Dickinson (2019-2021): Adaptation as a Vehicle for the Audio-Visual Exploration of the Life and Poetry of Emily Dickinson

Author
Chiara Luigina Dosithea Ravinetto

Discipline
Literature, New Media Studies

Keywords
Biopic / Television / Poetry / Dickinson / Adaptation

Doi
doi.org/10.61299/me458Hy

Amsterdam Museum Journal
Issue #3 Winter 2024

Abstract

In recent years there has been a rise in tv-shows, movies and books which present an innovative approach to fictionalizing history, approaching period-drama through a more self-aware and contemporary lens. One of such works, *Dickinson* (2019), created by Alena Smith, adapts both Emily Dickinson's life and poetry in a genre-bending literary biopic for the silver screen. The show follows Emily, portrayed by Hailee Steinfeld, as she navigates life and her love for writing in an extremely constraining society. In addition, every episode engages with a different poem, which is included in the title and is used as a thematic template for the narration. This essay explores the different ways the show presents and engages with Dickinson's poetry thematically and visually, while drawing connections between the struggles faced by Emily as she finds her way as an artist and the society we live in today.

Introduction

Literary biopics, understood as biographies of authors made for the screen, face the challenging task of adapting not only the life of a writer but also their work, while simultaneously attempting to externalize the author's interiority and writing process. As Buchanan states, *"a life of reflection, observation, composition and self-abstracting literariness does not self-evidently offer the sort of cinematic dynamism and narrative pulse usually considered the staple fare of the movies"* (2013, 3). These challenges, however, have not discouraged directors and showrunners from adapting the life of writers for the screen in various creative ways. In her series *Dickinson* (2019), Alana Smith, the creator and executive producer of the show, presents an innovative approach to the biopic genre, infusing her work with postmodern, neo-historical aesthetics and feminist consciousness.[1] The comedy/drama series, which premiered on AppleTV+ on November 1st 2019 and concluded on December 24th 2021, adapts both the life and the works of the American poet Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) as she navigates becoming a female poet in a deeply misogynistic society.

Smith stated that during *Dickinson*'s development, she consulted numerous biographies about Dickinson and even literary theory about her work (Lyall 2021). As such, at the heart of *Dickinson* lies not only the adaptation of Emily Dickinson's extensive literary work but also of the extensive scholarly work about her. The series, due to the sources used by Smith to *"compose a mosaic portrait of the character and [...] her times"*, can be understood as "*an adaptation of one or more previous texts"* (Indrusiak and Ramgrab 2018, 98). Furthermore, adaptations can be created with the purpose of giving voice to people/characters that were previously marginalized and giving new relevance to the original source text (Sanders 2016, 23), which *Dickinson* attempts and succeeds in doing. The show can thus be seen as a work of historical revision, which is *"the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction"* (Rich 1972, 18). Additionally, I would argue that *Dickinson* can be further inserted into the broader Feminist Revisionist Mythmaking tradition, even if these terms are often reserved for literary texts. As Ostriker explains:

> *"The core of revisionist mythmaking for women poets lies in the challenge to and correction of gender stereotypes embodied in myth, revisionism in its simplest form consists of hit-and-run attacks on familiar images and the social and literary conventions supporting them" (1982, 73-74).*

The show, in fact, with its queer female lead, explores several overtly feminist themes and encourages the viewer to reconsider any notions they might have of the poet and her extensive literary work.

The following essay will analyze how *Dickinson* approaches the biopic genre innovatively. First, it will briefly explore some of the show's formal characteristics. Then, it will analyze in depth how Smith adapted Emily Dickinson's poetry and life while simultaneously exploring an array of different themes and feminist consciousness.

