to assert the political power of the official party.

But how could the act of riddling could ever possibly be *dangerous* to anyone, outside mythology? After all, we generally admit that poetry can do little to change the world. It can change individuals, it can help build pockets of communities, but its concerns are the microcosm. "You must change *your* life," says Rilke [emphasis mine]. Indonesia's government fears the Weyewa poem-ritual because for the Weyewa, poetry is shaper and inscriber of their social world, as opposed to a reactive byproduct of that social world. The riddle-poems pose real danger—they not only transmit, but *create* social, religious, and historical realities through “performative” speech.

From this anthropological study, we see *what gets riddled defines one's culture*—the Weyewa's transition from oral, tribal, non-secular to written, national, secular power structures abbreviates the same issues the English language has undergone. It seems the circumstances of writing poetry fall outside the chronology of the everyday (“There is another world and it is in this one,” wrote Paul Éluard). Did speakers, prior to writing, view poetry as a shaper of the social world, and is that why riddles in folklore are so commonly imbued with the feeling of dread? Without it, what use is the riddle for a poet? Is it a children's game, practice for "real" speech? Excuses for poets to write willfully inscrutable verse?

§

Another question might shape an easier entryway: what makes the belief in witchcraft possible? In 1584, Reginald Scot published a hesitatingly skeptical exposé on medieval magic, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, a book that pulled from Latin authors and his own study of village superstitions. Attempting to halt the persecution of the poor, the elderly, and the mentally

handicapped, those commonly being called witches, he set about to prove that reason and Protestantism could not coexist with magic. Below is Scot's primary argument against the existence of witches:

And seeing that art faileth herein, doubtles neither the illusions of divels, nor the cunning of witches, can bring anie such thing truelie to passe. For by the sound of the words nothing commeth, nothing goeth, otherwise than God in nature hath ordeined to be doone by ordinarie speech. (124)

That things and the words that name them are utterly distinct, linked only symbolically, was not exactly the orthodox notion amongst his antecedents, let alone his contemporaries. Almost exactly a hundred years earlier, the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum* detailed how witches, by culling together the proper word-strings, could manipulate physical objects, causing tempests, injuring cattle, and, of course, "depriving man of his virile member," which has its own chapter.

Spell-casting: a witches' weapon, or complete crock? Although difficult to make succinct, the fundamental disagreement in early modern Europe rested on the relationship between a sign and its signifier. To function, an incantation requires an invisible tie between a sign and its referent. Within magic, or natural semiotics, the gap between the metaphorical (the word) and the literal (the thing) is nonexistent. Each sound becomes reified, dynamic, as this linguistic theory hinges on the precision of language. Find exacting words, manipulate material.

In opposition was the emerging scientific perspective: signs are merely signs. This debate became largely represented through John Calvin and Martin Luther's unease with the natural semiotics implied by the Church's doctrine of transubstantiation — did the wafer and

wine recollect the body and blood of Christ, or did they literally transform? As Thomas Greene has pointed out, "The minds of both [men] appear to have been deeply divided between sacramental conjunction and disjunction," an internal tension that was symptomatic of a macrocosmic conceptual question — a question, Greene adds, that "can be acted out freely [in] a work of art," art being a mirror reflecting the tensions at work within culture (32, 42).

Poetry, particularly the riddle, is a platform through which this debate gets endlessly reformulated. How do the tensions between conjunction and disjunction operate when encountered in the language of a poem? And, on a more tangible level, what if poetry *does* manipulate material, if that material is psycho-physical in nature (tiny neurons firing electrical signals to vertebrae, heart, eye?).

§

In her memoir *Life After Picasso*, Françoise Gilot provides an episode in which a young Picasso observes a collection of African masques in the Parisian ethnographic museum, Musée de l'Homme, and returns to describe it to her: "All those objects which men had fashioned with a sacred, magical intent, as intermediaries between them and the unknown hostile forces which surround them, thus attempting to overcome their terror in giving the forces color and form" (248-9). Picasso had had a revelation — "Painting is not an aesthetic process," Gilot quotes. "It's a form of magic which is interposed between the hostile universe and ourselves, a means of seizing power, of imposing on form our fears as on our desires." The same could be said of any poetry expressing personal feelings.

That painting (and, by extension, all creative acts), are an attempt to intuit grounding within an otherwise ungraspable universe, positioning us as subjects in a (mostly) post-magical locale, is an insight that would not have come to Picasso without the philosophical

groundwork that followed the Enlightenment. Following the path of Kant, nineteenth-century philosophers such as Fichte, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche turned towards the subjects of knowledge and capital-S self. I, the mind, human consciousness — elements which constructed ultimate reality within what was often seen as a chaotic, irrational, meaningless universe, one in which the invisible strings that held together signs and their referents — and really a web of *all* objects and humans together — had snagged.

