“My business is Circumference” Letter of 1862 to Thomas Higginson. A figure E.D. used to express some of the central themes of her poetry: “the figure of the circle with the mortal consciousness as its center, the extent of perception as the radius, and the area of comprehension the circumference,” “extending from mortal consciousness into the immortal sphere, from the little circuit of mortal life to the ‘new’ or ‘full’ circumference of the life to come.”
(Wm. Sherwood Circumference & Circumstance 1968)

“Austin and I were talking the other day about the Extension of Consciousness, after Death and Mother told Vinnie, afterward, she thought it was ‘very improper.’ Letter of 1880 to Mrs. Holland.

J. 1620
Circumference thou Bride of Awe
Possessing thou shalt be
Possessed by every hallowed Knight
That dares to covet thee. 1884

J. 1084
At half past Three, a single Bird
Unto a silent Sky
Propounded but a single term of term
Of cautious melody.

At Half past Four, Experiment
Had subjugated test
And lo, Her silver Principle

At half past Seven, Element
Nor Implement be seen
And Place was where the Presence was
Circumference between. 1866

J 508
I’m ceded—I’ve stopped being Theirs--
The name They dropped upon my face
With water, in the country church
Is finished using, now,
And They can put it with my Dolls,
My childhood, and the string of spools,
I’ve finished threading—too—

Baptized, before, without the choice,
But this time, consciously, of Grace--
Unto supremist name--
Called to my Full—The Crescent dropped--
Existence’s whole Arc, filled up,
With one small Diadem.

My second Rank—too small the first--
Crowned—Crowing—on my Father’s breast--
A half unconscious Queen--
But this time—Adequate—Erect,
With Will to choose, or to reject,
And I choose, just a Crown-- 1862

J. 564
My period had come for Prayer--
No other Art—would do--
My tactics missed a rudiment--
Creator—Was it you?

God grows above—so those who pray
Horizons-- must ascend--
And so I stepped upon the North
To see this Curious Friend--

His House was not—no sign had He--
By Chimney—nor by Door
Could I infer his Residence--
Vast prairies of Air

Unbroken by Settler--
Were all that I could see--
Infinitude—Hadst Thou no Face
That I might look on Thee?
The Silence condescended—
Creation stopped—for Me--
But awed beyond my errand
I worshipped—did not “pray”— 1862

J. 437
Prayer is the little implement
Through which Men reach
Where Presence—is denied them.
They fling their Speech
By means of it-- in God’s Ear--
If then He hear--
This sums the Apparatus
Comprised in Prayer-- 1862

J. 812
A light exists in Spring
Not present on the Year
At any other period—
When March is scarcely here
A Color stands abroad
On Solitary Fields
That Science cannot overtake
But Human Nature feels.

It waits upon the Lawn,
It shows the furthest Tree
Upon the furthest Slope you know
It almost speaks to you.

Then as Horizons step
Or noons report away
Without the Formula of sound
It passes and we stay—

A quality of loss
Affecting our Content
As Trade had suddenly encroached
Upon a Sacrament. 1864

J. 1068 “Further in Summer than the Birds”

Version 5
Further in Summer than the Birds -
Pathetic from the Grass -
A minor Nation celebrates
It's unobtrusive Mass.

No Ordinance be seen -
So gradual the Grace
A gentle Custom it becomes -
Enlarging Loneliness -

Antique felt at Noon -
When August is burning low
Arise this spectral Canticle
Repose to typify -

Remit as yet no Grace -
No furrow on the Glow
But a Druidic Difference
Enhances Nature now – c.1866

J. 1775
The Earth has many keys -
Where Melody is not
Is the Unknown Peninsula -
Beauty - is Nature's Fact -

But Witness for Her Land -
And Witness for Her Sea -
The Cricket is Her utmost
Of Elegy, to Me -