Fictionalization and Anachronism

Smith credits her interest in Emily Dickinson to a chance encounter during her college years with a biography on the author by scholar Alfred Habbenger. It was mostly the irony that pervaded the poet's life that struck Smith, as *"Dickinson's obscurity, while she lived, was at odds with the heat of her talent; her poetry seemed desperate to connect with people, to be understood"* (Waldman 2021). Years later, while pondering the creation of her show, she returned to Dickinson, spending six years creating her genre-defying tv-series (Whiting 2024). Smith, who researched Dickinson's life in detail, wanted to present a *"metaphorical representation of [Emily's] life and body of work and what she means to us today"* (Blacker 2020, 7:58-8:07). This has led her to develop a series that *"violates every tenet of What Victorian Period Pieces Should Look Like and liberates the poet from the hair-hurt of history's tightly wrapped bun"* (Whiting 2024), as *Dickinson* can be placed among a number of tv-shows and movies that have premiered in recent years, which present a distinct attitude towards fictionalizing history. This new typology of works approaches the period-drama and biopic genre through a more self-aware and contemporary lens, as a notable historical figure and their appropriation becomes a point of entry for the directors and creators to explore modern themes.

While one of the main features of the biopic genre is the fictionalization of historical characters (Indrusiak and Ramgrab 2018, 98), the degree of accuracy, fidelity and authenticity regarding the past and the sources used to create the work remain central in the discourse surrounding historical fiction, as critics see *"accuracy as a marker of merit"* (Saxton 2020, 129). Smith, however, moves away from those notions in order to present a lead character that is a "*personification of [Dickinson's] authorial voice*" (Waldman 2021) rather than an accurate representation of the historical figure. Dickinson is often described as *"direct, impulsive, original, and the droll wit who said unconventional things others thought but dared not speak"* (Johnson 1955, 3), characteristics that bled through in her writing. Focus-

ing on the construction of her authorial voice allows the series' Emily,[2] portrayed by Hailee Steinfeld, to be even more rebellious than she was in real life, giving voice to an array of modern feminist beliefs (Waldman 2021).

Dickinson thus endeavours to compose the poet's authorial voice while simultaneously inviting the audience to assess Dickinson's poetry through a contemporary lens. This is done through the careful use of intertextual references, the intentional employment of fictionalization and anachronism, understood as *"any element of the dramatized presentation which the audience would recognize as belonging to an era different from the historical period in which the drama is set"* (Shanks 2022, 2).[3] It is important to note that the employment of anachronism permeates the entirety of the show. Most notably, the show's younger characters present a linguistic register and mannerisms that are reminiscent of teenagers today (Russo 2021, 541). The employment of anachronism can also be seen in the *"self-conscious articulation of ideologies associated with the modern world"* (Russo 2021, 546), exemplified by the casual acceptance in the series of homosexual relationships, especially within Dickinson's young circle of friends. In fact, Emily and Sue's relationship is presented as a well-known secret amongst the younger generations of Amherst. The viewer, who might expect a harsher condemnation of same-sex relationships as the series is set in the past, is brought to apply a more contemporary perception of sexuality to the fictionalized past. This careful and constant employment of anachronism repeatedly reminds the audience of the continuity between past and present that this work aims to underline.

The setting also subtly illustrates the intertwining between the past and the present, as well as fact and fiction, which the show aims to highlight. The famous Dickinson house, now the site of the Emily Dickinson Museum, was recreated using period-accurate decorations with the addition of contemporary colours and wallpaper, making the set seem more contemporary. The production designer Loren Weeks states: *"Since Dickinson was going to be a contemporary interpretation of the poet [...] I wanted to be honest to the historical period, but not beholden to it"* (Brown 2019). This blend of historical and contemporary is especially evident in Emily's second-floor bedroom. The set faithfully replicates the furnishings of the original room, such as the desk and bed. However, it adds several decorations representative of Emily's different interests, including collages reminiscent of a teenage girl's Tumblr page (Brown 2019).

“The show, in fact, with its queer female lead, explores several overtly feminist themes and encourages the viewer to reconsider any notions they might have of the poet and her extensive literary work.”

