

addendum:

Emily Dickinson wrote

Step lightly on
This narrow spot —
The broadest Land
That grows
Is not so Ample
As the Breast
These Emerald
Seams enclose

Step lofty, for
This name be told
As far as Cannon
Dwell
Or Flag subsist
Or Fame export
Her deathless
Syllable

But in the fascicle version, this poem appears as a field of X's, due to how Dickinson chose to cross her T's and F's:

SXep lighxly on
Xhis narrow Spox —
Xhe broadesx Xand
That grows
Is noX so ample
As Xhe Breasx
Xhese Emerald
Seams enclose.

SXep lofty, for
Xhis name be xold
As far as Cannon
Dwell
Or Xlag SubsisiX
Or Xame Expox
Her deaxhless
Sylla ble

The X's are stitches in the picture of the poem. Letters are actually what sew the "seam," and what they enclose is the dead body in its emerald "spot." What is equally interesting is the apparent discarding of the dash. Thus, the poem has a squarer look to it—a plain, a plot, a field. The more defined/geometric the space, the more it resembles a space enclosed. The dashes signify an opening, but this poem has a concrete and pictorial surface, patched in places by the letter "X." *

There's a confession that links a man's name to a body beneath a field of X's. The man attempts to remove his name from the penalty box. He wants to become the X, the blank spot. The court eventually agrees to this, but the mark is still there. The X is both an absence and a presence.

* "The abstract term 'equality' took on materiality as we moved towards the church hall polling station and the simple act, the drawing of an X, that ended over three centuries of privilege for some, deprivation of human dignity for others. [. . .] A strange moment: the first time man scratched the mark of his identity, the conscious proof of his existence, on a stone must have been rather like this." (Nadine Gordimer, "Standing in the Queue")

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Step lightly on
this narrow spot
the precious land
that grows
is not so ample
as the forest
these Emerald
seams enclose.

Step lightly for
this name is set
as far as Cannon
O'Neill
or the lag suffix
or the name suffix
in the
symbols.