

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis basically focuses on the presence of the 'surreal' in the poetic works of the famous 19th century American poetess Emily Dickinson (1830-86). The surreal in Emily Dickinson's poetry creates an ambience of its own kind, different in spirit and structure from that of her contemporaries. It is a reflection of her moods and feelings and it becomes the best mode for her to review and question the literary tradition that denied her recognition as a poet during her lifetime. The presence of the surreal in her works also highlights characteristic features of surrealism such as nightmarish atmosphere, unexpected juxtapositions and pleasant surprises, portrayal of the grotesque, the marvelous and the sexual that are visible thematically as well as technically. On the structural level Dickinson's poetry portrays different stylistic devices such as the use of automatic writing, elliptical expression, rejection of conventional punctuation and innovations in vocabulary and imagery that represent the presence of the surreal and its ambience. Overall her poetry shows that although she represents her deeper self, she at the same time identifies this self with the American sensibility that she had imbibed.

My reading explores a different interpretation of Dickinson's poetic works as compared to the interpretations offered by other critics. The surreal in Dickinson's poetry is different from the surreal in other traditional poets of her times like Walt Whitman or Edgar Allan Poe. The surreal ambience in Dickinson's poetry is the result of an engendered psychological implication that we discover to be at the heart of her work. It is through this engendering process that Dickinson not only enriched surrealism but also set a female literary tradition within the prevailing main stream tradition of American Poetry.