

# EMILY DICKINSON'S NATURE IMAGERY IN HER POETIC CONSONANCE

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## Abstract

One of the most recognised American poets of the 19th century, Emily Dickinson is known for her mysterious and introspective poetry. Although she uses a variety of subjects and ideas in her work, her remarkable use of nature imagery and poetic consonance stands out as a distinctive aspect. This study examines the fundamental relationship between Dickinson's nature imagery and her meticulous deployment of consonance, illuminating their importance in heightening the poetry's emotional impact. The research starts out by looking at Dickinson's love of nature and her intense immersion in it. It is clear from a close examination of a few poems that Dickinson drew inspiration from nature and used it as a means of exploring important existential issues. Her profound awareness of the beauty and complexity of her surroundings is evident in her observations of the natural world, which range from the minute details of flora and fauna to the vastness of the cosmos. In addition, the study looks into Dickinson's widespread use of consonance in her poetry which adeptly captures the sensory experience of nature through the thoughtful use of consonant sounds, allowing the reader to empathise with the scenes more deeply. The research also examines how Dickinson's use of environmental imagery and poetic consonance relates to a particular theme. It argues that by combining these ideas, she may depict powerful emotions and existential struggles. Dickinson uses nature as a figurative canvas on which to reflect on life, death, love, and transcendence. She can communicate and depict complicated interior states of being by using consonance to enhance the emotional impact and poetic beauty of her poetry.

This study sheds new light upon the significance of natural imagery and poetic consonance in Dickinson's poetry by exploring the complicated link between them. It underscores how the natural world and the interior world of human emotions and thoughts interact, illuminating the breadth and complexity of her lyrical vision. Ultimately, the paper helps reader deepen his/her comprehension of Emily Dickinson's creative accomplishments and the ongoing impact of her poetry.

**Keywords:** American Poetry, Emily Dickinson, Metaphor, Nature Imagery, Poetic Consonance.

## DISCUSSION

With regards to thematic concerns reflected in her poems, Miss Dickinson is pretty much pluralistic. She is celebrated as poet of Love, Nature, Death, Transcendentalism, and Symbolism. Her creations are related to both the self and the society. That said, thanks to her self-reflective disposition, the voice from within the soul is palpable and experienceable. Her poems conveyed her life of isolation, seclusion, solitude, alienation, and astute observation. As known already, Dickinson lived a pretty solitary life since a very young age. She could relate to a relatively small number of people as a result. She found sanctuary in nature in this way. She could see the natural wonders that she had seen, appreciated, and written about right outside her bedroom window. She had a profound connection to nature. Because of this, it appears frequently in her poems. In fact, she used a variety of natural elements in her poetry to communicate both symbolic and literal meanings. For Wordsworth, Emerson, and many other poets, nature has always been a major theme and concern. For those who took refuge in nature, everything had life, everything had a living soul. That's exactly how mother can be justified to be playing different roles such as mother, teacher, and a perpetual confidante. In the seclusive world of Dickinson, where no invasion was apparently permissible/possible, nature managed to stay put. It remained a perpetual centre of attention. She used to spend majority of her time observing it and noting down the intricacies, dimensions, characteristics and the ways in which things attracted her. Along with the vast grounds that surrounded her house, her garden was her closest environment. She had restricted her perspective to it and something she would eventually see outside of her personal space.

All the occurrences in the world of nature be it sunrise, sunset, seasonal change or the living creatures were given considerable place by her. Everything from mountain to a blade of grass, regardless of the size got place in her imagination. Frisbie Whicher propounds that "the world of nature in more familiar aspects lay ready to her hand. She availed herself of it as soon as she began to write poems at all and continued to the end. "About one-fifth of her nature poetry may be classified as nature poetry" (251). Dickinson had discovered comfort, calm, and consolation in nature, and she was drawn to the spirit that pervaded it all.

The profoundness of relationship between herself and nature is highlighted by the poet's own statement in her response to Higginson, who had interrogated about her family, social and intellectual life; in the section where she is narrating her companions, following is what she writes:

You ask of my Companions Hills—Sir—and the Sundown—and a Dog—large as myself, that my Father bought me – They are better than Beings – because they know – but do not tell – and the noise in the Pool, at Noon – excels my Piano. (Letters, p.404)

Emily Dickinson gained recognition and attention as a young kid for her exceptional intellectual ability, love of reading, and interest in poetry.