Naturally, the desire for a point at which to anchor self became reflected in the poetry of the time. Despite Picasso's later association with the literary movements such as Cubism and Modernism, the Romantics' nose-wrinkling towards Enlightenment ideals most accurately parallels his concerns as a young man standing in the Musée de l'Homme. Romantic poems such as "Ode to a Nightingale" and "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" present a speaker who *appears* remote from the commotion of the exterior world, but who can only make his or her present moment in time sensible through retrospective reasoning, a meditation that must try to be heard over the clamor of modernity. In *Lyric*, Scott Brewster describes this movement in poetry as "a concentrated expression of individual emotion" but also "stresses its intersubjective character through its relation to [...] public performance" (1). First articulated by the Romantics, this inner and outer layering of the lyric, which had already been present since Sappho and other Greeks, developed into twin sensation: *desire*, the on-going, spontaneous, and artless mind in motion — and *fear*, the ordering, internalized, and withdrawn mind in reflection. (Curiouser and curiouser — another hybrid).

What's strange, though, about Picasso's anecdote is that he dubs this, what is essentially a lyric negotiation, "a form of magic." Is Picasso using "magic" solely in association with tribal art? Is the term "magic" just smoke rising from the Romantic obsession with

irrational impulse, a reaction against the utilitarian? Isn't the very reason why poetic lyricism finds itself in the world is because, without natural semiotics, without being connected in a metaphysical sort of web, the world is a chaos that demands to be made sense of? Without the mentality that speech provides us with a special power over nature itself, theories of language, including the language of visual representation, i.e. modern art, complicates our picture instead of simplifying it. Engagement with language pulls us out of the world of experience and into the world of memory, including the dizzying carousel of etymology.

§

So, what part of our encounter with art is "magic"? That question is a bit terrifying. I'd rather think a little more on Dickinson's "magic Prison," and what that could mean.

Dickinson's Prison exists not only because of the impulse to say, "*This is it?*" when we look at the world around us, especially when a poet considers the flaws of language—but also, we make sense of the world through limited systems of mythic vocabulary. Human imagination pretends to be limitless in scope, but our ability to explain existence symbolically certainly knows some bounds, given how the same stories manage to have different origins. Perhaps humanity has species-specific, inherited predispositions towards certain images, but I'm not equipped to prove that, so here's a simpler argument. Dickinson's "magic" *is* story. Magic is the ability to tap into a communally-shared wealth of metaphors, and to knit together one's life by engaging in that story-telling practice.

§

In the forward to Brigit Kelly's first book, *To the Place of the Trumpets*, James Merrill observes how one of the primary struggles at its heart is "the [Catholic] Church's hold upon her young life, and to the cost at which she struggles free of it" (x-xi). In the poem "Mount

Angel," for instance, the speaker recalls a sermon: "[...] but I tell you, I have lost many / things, and what he said was nothing to me, was / as innocuous as that rosary of plastic peonies." Merrill continues his introduction: "Free of the shaping past? Isn't the most we can do, to be free *with* it, submit it to some shaping of our own?" As with all the foundational stories of childhood, Kelly's religious imagination is worked like brocade into her perspective, and she has to learn to exist with it. All we can do, her poems suggest, is to resist our upbringing—that resistance proves we are alive.

Many poems in Kelly's latest collection, *The Orchard*, further develop this argument. This is a book in which narrative figures, such as a dog eating a dead doe in the book's title poem, repeatedly transform into embodied myths as the speaker tracks her cosmogony, slipping almost helplessly between fact and fantasy:

[...] the apple
 In my hand, against my lips, small,
 Misshapen, the size of a child's fist,
 Full of worms, turned suddenly warm
 And soft. And it was as if, on that hill,
 While the dog fed and the lake lay
 Frozen, I was holding in my hand,
 Against my lips, not a piece of fruit,
 Not a piece of bitter, half-eaten fruit,
 But the still warm and almost beating
 Heart of some holy being— just lifted
 From the dead body. And the heart
 Was heavy. And wet. And it smelled
 As it would smell forever. Of myrrh.
 And burning blood. And gold.

