

**T**orn envelopes, scraps of wrapping paper, and pages from notebooks— Emily Dickinson wrote her prose and poetry on fragments of all types. Her words, marks, and strokes on paper can start to look like drawings.

In 1985, the poet Susan Howe wrote a book about Emily Dickinson, called *My Emily Dickinson*. She describes Dickinson as an expert in standing in corners, in secret listening, and in silent understanding—*the vital distinction between concealment and revelation is the essence of her work*. She writes about the flow of contradictions and the liberty of interruptions that exist within the structure of each line. They are poems about death and immortality, sensuality and sadism, love and trauma, liberty and exile.

Her Emily Dickinson is a poet for whom *a tear is an intellectual thing*.

We know that Emily Dickinson was reclusive. She rarely left the house. But she is an artist whose solitary activity turns withdrawal into acts of delicate precision, and she invented a grammar that allowed for language to be forceful and hesitant at the same time. She made the marginal masterful, and vice-versa.

Her notes and drafts are intersections of privacy and practice. She maintained a large correspondence with a variety of friends, to whom she sent several different versions of her poems. She would change the slope and stutter of her handwriting to reflect the subject of her poems and letters. She would fit her thoughts onto the triangular fold of an envelope.

Susan Howe recently pointed out that *text* and *textile* come from the Latin *textus* and *texere*—to weave. Language is that which is woven, and Dickinson uses poetry to undo familiarities woven into the structure of a sentence. She salts words with fire.

On May 20th, 2012, Susan Howe talks about fragments, drafts, drawings, envelopes, and her Emily Dickinsons. This event is organized and hosted by Mary Simpson.