As a child, Emily Dickinson was soon distinguished for her rare intellectual capacity and interest in and love for books. The Amherst Academy had an enormous library with myriad of literature giving heavy emphasis on the natural sciences. Botany was one of the subjects Dickinson loved the most to study in school. She came into contact with texts during her years of educational formation that mostly used the Bible to provide instances for theories about nature and natural events. Emily Dickinson was in constant touch with the Bible, either implicitly or explicitly, and it provided valuable inspiration for her later collection of poems about nature.

The lecturers' main objective and mission at her institution was to win the students to Christ. Therefore, their objective had a profound impact on the teaching's subject matter. One such instance of this is Edward Hitchcock, Reverend Professor of Science and President of Amherst College. Young students of Amherst were taught science by him however always with the objective of "leading his students to God through the study of His works" (Sewall, 344) and this was purpose was fulfilled by him through mediums such as lectures, intellectual discourse, exchange of ideas, sermons and even trips into nature. He achieved quite a reverential place in the early letters of Emily Dickinson, and hence could not remain uninfluenced. The profound analysis of nature in the courses of Amherst College sparked the intense love for nature in the mind and heart of the poetess.

The evolving philosophical, intellectual, and spiritual climate of New England in the nineteenth century also contributed to the poet's development of a close bond with nature. Key individuals like Emerson and Thoreau, particularly in literary and philosophical circles, introduced ideas that altered prevailing philosophical and theological paradigms. The close reading and accurate interpretation of Emily Dickinson's poetic expression reveal undeniable parallels to these great representatives of the romantic transcendental spirit of the time, despite the fact that she was not associated with and had no apparent contact with any of them. The poet's keen intuition propels her on a journey to comprehend the meaning of life and natural events in a way that differs from other literary thinkers of the age. Her nature poetry represents arguably the largest collection of poetical rhymes to and about nature written by a sole artist in America during the nineteenth century.

Although Emily Dickinson may not have embraced the refined rhetoric of her contemporary literary men and women, she undoubtedly inhaled the indoctrinating air of the transcendentalist movement. The apparent contrasts that become obvious after carefully examining Dickinson's poetry and the principles that underlie them, however, should not be ignored. Her ideas about nature are still independent of any other pattern but her own. Her varied beliefs become especially apparent when the interaction between God, nature, and man is taken into account. The transcendental principles of Emerson, "that the poet can absorb the spirit that energizes nature and so achieve merger with the Oversoul" (Anderson, 75), founded on a mystical base, was never welcomed by Dickinson. She successfully differentiates between God and nature in her hypotheses and deductions, keeping man and nature entirely apart. At this juncture, she distinguishes herself even from Whitman. If Whitman's symbols are established upon a view that believes in the pantheistic blender of God, nature and man, then in that context, the symbols by Dickinson keep the triumvirate quite apart. The fact that she was, at least indirectly, affected by her contemporaries' ideas and beliefs must be acknowledged, notwithstanding her singularity and deviations from them.

For Emily Dickinson, nature was what she heard and saw, what she experienced via her senses. However, she went beyond this, equating nature with Heaven or God rather frequently. Despite being acutely aware of nature's diversity, she felt how the harmony of natural law bound everything together.

"Nature" is what we see —  
The Hill — the Afternoon —  
Squirrel — Eclipse — the Bumble bee —  
Nay — Nature is Heaven —  
Nature is what we hear —  
The Bobolink — the Sea —  
Thunder — the Cricket —  
Nay — Nature is Harmony —  
Nature is what we know —  
Yet have no art to say —  
So impotent Our Wisdom is  
To her Simplicity. (Poem 668)

Beyond the miniscule and enchanting dimensions of nature that captured her attention and inspired her poems, she intuitively realised that there was a reality she could never fully comprehend or articulate. Despite the fact that she was apparently preoccupied with the particularities of nature—the hill, the afternoon, a squirrel, an eclipse, the bumble-bee, the bobolink, the sea, thunder, the cricket, she discovered manifestations of the universal in them. Professor Whicher has noted that, while there is a theological meaning implicit in her handling of it, this connotation is very lightly emphasised, and that her approach towards nature was more like that of an artist than a philosopher. (Whicher, 262) Although it is a characteristic of Emily Dickinson's work that the philosophical and religious relevance is never highlighted, there is little question that it was significant to her. She discovered a religious symbol, a mystic rapture, and the solution to her real-world puzzles in nature.