Apple, heart, doe, myrrh, blood: these strike us as so familiar as to make it impossible to see the images without also seeing the tropes that lie beneath the speaker's personal experience. Kelly's orchard is a place of obsession, where objects cycle ruthlessly through transformations - a dream where a horse becomes a living dog, a rotten apple that, once bitten, becomes a

heart - tropes splintering off in unexpected directions as the speaker looks on, swept up in her meditations, akin to Julian of Norwich and other anchoresses afflicted with strange visions.

The pull towards myth fills us with dread, even as myths are *about* dread. With our distancing from the magical properties of story, contemporary art becomes abstruse, becomes enigmatic. We long to be "free from the shaping past," to feel as if we are fashioning ourselves, beholden to our own age, not conceptions of the world that *just won't go away*—yet, as Merrill argues, metamorphosis is sustained not only in the natural world, but also in our imagination. Kelly approaches mutability with dread, but also with love, because mutability signals, for a while, the continuation of life—as such, her transformations are held in tension between low and high emotional registers (eating a heart/a golden heart).

§

[Is there any poetic trope emerging now that might supplant the moon?]

§

It was in the atmosphere of nineteenth-century egoism that Dickinson lived and wrote. She is hardly a woman in need of introduction; however, I will say she is sometimes called the Sphinx of Literature and that by holding herself inside the orbit of her family in Amherst, she put a wedge between herself and most social structures. (She used to bring her niece into her bedroom, make the motion of a key locking by turning her wrist, and tell her, "It's just a turn—and freedom, Matty!").

An aficionado of vernacular English riddles would be quick to point out that Dickinson's are rarely "true," literary riddles; they deal too much in the abstractions of Eternity, Soul, God, Grief, and so on, and as a speaker, she always falls somewhat outside of the material objects she *does* describe. A quick gloss of Anglo-Saxon riddles reveals a focus on

objects related to farm and church, objects in which people could locate themselves unexpectedly. From her isolated, alienated, revisionist position, Dickinson felt a desire for the world that is only brought by lack; she could not attempt to take a place in any literary tradition, or even in standard everyday discourse; she took old tropes and reevaluated them — one of these was the riddle, which she often enclosed in her personal letters, alongside scraps of clues, like pine needles.

§

381

A Secret told—
 Ceases to be a Secret — then —
 A Secret — kept —
 That — can appall but One —

Better of it — continual be afraid —
 Than it —
 And Whom you told it to — beside —

As Susan Howe calls it, the dash is a hesitation, a forced breath on the page, a lapse in the structure of the poem where words risk nullifying or erasing themselves, an indication of the dread of the interior (it is difficult to continue, yet it has to be done). Of his own work, W.S. Merwin has said that "punctuation nails the poem down on the page"; like the total absence of titles, dashes avoid coming to rest at one conclusion, and so they function as an opening of meaning, the secret of the poem, as they simultaneously indicate an attempt to maintain control over one's inner life.

Riddles develop their own strange grammatical systems in order to stress the paradox of natural law. For example, from Old Norse, "On high fells what lives? / What falls in deep

dales?" adopts the simple present tense of "lives" and "falls", confusing images of high/deep and the temporal unfolding of the scene, and the ambiguous interrogative creates a parallel between object and living being. While not in the same style, in this early poem, Dickinson's hesitations create an idiosyncratic structure that complicates the already unconventionally fragmented syntax, "A Secret— kept—/That—can appall but One," and "Better of it— continual be afraid—/Than it—," indicating that while it may be wise not to divulge secrets for the preservation of one's social self, speech by its nature is conflicted between self-revelation and self-concealment.

How the voice of the poem begins - "A Secret told" - signals we are entering the poem with expectations of proverb, of straightforward advice, yet within the next couple of lines, the interruption of the dashes also disrupts this assumption. In describing how a secret is concealed, it enacts a secret, a desire to *partially* communicate experiences that are locked away. The language in a poem must open and close, to take what's inside the poet and try to put it on the outside of the poet. Poetry concentrates on the felt-emotion concealed within words, but because our language is an imperfect tool of expression, we're always failing to fully reveal ourselves through words, akin to the tension of dread and relief that comes with self-disclosure—"A Secret told" *is* "[a] Secret—kept."

§

[What is the difference between a poem and a letter?]

§

Secret and sacred are cognates—from the *OED*, the etymological root of secret is the Latin *secretus*, "to set apart;" for sacred, it's the Latin *sacrare*, which additionally means "to set apart," among a few other definitions (including "hold sacred," "immortalize," and

“dedicate.”). For Dickinson to suggest but not divulge a secret grants her a position of authority over her audience (although "authority" simplifies, for kept secrets are burdens to the secret keeper). Nonetheless, to set something apart is to imbue it with special power. Sacredness moves an event, object, or person away from the mundane world, into a world of specialized knowledge. A person with a secret is empowered beyond the restrictions of ordinary social boundaries (as Mr. Bennet accurately noted, “A girl likes to be crossed in love a little now and then. It is something to think of, and gives her a sort of distinction among her companions.”).