Adapting a Poet's Life and Characters

As one of the central purposes of *Dickinson* was to portray Emily Dickinson's authorial voice, one of the most challenging aspects of creating this biopic was presented by how to adapt her poems. The series approaches this adaptation in two distinct ways. *In primis,* Dickinson's writing process and poems take physical form in the series as, while Emily writes and thinks about her work, the words appear on the screen. Simultaneously, while she is writing, a voice-over of Emily reads the words, or when she thinks about a poem, Emily mumbles along. The handwritten words, however, always quickly disappear from the screen, underlining the intangible nature of Dickinson's poetry, which transcends the simple act of putting pen to paper. Additionally, *Dickinson* adapts the poet's body of work by having every episode engage with a different poem, which is included in the title and is used as a thematic template for the narration.

The first episode of the series, for example, titled "*Because I could not stop for Death*", adapts one of Dickinson's most well-known poems while setting the stage for one of the major themes of the show: what it means to be a poet and a woman in a society that views women as having only a place in the home. The episode follows Emily as she is forced, yet again, by her mother to entertain a suitor, George (Samuel Farnsworth). She, however, promptly rejects George's advances, stating, *"I'm not gonna marry anyone [...] I have one purpose on this earth, and that is to become a great writer. A husband would put a stop to that"* (Green 2019, 05:58-6:10). George, not deterred, asks her if the reason she will not marry him is that there is someone else. To this, Emily responds that yes, there is someone else, someone he cannot kill, as he is Death. Thus, one of the recurring themes in Dickinson's poetry is introduced. She tells George, *"I'm in love with Death. He takes me out for a carriage ride every night. He's such a gentleman. Sexy as hell"* (Green 2019, 06:36-06:44). As she says this, the scene transforms. The viewer sees a dark carriage, pulled by ghost-like horses, and a completely different Emily, dressed in red, entering the carriage. However, it is not until later that the viewer becomes privy to the words Emily and Death exchange during their meeting.

The episode continues with Emily asking George to publish one of her poems. She later announces the good news to her family, expecting them to be proud of her. However, her parents' reaction is quite the opposite. Her father, Edward, becomes infuriated and states, *"wicked girl [...] we have given you too much freedom, and now you have taken advantage of our kindness [...] [and] exhibit such scandalous behaviour"* (Green 2019, 23:51-24:03). She is thus not allowed to pursue a career and publish her work simply because he

does not *"approve of a woman seeking to build herself a literary reputation"* (Green 2019, 22:37-23:41). While Emily is convinced that her purpose in life is to be a writer, her sense of worth as a writer is still profoundly bound to the opinions of others, especially her father. After the disastrous ending to the family dinner, Emily once more has a vision of a carriage, only this time, the viewer is invited to look into the conversation between Emily and Death. She is dressed in red, signaling to the viewer that she is meeting a 'lover' rather than the dreaded harbinger of demise.

The poem, often interpreted as a sweet meeting between the narrator and Death as she is led into eternal sleep (Johnson 1955, 222-223), takes on a new meaning in the series adaptation. The two lovers converse about what transpired at dinner, and when Emily expresses her doubts about being able to become a poet, Death, interpreted by American rapper Wiz Khalifa, states:

> *"[Death] My darling...you'll be the only Dickinson they talk about in 200 years. I promise you that.*
> *[Emily] Even if my poems are never published?*
> *[Death] Publicity is not the same thing as immortality.*
> *[Emily] Immortality is nothing. All it takes is being very good and well-behaved and then you go to heaven.*
> *[Death] See, that's not the kind I mean. Your type of immortality won't come from you following the rules. It's gonna come from you breaking them"* (Green 2019, 26:55-27:27).

"The Carriage held but just Ourselves - / And Immortality" (Dickinson 1863, lines 3-4) does not, in this case, simply symbolize the narrator's last ride together with Death. The 'Immortality' mentioned in the poem takes a new meaning: the immortality of the written word, the immortality one achieves when they are remembered forevermore for their work. It will, however, take Emily the entirety of the show to fully understand the meaning of Death's words, as she first has to 'defeat' those who want to control her and force her to follow the patriarchal rules of her society.