The rainbow never tells me  
That gust and storm are by,  
Yet is she more convincing  
Than Philosophy.  
My flowers turn from Forums —  
Yet eloquent declare  
What Cato couldn't prove me  
Except the birds were here! (Poem 97)

For the poetess - the rainbow, her flowers, and the birds were evidence enough of a sublime and divine reality. Even the selection of rainbow as an image recalls God's agreement with Noah, a symbol of the eternal covenant between Almighty and every living being including flora and fauna on the earth.

For Emily Dickinson, nature served as both a philosophy and a religion, and the sensitive and astute care with which she observed and chronicled it in all of its incarnations speaks volumes about her reverent attitude. She preside over summer's funeral in one poem about autumn and concludes with a benediction:

In the name of the bee

And of the butterfly And of the breeze, amen! (Dickinson, Lines 5-7)

Although Emily Dickinson's poetry of nature often has a mystical or religious undercurrent, she sees nature in a wide variety of ways and uses a wide range of imagery. By doing so, she gives life to and gives credibility to abstract theological and metaphysical generalisations. Besides being heaven and harmony, nature is also mother, housewife, countryman, spacious citizen, juggler, and showman.

Even when the poet uses a conventional imagery like Mother Nature, she does so in a unique way that avoids being trite or clichéd and instead offers us a fresh perspective on an age-old image.

Nature — the Gentlest Mother is,  
Impatient of no Child —  
The feeblest — or the waywardest —  
Her Admonition mild —  
In Forest — and the Hill —  
By Traveller — be heard —  
Restraining Rampant Squirrel —  
Or too impetuous Bird —  
How fair Her Conversation —  
A Summer Afternoon —  
Her Household — Her Assembly —  
And when the Sun go down —  
Her Voice among the Aisles  
Incite the timid prayer  
Of the minutest Cricket —  
The most unworthy Flower —  
When all the Children sleep —  
She turns as long away  
As will suffice to light Her lamps —  
Then bending from the Sky —  
With infinite Affection —  
And infinite Care —  
Her Golden finger on Her lip —  
Wills Silence — Everywhere — ( Poem 790 )

This personification of nature as the gentlest mother is cherished and well-recognised, and the feeling of her being gentle towards all her children is portrayed through progressive imagery, ranging from the colossal facets of forest and hill to squirrel, bird, "the minutest cricket," and "the most unworthy flower." Vague, broad imagery like "her conversation," which are interwoven with the more specific, are used to evoke the senses of sight and sound. The image of aisles and "the timid prayer" of the flower and cricket both convey a reverent

mood. The last two words eloquently capture the beautiful stillness of a calm night after nature has lit her lamps. "Her golden finger on her lips" conjures up an intense picture of nature's boundless love and care, reminding each person of a childhood memory of his own mother making a similar gesture before night. With its associations with value and purity, the adjective "golden" enriches the image. The verb wills provides nature's activities purpose and heightens the sense of security. It is clear that the skilful use of imagery, rather than the concept itself, elevates this poem above the mundane and is responsible for its success in conveying the reassuring idea that Mother Nature watches over man, too, perhaps the weakest and most errant child of all, by implication rather than direct statement.

Emily Dickinson vividly depicts nature to us in a completely different mood while acting as a housewife rather than a mother:

She sweeps with many-colored Brooms —  
And leaves the Shreds behind —  
Oh Housewife in the Evening West —  
Come back, and dust the Pond!  
You dropped a Purple Ravelling in —  
You dropped an Amber thread —  
And how you've littered all the East  
With duds of Emerald!  
And still, she plies her spotted Brooms,  
And still the Aprons fly,  
Till Brooms fade softly into stars —  
And then I come away — ( Poem 219 )

Such a poem is remarkably representative of Emily's gayer phases. She based all of the visuals in it on a common domestic routine. Who else would have dared to compare a sunset to a housekeeping job? And who else could have made such a mundane task seem so utterly lovely, especially when it was carried out so carelessly, leaving behind tatters, purple ravellings, amber threads, and emerald duds everywhere? The end result is that even if the turmoil has been enjoyable, we are pleasantly satisfied when the housewife completes her difficult task, order is restored, and the "brooms fade softly into stars." This is because of the charming incongruity of the metaphor.