§

A secret is always true, at least for the person who reveals it. One mark distinguishes a riddle from an ordinary secret—a riddle unlocks a particular view of the world nested in that culture's image of itself; its metaphors cannot be comprehended without shared cultural consciousness. Without a little foreknowledge of life at sea, it might be difficult for us to solve the riddle that, tradition holds, plagued Homer to death when he failed to answer the fishermen's boys: "What we caught, we threw away, and what we didn't catch we kept." (The answer is *lice*, by the way.) Riddles become sites for working out cultural anxieties. For those contemporary to the *Exeter Book*, one of four remaining Anglo-Saxon poetry collections, the otherness of its riddle-creatures expresses the English disquietude "about the actual or potential threat posed by Viking incursions [...] in the wake of the Benedictine Reform" (McFadden 329). The marvels of talking swords and Christian crosses challenge the reader to penetrate the cloak of mystery around the ordinary objects they describe. In doing so, the tensions formed by these unprecedented and perhaps threatening encounters with riddled objects – consciously or unconsciously echoing the anxieties about Viking aggressions

– allows the “supposed marvel’s uncertainty to be contained in the safe, familiar context of an object in the reader's experience” (329-30).

A second mark that further distinguishes a riddle-secret from an ordinary secret: it is a wisdom-conveying technology, related to an aphorism or a proverb, but with a truth that must be worked towards with difficulty. Dickinson knew it was necessary to embed new perspectives about such cultural anxieties within riddle-language:

1263

Tell all the truth but tell it slant —
 Success in Circuit lies
 Too bright for our infirm Delight
 The Truth's superb surprise
 As Lightning to the Children eased
 With explanation kind
 The Truth must dazzle gradually
 Or every man be blind —

Here, she likens truth to a lightning bolt, a happening that comes as a “superb surprise,” yet that must reveal itself “gradually” and “[w]ith explanation kind,” otherwise it might blind us. The rhythm of this poem, alternating lines of iambic tetrameter and trimeter, evokes the flashing and receding of insight that must be pondered. Truth can be “[t]oo bright for our infirm Delight” —she rarely wrote directly about the political upheaval around her - slavery and civil war - yet we know she was intellectually and emotionally invested. (Thomas Wentworth Higginson, her primary correspondent, was a radical abolitionist, and it was these publications that drew her to him).

How does a poet write about urgent concerns, knowing that futurity will consider the past oblivious and uncivilized, if it remembers the past at all? For all its relevance to its contemporaries, the *Exeter Book* came to be used as a cutting board, and later, as a coaster for someone's beer. It seems likely Dickinson would answer that a reader is rewarded with

knowledge that goes beyond the limits of the poem if the writing itself approaches its audience from a "slant," an unexpected point of entrance to truth. I think this may also be my answer to a question asked earlier: *what use is the riddle to a poet today?*

§

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,
 And Mourners to and fro
 Kept treading - treading - till it seemed
 That Sense was breaking through -

And when they all were seated,
 A Service, like a Drum -
 Kept beating - beating - till I thought
 My mind was going numb -

And then I heard them lift a Box
 And creak across my Soul
 With those same Boots of Lead, again,
 Then Space - began to toll,

As all the Heavens were a Bell,
 And Being, but an Ear,
 And I, and Silence, some strange Race,
 Wrecked, solitary, here -

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,
 And I dropped down, and down -
 And hit a World, at every plunge,
 And Finished knowing - then -

Compare this poem to a riddle in Giorgio Agamben's *Language and Death*:

Albinus. What is and yet is not?
 Pippinus. Nothing.
 A: How can it be and not be?
 P: It is in name and it is not in substance.

Whenever we direct our attention towards the identity of self, we also fixate on the absence of identity, in other words, the consciousness of self-death. Our speaking of death is an attempt to establish control over the uncontrollable, in the way Agamben's riddle suggests

what allows us to articulate a human voice is nothingness, a kind of negativity ("Zero," Dickinson would say). "I felt a Funeral in my Brain" signals a motion towards surrealism, where death can only be brought into language through enigma—again Dickinson asserts that art exists to challenge particular kinds of world orders. Like the multifaceted personification in "Because I could not stop for Death," the slipperiness of this poem is in how the ritual of a funeral is rendered in several unexpected ways.