The episode concludes with Emily and her father reconciling and her writing the first stanza of the poem, deliberately halting on the word 'Immortality'.[4] As *"literary biopics depict writers both as creations and creators, while the artists' works are rendered both as fact and fiction"* (Indrusiak and Ramgrab 2018, 99), throughout the episode, Emily is shown first composing and then writing her poem, while experiencing visions throughout the day of the carriage carrying Death. This method of 'double adaptation' allows

Dickinson to create links between more or less fictitious events in Emily's life and the composition of her poems without explaining or oversimplifying her artistic process. In fact, it offers *"a way of reading Dickinson's oeuvre that draws attention to the myriad of influences that she drew from the world around her"* (Russo 2021, 550). In addition, the open fictionalization of a real-life historical character becomes a source of curiosity and scandal, as *"there is an ontological scandal when a real-world figure is inserted in a fictional situation"* (Mchale 1987, 85). By adapting their lives, these works bring these important historical and literary figures *"down from the ivory tower by showing their human and flawed nature"* (Indrusiak and Ramgrab 2018, 98), which allows for a deeper exploration of the character's emotions, ideas and motivations.

In addition to Death, which is a recurring theme in Dickinson's poetry and thus a recurring character in the series, Emily also repeatedly encounters 'Nobody' (Will Pullen). While the poem *"I'm Nobody! Who are you?"* is only adapted in the second season's eighth episode, in which Emily roams Amherst listening to people's reactions, invisible following the publication of one of her poems, the character 'Nobody' is introduced during the first episode of the season. 'Nobody', who we later discover is an old school friend of Emily's brother who died during the Civil War, is central to Emily's growth as a poet, guiding her through her ambiguous feelings towards fame and publication. In the final episode of the second season, in fact, the two talk about his death in the coming war, which he will join seeking fame and glory, and he tells Emily:

> *"You have wars to fight Emily Dickinson. But you must fight them in secret. Alone. Unseen. You must give all the glory to yourself and ask for nothing from the world. You must be a nobody. The bravest, most brilliant nobody who ever existed" (Howard 2021, 11:27-11:58).*

The verses of the poem *"I'm Nobody! Who are you?/ Are you – Nobody – too?"* (Dickinson 1861, lines 1-2) again take a new meaning, linking the feeling of disembodiment the poem evokes to the state of anonymity her poetry will endure during her life (Loving 1986, 8). The characters of Dickinson's poetry are thus personified in the show not only as representations of her poetry but also to aid Emily in her journey of growth as a poet.

Alongside the adaptation of Dickinson's poetry and the embodiment of 'Death' and 'Nobody', *Dickinson* encourages the viewer to reexamine and rethink her body of work by inserting several interactions between

"*Dickinson* [thus] endeavors to compose the poet's authorial voice while simultaneously inviting the audience to assess Dickinson's poetry through a contemporary lens."

the main character of the show and a number of other historical figures, often to comedic effect, simultaneously upping the feeling of scandal the show aims to evoke and providing the viewer with information necessary to gain a deeper understanding of Emily's authorial voice. She, for example, interacts with several famous writers, such as Thoreau, Alcott, Whitman, and Allan Poe, often debating art and poetry. Emily even encounters Sylvia Plath, as she has a vision of the future in the episode "*The Future never spoke*". After Plath shows Emily and her sister a collection of her published work, Emily says *"I thought I told you to burn all my poems when I died"* to which Lavinia responds *"I knew you didn't mean it. I wasn't gonna let everyone forget my sister. And now look, in the future, you're actually famous"* (Heather 2021, 18:50-19:01). Through this encounter, the viewer becomes privy to the manner in which her poems will be published and of the future debates surrounding the poet, especially regarding her sexuality. In addition, the choice of casting recognizable figures of contemporary pop culture for these guest star roles- like Wiz Kalifa as Death, John Mulaney as Thoreau, and Nick Kroll as Allan Poe- both exemplifies the show's desire to link past to present, while simultaneously reinforcing a sense of scandal and familiarity in the viewer.