Emily Dickinson frequently felt as though nature was putting on a show specifically for her enjoyment and inspiration. She found plenty to marvel at in all of nature's activities, from the smallest to the grandest. She frequently had a front-row seat to the magnificent spectacle of nature's theatre. Sometimes, she simply watched the performance and loved describing what she saw. Other times, she was perplexed.

We spy the Forests and the Hills  
The Tents to Nature's Show  
Mistake the Outside for the in  
And mention what we saw.  
Could Commentators on the Sign  
Of Nature's Caravan  
Obtain "Admission" as a Child  
Some Wednesday Afternoon. (Dickinson, Lines 5-12)

The above two poetic stanzas are extracted from *Dew-is the Freshet in the Grass-* (Poem 1097), here the poetess serves as one of nature's primary critics, who is also the great showman. The photographs Nature's Show and Nature's Caravan capture her sense of nature as drama; despite her confusion about its deeper significance, I'm confident that she frequently gained "admission" and saw much more than the plain external cues. Even on occasion, she perceived God there:

Like Mighty Foot Lights — burned the Red  
At Bases of the Trees —  
The far Theatricals of Day  
Exhibiting — to These —  
'Twas Universe — that did applaud —  
While Chiefest — of the Crowd —  
Enabled by his Royal Dress —  
Myself distinguished God — ( Poem 595 )

From the first line to the end, the poem's usage of the image of the theatre builds dramatically. The play itself is first visible in "The far theatricals of day," with the specifics left to our own imagination. These footlights must be the reflections of the dying sun at the bases of the trees. When the entire cosmos cheers, the magic is abruptly broken. The final word, God, provides the finale. Emily knows Him in what way? By "his royal dress," she explains. Is this the sunset's purple, which the poet frequently deems to be a colour fit for royalty? Or is the so-called "royal dress" merely a symbol for divinity, the King of Kings? As is so frequently the case with Emily Dickinson's enigmatic verse and illogical visuals, we must come to our own conclusions.



Dickinson created an enumeration of natural elements at the transition from night to day in an effort to depict the beautiful expressions of nature in the morning.

An altered look about the hills —  
A Tyrian light the village fills —  
A wider sunrise in the morn —  
A deeper twilight on the lawn —  
A print of a vermilion foot —  
A purple finger on the slope —  
A flippant fly upon the pane —  
A spider at his trade again —  
An added strut in Chanticleer —  
A flower expected everywhere —  
An axe shrill singing in the woods —  
Fern odors on untravelled roads —  
All this and more I cannot tell —  
A furtive look you know as well —  
And Nicodemus' Mystery  
Receives its annual reply! (Poem 140)

The poet assembles the fragments of the morning mosaic in stichic verse and through the use of anaphora. The sixteen iambic tetrameters are supported by rhymes that are occasionally totally masculine and other times eye rhymes. One explanation for this unique observation is provided in the last few lines. Because she is attempting to comprehend the significance beyond these optical effects, the poet-beholder is drawn to such an instance of captivating beauty.

Emily believes that this image of the fleeting moment in the natural process has a deeper lesson to impart in addition to mere enjoyment and consuming intrigue. The great "Nicodemus' mystery" receives "its annual reply" from it. It is simple to see how specifically John's gospel is mentioned.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus ... This man came to Jesus ... Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:1-5)

Regarding the individual's redemption and the pursuit of real knowledge of God, this text is essential to Christian theology. The issue is merely theological, and the riddle of Nicodemus connects to countless generations of inquirers. Not everyone reads the Bible in order to be able to see these words for themselves, but in the poem mentioned above, the poet draws the reader's attention to the underlined answer to this important topic. The potential for a broad revelation of nature becomes apparent. The theological questions are not discussed in great length by the poet. She only keeps the answer to Nicodemus' query a mystery for everyone, including those in the Connecticut Valley. Here, the poem serves as only a pointer that directs the viewer's attention to a recurrent answer to the crucial query of eternity and the hereafter.