Rather than order the narrative around funeral rites, the "Mourners / [...] treading—treading—till" sense breaks through, 280 resists this center with a tone that becomes strangely impartial, consumed by the sequence of events that goes beyond the "Service": "And Being, but an Ear, / And I, and Silence, some strange Race, / Wrecked, solitary, here—". The narrative is explicitly concerned with the relationship between art (or the artifice of tradition) and 'real' life; the habitual order of the funeral and the growing disjointedness of the methods that define the speaker's consciousness are locked in tension between order and chaos—too little articulation of the funeral ceremony, and the reader would be alienated from the poem—too little a distortion of the self, and the poem would become monotonous and unfeeling. This balancing act signals that, because nothing in the world can escape its destruction, humanity has to fashion its own order.

When the set of funerary associations quickly unravels—"a Plank in Reason, broke / And I dropped down"—"hit a World, at every plunge"—Dickinson admits to having no idea how the state of dying or being dead actually works. "Finished knowing" acts as a double entendre: has the speaker lost consciousness, being no longer in the fantasy world of the poem, or has she reached some kind of completion that language is incapable of seizing? Her ambiguity is not only deliberate, but inborn to the subject, and because of this doubled

uncertainty that comes from an inductive approach to writing, the poem exemplifies Keat's negative capability. That is, not *only* approaching a poem with an amateur sensibility, but allowing the work to shape itself around a core question, a question that willfully resists answers or further condensing. Fragment 123 from Heraclitus declares that "Nature loves to hide itself." Expressed truth has a semblance of riddle about it; everything is flux, process.

§

1212

A word is dead when it is said
 Some say—
 I say it just begins to live
 That day.

If the nineteenth century was fascinated with its new notion of self-consciousness, unsurprisingly, it became obsessed with the annihilation of consciousness, self-death. Language, because it articulates and preserves identity, provides a field of play for the working-through of this fear.

In 1212, Dickinson posits that speech does not kill the power of words—instead, words die only when they go unused, or pass out of human memory entirely. The end-stopped arrival of "some say" underscores the confidence of the opening line. With it, a contrast is set up between the conventional wisdom of the "some" and the "I" persona. 1212 makes a subtle argument for Dickinson's intimacy with the vehicle of language—because we encounter her take on literacy and death within a poem itself that's doing its own work within language, that lends her philosophy tremendous weight that the "some say" cannot compete with.

Many writers have addressed the separation that poets occasionally fancy marks their identity—Susan Howe says that "there is a mystic separation between poetic vision and ordinary living" (13). Speech is one of the key markers of identity; one's speech forms through

the circumstances of one's life, and through speech in action, the self is asserted within its community. But once a *poem* is spoken, it no longer belongs to the speaker—a poem sheds its connection to the individual writer, invites the interpretation of the reader.

Fear of change, divergence, breakdown in communication—how could Dickinson relay to an audience her concerns about the vitality of language through language itself? Traveling back to etymology, Dickinson investigates a word's original metaphor concealed by history, profiting from the image implied by its first speakers; then, however, she often disjoints the meaning of the word from both dated and current usages to fit the context of her argument. The word "decoys," for example, in "I have a Bird in spring / Which for myself doth sing—/The Spring decoys," means "lures or traps," possibly from the Dutch *kooi*, or "cage," wherein a pond was surrounded by nets to lure in waterfowl for capture, but "decoys" simultaneously means "stops being coy" — "coy" comes with its own lexical heft, from the Old French *coi*, "quiet, gentle," which became "shy," likely Dickinson's understanding of the word.

Wordplay and the slipperiness of definition are essential to a riddling poet, who exploits the meaning of words to demonstrate rhetorical skills. Out of her wordplay comes Dickinson's brand of poetics, where the way to gain knowledge of a subject is not by enclosing words into an argument, placing the words under the writer's control, but allowing the connective tissue of each word's history to generate new meanings for the writer.

§

It was not Death, for I stood up,
And all the Dead, lie down -
It was not Night, for all the Bells
Put out their Tongues, for Noon.

It was not Frost, for on my Flesh
I felt Siroccos - crawl -
Nor Fire - for just my marble feet

Could keep a Chancel, cool -

And yet, it tasted, like them all,
The Figures I have seen
Set orderly, for Burial
Reminded me, of mine -

As if my life were shaven,
And fitted to a frame,
And could not breathe without a key,
And 'twas like Midnight, some -

When everything that ticked - has stopped -
And space stares - all around -
Or Grisly frosts - first Autumn morns,
Repeal the Beating Ground -

But most, like Chaos - Stopless - cool -
Without a Chance, or spar -
Or even a Report of Land -
To justify - Despair.