The Serialized Episodic Form

It is noteworthy to mention that this approach to adapting poetry and Dickinson's authorial voice is facilitated by the choice of medium through which the narrative is presented. I would argue that *Dickinson* falls into what Hilmes refers to as *"serialized episodic"* (2014, 27). Unlike shows of an episodic nature, in which each episode presents a separate closed narrative, like in *Law and Order*, or serials, in which a longer story that carries over from episode to episode is presented, like in *Dallas*, shows presenting a serialized episodic style have a more hybrid nature. In *Dickinson,* the narrative is explored on different levels as the series presents individual episodic narrative arcs through which the broader seasonal arc is interweaved. As Newman states, *"serials tend to focus on ensembles, with each episode interweaving several strands of narrative in alternation scene by scene"* (2006, 16). This is the central feature the serialized episodic form takes on, with the addition of each episode also having a central theme or issue that is resolved by the end of the episode but remains important for the broader narrative arc. This form, unlike film, is able to create *"dense, complex story worlds that can unfold over months, years, and even decades"* and, as such, tv-series:

> *"can tie viewers to characters, situations, and settings much more effectively exactly because they eschew visual pyrotechnics [of film] in favor of good writing, straightforward exposition, and the evolution of characters and plots over time" (Hilmes et al. 2014, 27).*

Thus, the serial episodic form allows the creators to explore the character's inner workings more deeply over a longer period of time.

As *Dickinson* aims to adapt poems, which, unlike prose writing, present the challenge of being both short and varied in content and themes, the serial episodic form allows Smith to adapt one poem in each episodic narrative arc, capturing their varied moods and themes, while at the same time creating overarching seasonal narrative arcs. Furthermore, the essence of each poem is not only relegated to the plot structure of the episode but also to the set and costume design choices, visually evoking each poem adapted. Moeller, the costume designer for season 2, reveals that during the creation of each costume, she considered the imagery evoked by the poem chosen for each episode by adding patterns and colours referencing Dickinson's poetry while staying true to the period's silhouette (Fraser 2021). For example, in the fourth episode of the second season, entitled "*The Daisy follows soft the Sun*", in which Emily compares herself to a daisy that will wilt if she does not get the approval of her editor; she is dressed in a bright yellow dress with floral patterns, underscoring the imagery evoked by the poem central to the episode.

Aided by the numerous intertextual references to not only Dickinson's poetry and epistolary work but also different biographies and literary criticism about the author, the show explores Emily's relationship to her own writing, manifestation of her agency and autonomy in an oppressive patriarchal society. The show presents three different seasonal narrative arcs involving her relationship to her writing. In the first season, we see Emily tentatively establishing herself as an author, taking the first steps into publishing, as it is the only way she feels she can become a true writer. In the second season, however, she begins to question the need for fame and recognition and, consequently, the need for her poems to be published. In the third season, Emily ultimately understands that her worth as a writer lies not in the opinion of others, but within herself, and in doing so, she discovers a new depth to her art. Throughout this evolution of Emily's relationship with herself, however, one thing always remains the same: for Emily, her poems are her outlet, the way she expresses herself to the world, the medium through which she establishes and maintains her in-

dependence in a time where she had little freedom outside the confines of her room. As such, while being tangible, her work as a writer also becomes a symbol of freedom in her mind.