Emily sometimes observed nature's performances from a distance in wonder; other times, she took part in the play herself.

The bee is not afraid of me,  
I know the butterfly;  
The pretty people in the woods  
Receive me cordially.

The brooks laugh louder when I come,  
The breezes madder play.  
Wherefore, mine eyes, thy silver mists?  
Wherefore, O summer's day? (Poem 111)

Her friends were the bee, the butterfly, brooks, and the breezes. In another instance she talks about "A bee I personally knew." (*Bolts of Melody*, p. 68, No. 124.) The image "The pretty people in the woods" indicates flowers, birds, ferns, whatever we recollect from our own experience in tramps through the woods. It also demonstrates how intimately connected the poet felt to the creatures of nature. She belonged to them. She always appeared to feel more at home with them than with other people, and they were her companions. The final two lines express the depth of her emotional reaction to this company and her surprise at being so moved to tears. Why, oh why? It is the everlasting question of all nature lovers.

Emily Dickinson describes the life-history of the grass in a happier, gayer mood:

The grass so little has to do, —  
A sphere of simple green,  
With only butterflies to brood,

And bees to entertain,  
And stir all day to pretty tunes  
The breezes fetch along,  
And hold the sunshine in its lap  
And bow to everything ;  
And thread the dews all night, like pearls,  
And make myself so fine, —  
A duchess were too common  
For such a noticing.  
And even when it dies, to pass  
In odors so divine,  
As lowly spices gone to sleep,  
Or amulets of pine  
And then to dwell in sovereign barns,  
And dream the days away, —  
The grass so little has to do,  
I wish I were the hay ! (Poem 333)

In this poem, images appear quickly one after the other. Colour, movement, music, light, and odours—all the sensations linked with grass - appear. The third stanza's image, which shows the grass stringing dew like pearls, is feminine. A duchess, another of Emily's representations of royalty, appears in this poem. In the fourth and fifth stanzas, we can nearly smell the enticing aroma of the hay piled in "sovereign [another image from royalty] barns." What a gay ending thus this little drama has! It is a miniature comedy that is flawless and has a hearty chuckle at its ending.

## CONCLUSION

A powerful and moving poetic experience is produced by Emily Dickinson's extraordinary ability to combine nature imagery with poetic consonance. Dickinson exhibits a strong bond with the natural environment throughout her body of work, drawing inspiration and thought from it. Her strong sensitivity and poetic skill are on full display in her thorough study of nature's nuances and her ability to convey its beauty and complexity in words. Additionally, Dickinson's intentional use of poetic consonance heightens the impact of her environmental images, giving her poetry a melodic and harmonic character. Consonant repetition within words or at their ends gives writing a poetic aspect that appeals to the senses and emotions of the reader. Her careful use of consonance enhances the sensory components of the natural world so that the reader can more fully appreciate it.

In Dickinson's poetry, the interconnectedness between nature imagery and poetic consonance divulges and solves thematic depth and complexity respectively. She tackles difficult existential issues and muses on the enigmas of life, death, and transcendence through her views of nature. She uses nature as a figurative canvas to express her innermost feelings and thoughts. Her poetry's lyrical beauty and emotional ferocity are amplified by consonance, giving it a potent channel for portraying the intricacies of human experience. In conclusion, the paper has analysed Nature Imagery coupled with synergy with poetic consonance by Emily Dickinson. This study looked at Emily Dickinson's use of natural imagery and how it worked with poetic consonance. We now have a clearer understanding of the significance of these components in her poetry as a result of our investigation into her poetic style and thematic implications. Dickinson is able to evoke vivid and moving poetic experiences thanks to her deep connection to nature and deft use of consonance. Nature Imagery and poetic consonance of the poetess interweave to fabricate a poetic landscape that has both aesthetic pleasure and intellectual stimulation. The emotional power of her poems is enhanced by her examination of nature's beauty and her use of consonance to manipulate sound. Dickinson urges readers to ponder the secrets of existence and connect with the nuances of the human experience through her distinctive aesthetic perspective.

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