510 takes on a definitional posture, as with many Dickinson poems, wherein the "it" neglects proper reference until the final word "Despair." Just like a riddle, the first stanza begins with a paradoxical guessing game as the "it" is omitted and must be sought after by the audience.

Through negation ("It was not [X]") and pronoun ellipses, the definition of despair gestures to a longing for order, but this must be some architecture beyond the ordinary world—the paratactical syntax throughout pushes against standardized word order (for example, "Nor Fire - for just my marble feet / Could keep a Chancel cool - // And yet, it tasted, like them all, / The Figures I have seen" or "As if my life were shaven, / And fitted to a frame, / And could not breathe without a key")). Certain words, such as "Noon" and "Midnight" are imbued with a magical quality, indicating points at which both death and infinity are implicated, and the caravan of *nots* becomes a trance-inducing mantra, a ritual that falls outside the everyday use of language, a place where the personification of entities occurring in the fifth stanza ("space

stares," "Autumn mourns") threatens a stable sense of substance and selfhood.

§

[What does riddle reveal about the substance of an object?]

§

In its process of transition from oral to written word, charms and riddles often became bound into the same context—the ancient Greek for "riddle" translates to "verbal snare" (compare to the Old English *ræðan*, "to advise, counsel, read, guess;"). Artifacts from Scandinavia and Viking settlements abroad, such as the Rök Runestone - the first known piece of writing in Swedish literature - inscribe riddles and various cyphers for use in magical rituals.

This coincidence suggests that obscurity in language preserves a sense of the magical. Northrop Frye wrote "a riddle is like a charm in reverse," noticing that Lewis Carroll's riddles typically try to overwhelm sense by distracting sound-play. Both genres, he observed, set similar linguistic traps. As an example, this is a riddle from the Scottish Highlands (of unknown date, although it appears in an altered form in Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin*):

Come a riddle, come a riddle, rote-tote-toe;
A wee, wee man, in a red, red coat,
A staff in his hand, and a bone in his throat;
Come a riddle, come a riddle rote-tote-tote.

Melos clearly drives this riddle: the alliteration of "c," "r," and "w," the refrain and repetition of the words "wee" and "red," the rhyming, sing-song rhythm, and presence of nonsense language pushes the listener into a space beyond the rational. If a spell uses such tricks to send the speaker into a trance state, where ordinary psychological laws do not quite apply, a riddle relies on these sonic devices so that the listener's attention is driven away from the

relationship of the ideas and onto the language itself, making it more challenging to solve.

Contemporary poems rarely fall perfectly into the riddle genre, but the language of many is informed by riddles to impose a kind of difficulty for the reader (after all, there's little reward without effort). Excerpted below is an early poem by Kelly, "To the Place of the Trumpets":

To the place of the trumpets,
To the place where the sun sets,
To the place where the peace sits,

We are going. By twos
Or threes, going to choose
New weather and new clothes,

The new sound of words walking
As trees among the winging
Fields, the fields on the herons' wings;

[...]

Where quiet ways grow,
Where the wound loves the arrow,
Where ankle and adder know

Accord, where the lion's lamb
Leads him to the grasses down,
Leads him with her little song[.]

As with many of Kelly's poems, the diction is plainspoken; however, form and content work against an easy recognition of meaning—the surreal imagery, disembodied voice, and ahistorical, atemporal locale illustrate the riddle's entrapment of wisdom. The vocabulary elides personal pronoun, and only infrequently employs functional words such as adjectives or appositives. At first glance, this simplicity tricks the audience into interpreting the lines as artless information, but the bizarre confluences alert us to the illogical abstractions, and the distracting elements of song - anaphora, musicality, rhyme - push the poem further beyond

rational space. Images personify the physical world and bring it into the human world: "peace sits," "words walking as trees," "ankle and adder know accord," in the way the Scottish highlands riddle creates a correspondence: *man equals cherry*.

As in the riddle example, where the answer has startling veracity, the mystery of Kelly's meaning exists solely through the "spell" created by the reduction and coherence of her metaphors, and by the production of a cadence which conveys meaning beyond accumulated word-strings, what Robert Frost calls "sentence sound." An odd feeling sometimes occurs during the performance of a virtuoso: watch a pianist long enough, and it can become difficult to tell whether she is putting music *into* the piano, or whether she is pulling music *out* of the piano; in the most magical moments of poetry, reader can enact writer, subject, and audience, all at once. For poets, this might mean: take care of the sound, and sense will follow.