Conclusion

Aiming to compose a narrative around Emily Dickinson's authorial voice, *Dickinson* puts the adaptation of her poetry at its centre. However, rather than simply adapting the action of putting pen to paper, the show takes a step further, infusing everything about each episode, from the title to the content to the various settings and costumes, with Dickinson's poetry. Simultaneously, the show aims to identify, analyze and subvert any preconceptions the viewer might have about one of the most brilliant American authors while underlining *"the historical continuities between the struggle to claim a poetic voice by both historical and contemporary women writers"* (Russo 2021, 544). Additionally, the show seeks to better understand "*the truth [that], perhaps, is hidden in her poems"* (Storer 2021, 00:28-00:32), encouraging the viewer to approach her poetry with new and fresh eyes. *Dickinson* aims not to be a 'normal' biopic but becomes *"in some ways […] a dramatization of literary theory"* (Smith qtd. in Lyall 2021). While *"everything that happens in the show has some connection to fact*" (Smith qtd. in Lyall 2021), the show takes numerous liberties in the development of the narration, inserting visions, dreams and meetings that do not appear in the historical records and adapts most of its dramatic elements from the literary theory surrounding her poetry (Smith qtd. in Lyall 2021).

This amalgamation of intertextual references, anachronisms and intentional fictionalization led *Dickinson* to stray away from authenticity models typical of historical fiction and biographical narrations while presenting a reproduction of Dickinson's poetry and life that focuses on constructing the poet's authorial voice. This has led Smith to create what Harris calls a 'neo-history', a work that *"uses […] deconstruction to create new narratives and openly fictionalized neo histories"* (Harris 2017, 194), presenting the past and present as united instead of divided, and blurring the lines between fact and fiction. Rather than denying the unknowable nature of the past, *Dickinson* embraces and revels in its own historical 'inaccuracies', creating a new narrative surrounding the poet. This new narrative, in turn, encourages the viewer to reflect on what Dickinson and her extensive literary work can mean for us today while re-appropriating the myth of Emily Dickinson in order to create a relatable feminist and queer icon.

“The ‘Immortality’ mentioned in the poem takes a new meaning: the immortality of the written word, the immortality one achieves when they are remembered forevermore for their work.”

References

Blacker, Ben. "Alena Smith (Dickinson) and Tony McNamara (The Great)." *The Writers Panel* from *Forever Dog Podcast Network*, 15 May 2020, benblacker.substack.com/p/alena-smith-dickinson-and-tony-mcnamara-fea?utm_source=publication-search.

Brown, Elizabeth Quinn. "The Set of Dickinson Is an Ultra-Colorful Version of the Poet's Home." *Architectural Digest*, 6 November 2019, www.architecturaldigest.com/story/dickinson-apple-tv-show-set-design.

Buchanan, Judith. "Image, story, desire: the writer on film." *The Writer on Film: Screening Literary Authorship*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 3–34, doi.org/10.1057/9781137317230_1.

Dickinson, Emily. "Because I Could Not Stop for Death," 1863. *Selected Poems*. Edited by Stanley Appelbaum. Dover Publications, 2014, p. 35.

Dickinson, Emily. "I'm Nobody! Who Are You?" 1861. *Selected Poems*. Edited by Stanley Appelbaum. Dover Publications, 2014, pp. 9–10.

Finnerty, Páraic. "'You'll Be the Only Dickinson They Talk About in Two Hundred Years': Queer Celebrity, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *A Quiet Passion, Wild Nights with Emily*, and Apple TV+'s *Dickinson*." *The Emily Dickinson Journal,* vol. 31, no. 1, 2022, pp. 1–30, doi.org/10.1353/edj.2022.0000.

Fraser, Emma. "How the Costume Design on 'Dickinson' Emphasizes the Sartorial Fire Burning Within." *Elle. Com*, 11 July 2021, www.elle.com/culture/movies-tv/a36833852/dickinson-season-2-costume-designer-interview/.

Green, David Gordon, director. "Because I could not stop." *Dickinson,* season 1, episode 1, AppleTV+, 1 November 2019.

Harris, Katharine. "'Part of the project of that book was not to be authentic': neo-historical authenticity and its anachronisms in contemporary historical fiction." *Rethinking History*, vol. 21, n.2, 2017, pp. 193–212, doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2017.1315968.

Hilmes, Michele et al. "RETHINKING TELEVISION: A Critical Symposium on the New Age of Episodic Narrative Storytelling." *Cinéaste*, vol. 39, n.4, 2014, pp. 26–38.