§

There is a way, however, that a riddle is not the reverse of a charm, but a charm in action. Giambattista Vico said, "While the mind perceives itself, it does not make itself" (DA 52). This was his argument against Descartes' dualism, the notion that clear, distinct ideas are the source of truth; instead, Vico insists we can only truly come to know that which we make ourselves—*making is knowing*. In many regards, Vico – writing in the 17th century – anticipates what becomes Kant's position—that we can never directly know the world as it exists outside of our minds. It's common to demonstrate Kant through a classic thought experiment. One can imagine a man with a horse's body (a centaur) with ease, but it will be impossible to imagine a rider standing next to his horse, with neither horse nor rider on the left. Through these kinds of arguments, Kant gathers that our minds are able to perceive space and time

only through basic and innate scaffolding, but that scaffolding is not a structure we can escape.

A poet's principal enterprise is presumably empathy, to make readers know the feeling of the speaker through the activity of the language — "The mollusk doesn't know its shell until it lives in it," Paul Valéry wrote. *Understanding* a poem's content or argument is not enough to produce feeling; emotion extends beyond the intellect and into the body. A poem has to rival a sensory, physical experience of being in the world to make itself known. The relationship between truth and active engagement with the world, for Vico, is reciprocal. Knowing is making. Emotion must be made anew, every time.

How does the language of a poem make itself inside the reader's mind? If I turn to Dickinson, she says, "One need not be a chamber to be haunted." The mind is infinitely larger than a chamber — to imagine a thing into existence is a natural deed for a person — and metaphor is the linguistic arena that allows for perceptual events to occur spontaneously in the mind. For capturing flashes of insight or high emotion, one of the most powerful means is to unite two things that seem to be logically disconnected so they emit a charge. A metaphor is a perceived folding of two points in time and space, bypassing our expectations of how time and space operate entirely. Somehow, when we encounter a forceful metaphor — "Hope is the thing with feathers," "Remorse — is Memory — awake" — we feel that the hidden substances of the objects described reveal themselves; like pressing on ice until it cracks, we are pressing on the words until a new, felt understanding of the physical world emerges.

The riddle genre seems hyperaware of the psychology of metaphor. As Richard Wilbur has noted, once a clever riddle is solved, the pleasure left is the emotional texture of the metaphor — the way in which the riddle allows us to reinvent our perception once more (39).

As an example, here is the shortest Anglo-Saxon riddle in the *Exxeter Book*:

Wundor wearð on wege—wæter wearð to bane!

[There was a wonder along the way—water became bone!]

Not a tricky riddle at all (the solution is "ice"). Yet, the spatial collapsing - *ice equals bone* - is what gives listeners pleasure, as they are able to access the world in a new way, to approach ice as though for the first time. Although the scientific description has a beauty of its own, this definition of ice, at least for me, imparts more emotional significance than its arguably truer sibling, *water frozen into a solid state*, because its act of defining is suspended between subject and object.

It is not quite enough to say that *riddle equals metaphor*. The making lies less in discovering the answer and more in the laboratory of the riddle, where the search for meaning-making is on-going. Northrop Frye writes that "we solve the riddle by coming out of the mirror, into the world that words and things reflect," that it is (147). While the essence of objects, if such a thing even exists, might stay secret and unnamable, these comparisons allow us to name what is around us—the transubstantiation of poetry then, to corrupt a term, is to create something out of nothingness, *poof*, a connection that wasn't there before, in the way that first song inexplicably came to Cædmon. Looking through Vico's eyes, this is a subtle form of performative magic—where the act of saying something makes it true, true by the process of making.

§

Kelly's "Song," a mythical piece of narrative, recounts the brutal tale of a girl's pet goat, killed by a group of unthinking boys:

But listen: here is the point. The boys thought to have
Their fun and be done with it. It was harder work than they

Had imagined, this silly sacrifice, but they finished the job,
 Whistling as they washed their large hands in the dark.
 What they didn't know was that the goat's head was already
 Singing behind them in the tree. What they didn't know
 Was that the goat's head would go on singing, just for them,
 Long after the ropes were down, and that they would learn to listen,
 Pail after pail, stroke after patient stroke. They would
 Wake in the night thinking they heard the wind in the trees
 Or a night bird, but their hearts beating harder. There
 Would be a whistle, a hum, a high murmur, and, at last, a song,
 The low song a lost boy sings remembering his mother's call.
 Not a cruel song, no, no, not cruel at all. This song
 Is sweet. It is sweet. The heart dies of this sweetness.

Turning unexpectedly from traditional storytelling, the narrative lens twists from the experience of the victims - the goat, and the girl who loved him - and towards the boys who slaughtered it. Kelly captures their interior lives with a gentleness and patience at odds with their violent act. The "song" is the poet's vocation, which is tied to immanent sense of mystery in the world. Kelly's emphasis on ritual, the act of killing an animal "sacrifice," and on the haunting of the goat's severed head, recalls the myth of Orpheus, poetry's foundational myth, in which the life of art becomes separate. By looking back on the process of creation and reflecting upon it, the poet-figure becomes separate from her song and cannot control it.

Producing a song that has the ability to make heart beats harder, that continues to sing long after its singer, expanding in the mind, is not only an arduous task ("Pail after pail, stroke after patient stroke"), but requires that the head and heart, the rational and emotional, be inexplicably bound up. Linking to other poems of Kelly's, such as "Percival," the pails of goats-milk is likened to the nourishment that comes from poetry, which "[i]s sweet [...] The heart dies of this sweetness." Poetry can do this because it *won't* data. Enabling information to flow from one person to the next—that's ordinary speech. But the aim of poetry, and especially the riddle, is to disrupt and delay information.

I am struck now, in a way I wasn't before, by Antigone's description of the Sphinx's riddle as a "song." I look again, and in *Oedipus Rex*, the Chorus refers to the Sphinx as a "singer of tales," *rhapsode*, the term applied to an epic poet. Early Greeks must have intuited a link between the Sphinx's riddle and the poet's public utterance: both create verbal snares that have a certain binding power over their audiences (like Siren-song), and both forms create political possibilities—their performances have ramifications for entire communities.

Bibliography

- Agamben, Giorgio. *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006. Print.
- Borges, Luis Jorge. *The Book of Imaginary Beings*. New York: Penguin, 2006. Print.
- Brewster, Scott. *Lyric: The New Critical Idiom*. New York: Routledge, 2009. Print.
- Dickinson, Emily. *Final Harvest: Emily Dickinson's Poems*. New York: Little, Brown & Co, 1961. Print.
- Julian of Norwich. *Revelations of Divine Love*. Translated by John Skinner. New York: Penguin, 1999. Print.
- Frye, Northrop. "Charms and Riddles." *Spiritus Mundi: Essays on Literature, Myth, and Society*. Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1976. Print.
- Gilot, Françoise, and Carlton Lake. *Vivre avec Picasso*. Trans. Thomas Greene. Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1965. Print.
- Greene, Thomas. *Poetry, Signs, and Magic*. Newark, NJ: U. of Delaware Press, 2005. Print.
- Gribbin, Laura. "Emily Dickinson's Circumference: Figuring a Blind Spot in the Romantic Tradition." *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 2.1 (1993): 1-21. Print.
- Howe, Susan. *My Emily Dickinson*. New York: New Directions, 2007. Print.
- Kelly, Brigit Pegeen. *To the Place of the Trumpets*. New Haven: Yale U.P., 1988. Print.
- . *Song*. Rochester, NY: BOA Editions, 1995. Print.
- . *The Orchard*. Rochester, NY: BOA Editions, 2004. Print.
- Kuipers, Joel C. "The Poetics of Power: Sumba and Beyond." *AnthroNotes* 13.3. (Fall 1991): 8-12. Smithsonian Libraries Web. 30 December 2014.

- McDowell, John Holmes. *Children's Riddling*. Bloomington: Indiana U.P. 1979. Print.
- McFadden, Brian. "Raiding, Reform, and Reaction: Wondrous Creatures in the Exeter Book Riddles." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 50.4 (Winter 2008): 329-351. Print.
- Nietzsche, Friederich. *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Trans. Ronald Speirs. New York: Cambridge U.P., 1999. Print.
- Ruefle, Mary. *Madness, Rack, and Honey*. Seattle: Wave Books, 2012.
- Scot, Reginald. *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*. Mineola, NY: Dover, 1989. Print.
- Tiffany, Daniel. *Infidel Poetics: Riddles, Nightlife, Substance*. Chicago: Chicago U.P., 2000. Print.
- Vico, Giambattista. *New Science*. Trans. Dave Marsh. New York: Penguin, 2000. Print.
- Wilbur, Richard. *The Catbird's Song*. Boston, MA: Harcourt, 1997. Print.