Howard, Silas, director. "You cannot put a Fire out." *Dickinson,* season 2, episode 10, AppleTV+, 26 February 2021.

Indrusiak, Elaine, and Ana Iris Ramgrab. "Literary biopics: adaptation as historiographic metafiction." *The Routledge Companion to Adaptation*, edited by Dennis Cutchins, Katja Krebs and Eckart Voigt, Routledge, 2018, pp. 97-105.

Jack, Heather, director. "The Future never spoke." *Dickinson,* season 3, episode 7, AppleTV+, 3 December 2021.

Johnson, Thomas H. *Emily Dickinson: An Interpretive Biography*. Harvard University Press, 1955.

Lyall, Sarah. "'Dickinson' Uses the Civil War to Explore Modern Divisions." *The New York Times*, 9 November 2021. www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/arts/television/dickinson-final-season.html.

Loving, Jerome. *Emily Dickinson: The Poet on the Second Story*. Cambridge University Press, 1986.

McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. Methuen, 1987.

Mittell, Jason. *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling*. New York University Press, 2015.

Newman, Michael Z. "From Beats to Arcs: Toward a Poetics of Television Narrative." *The Velvet Light Trap*, vol. 58, 2006, pp. 16-28.

Ostriker, Alicia. "The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking." *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1982, pp. 68–90, www.jstor.org/stable/3173482.

Passon, Stacie, director. "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" *Dickinson,* season 2, episode 8, AppleTV+,12 February 2021.

Rich, Adrienne. "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision." *College English*, vol. 34, n.1, 1972, pp. 18-30.

Rodriguez, Rosemary, director. "The Daisy follows soft the Sun." *Dickinson,* season 2, episode 4, AppleTV+, 15 January 2021.

Russo, Stephanie. "'You Are, like, so woke': Dickinson and the Anachronistic Turn in Historical Drama." *Rethinking History*, vol. 25, no. 4, February 2021, pp. 534–554, doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2021.1995645.

Sanders, Julie. *Adaptation and Appropriation*. Second edition, Routledge, 2016.

Saxton, Laura. "A true story: defining accuracy and authenticity in historical fiction." *Rethinking History*, vol. 24, n. 2, March 2020, pp. 127-144, doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2020.1727189.

Shanks, John. "Presentist Anachronism and Ironic Humour in Period Screen Drama." *Research in Film and History. New Approaches*, 2022, pp. 1–35, doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/18962.

Smith, Alana, creator. *Dickinson*. Apple TV+, 2019.

Storer, Cristopher, director. "Before I got my eye put out." *Dickinson,* season 2, episode 1, AppleTV+, January 8th, 2021.

Waldman, Katy. "Alena Smith's Subversive 'Dickinson.'" *The New Yorker*, 25 February 2021, www.newyorker.

com/culture/persons-of-interest/alena-smiths-subversive-dickinson.
Whiting, Amanda. “The Story behind the Miraculously Weird ‘Dickinson.’” *Bustle*, 20 February 2024, www.bustle.com/entertainment/the-story-behind-the-miraculously-weird-dickinson19355435

End Notes

1 Questions of authorship are quite complex when speaking of TV series, where "the final product of an aired episode goes through complex collaborative processes, filtering the contributions of performers, designers, editors, and network executives" (Mittel 2015, 91). In this essay, I will refer mainly to the show's creator and mention other contributors, such as set designers, where necessary.

2 For clarity, I will refer to the protagonist of the series as ‘Emily’ and the historical figure either by her full name or ‘Dickinson’.

3 See Russo (2021) for an in-depth analysis of how *Dickin*son employs intentional anachronism.

4 See Finnerty (2022) for an overview of Dickinson’s negotiations with celebrity culture during her time and an analysis of the way the show *Dickinson* grapples with her status as a queer celebrity, alongside a number of other recent films about the poet.